

The *Bola* or *Parma* of the Newar in Manamaiju Village: The Significance of a Farm Labor Exchange System among Indigenous Peasants in Nepal



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Master Program in Indigenous Studies

Thesis Submitted for the Degree:

Master of Philosophy in Indigenous Studies

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Norway

Spring 2006

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to express my grateful appreciation to my Professor, Trond Thuen and Associate Professor Jon Schackt, for their valuable supervision and advisory role in this study. Their remarkable comments and recommendations inspired me to make the structure thoughtful in friendly environment. My sincere thank goes to them.

I am very grateful to the Nepal Government and The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) who brought me here and sponsored two years study in Norway.

I am indebted to the organizations – The Central Bureau of Statistics, The Manamaiju Village Development Committee (VDC) and Tribhuvan University of Nepal.

I am very thankful to the Indigenous Master Programme at the University of Tromsø, Centre of Sami Studies, SEMUT, and my fellow students who continuously provided me with courage, inspiration and cooperation. My special thanks go to Celia Collins for correcting my English.

My family is a source of motivation to this study. My love goes to them forever.

During my study in Norway, I lost four close relatives in a tragic accident in Nepal in December 2005; my thesis is a memorial dedication to their great souls.

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Abstract

This thesis is devoted to a study of the reciprocal labor exchange system bola, and the indigenous knowledge that it supports. The field study took place in a rural area of Nepal where agriculture is the main occupation. I observed the system in action in Manamaiju village where Newari peasant groups, including their farmer groups Jyapu, live and which is situated in Kathmandu District. The Newar people are the second largest population group in the village and they are successfully maintaining bola on their terms. It is recognized that there are 59 Indigenous Nationalities in Nepal and one of them is the Newar. Nepalese social structure is mainly based on Hindu rule and, in addition, the Newar of Kathmandu Valley have their own caste hierarchical system. It was formed on the basis of their traditional work descriptions in the period of the Malla Dynasty around 15th century BC. According to traditional social structure, Jyapu and Matwali (alcohol user by birth) remain cultivator groups as a Sudra for the Hindu Varna system. There are various Jat (sub-castes) groups that exist only in Jyapu group and who belong to a ranked system of higher and lower status positions. Accordingly, Maharjan and Rajbahak are the main Jyapu groups in the village which covers almost 50% of the total area of the Manamaiju Village Development Committee (VDC). In this regard I am only looking at these particular groups and their performance of the bola system.

The key queries of this study are: what does the bola system look like in the village; and, how are they maintaining it as a successful living practice when there is a liberal economic policy in front of them? Regarding the latter, it has been found that their subsistence farming and social and cultural values are the most significant influential factors. Furthermore, their own Newari / Nepal Bhasa language, powerful Guthi (social structure) system, strong social commitment, traditional food and deeply ingrained festivals are some of the significant factors of the bola system. Hence, it plays an important role in maintaining the Newari as a distinct ethnic group and in making their adaptation economically sustainable. In this perspective the bola system might be a source of inspiration to other indigenous agricultural worlds.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background

The term *bola* or *parma* is related to the reciprocal labor exchange system in Nepalese agriculture. Different ethnic groups of Nepal, such as the *Newar* call it *bola*, while other ethnic groups use the word *parma*. The nature and characteristics of both terms are similar. The key aspect of this system is based on reciprocity of labor and the use of family members. I have selected Manamaiju village situated in the Kathmandu District of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. In Manamaiju village there exists different caste and ethnic peasant groups, such as *Brahmin*, *Chhetri* (castes) and *Newar*. My study concerns only the *Newar* peasant groups and their reciprocal labor exchange system. There are many other *Newar* villages in Kathmandu Valley and the main occupation of agriculture is common to them all. The *Newar* peasant groups also consist of *Jyapu*, a sub-group within the *Newar* caste system. Mixed farming, for example, rice, wheat and potato crops in the same field, is the preferred farming method in this area. The most important factors of *bola* are that there are no monetary transactions for labor and female participation is greater than male, especially in rice planting. The traditional *Newari* meal of buffalo meat and home-made liquor, *thon* (rice-beer), is served by the recipient farmer during a *bola* workday. There are two main aspects to their farming life: one is related to their economy, the other is related to their cultural values supported by the traditional caste system and *Newari Guthi* (social structure). There are mainly two *Newar* peasant groups in the village, namely *Maharjan* and *Rajbahak*. Both groups believe in Hinduism and Buddhism and apply the same *Newari* cultural practices, but they cannot make marital relationships with each other according to their own social rank system. However, when working within the reciprocal labor exchange system *bola*, there is no conflict among them. Historical evidence proves that *Jyapu* are farmer groups of *Newar* and one of the Indigenous Nationalities in Nepal who are native to Kathmandu Valley, and are very efficient at preserving their cultural identity. The *Newar* are the sixth largest population group in Nepal, but there is no exact figure of *Jyapu* even though they remain the majority of the *Newar*. *Newars* are not only preserving an historical, cultural identity but also leading commercial and industrial roles in the country.

In this study I will try to explain why the old labor-use system of *bola* prevails while, according to available literature, it is disappearing in other villages where modernity is rapidly increasing. It is a fact that the system is still relevant and looks very healthy in Manamaiju village. It interweaves social harmony and the trust of local knowledge while resisting modern techniques. In this respect, my main query is to explore the significance of *bola* to show its present day applicability to the rest of world, especially to indigenous agricultural peoples. A Norwegian reader of this research paper will recognize it as a *dugnad*.

1.2 Problem Identification:

This study concerns Nepalese agriculture and the local knowledge of indigenous people. In the village of Manamaiju, farming is the major occupation of the *Newar* peasants. Rice is their main food crop and it is cultivated yearly. The dependency on the monsoons for the rice plantation and planting is crucial, as is the extra manpower needed from their locality in addition to family members during the period of planting and harvesting. *Newar* peasants do not believe in paid labor within their own ethnic group and community, and they can only serve other higher caste groups in the locality, such as *Brahmin* and *Chhetri*. This situation shows that without *bola*, their rice farming would be problematic. On the one hand, they cannot easily pay for labor, and on the other, they have strong traditional values. That is why they apply the reciprocal labor exchange system *bola*. More over, *bola* is based on their traditional values and social commitment. Yet the identical system of *parma* is disappearing continuously from the non-*Newar* groups in the vicinity of the village. From an economic point of view *bola* is not necessarily cheaper than paid labor; this is due to costs of the food and drink served to *bola* workers. For example, suppose there is a land of four *Ropanis* (approx. 0.5 Acres), it needs a working group of around 30-40 persons for one particular day of rice planting. Most of the workers will be *Newar* and they require a meal of either cooked rice or *chiura* (beaten-rice) with meat and cereals (beans or peas) as well as consuming the home made liquor *thon* (rice-beer), three to four times a day during the working day. It is expected that the cost of providing this would be more than the cost of labor from the locality. However, there is no burden of cash outlays, except the purchase of meat, as they consume their own home made *thon* and reserved foodstuffs. This shows a glimpse of simple peasantry life, but from an anthropological point of view there must also be many significant cultural aspects to consider for the *Newar* to continue their practice of *bola*. My query relates to

finding out which circumstances and in which manner this kind of reciprocal labor exchange is so important in Manamaiju village?

The reciprocal labor exchange system of *bola* is on the whole undocumented for this village. However, according to Hiroshi Ishiee (1987), this type of system collapsed in one of the *Jyapu* villages near Manamaiju in the Kathmandu District around three decades ago. Today's practice of *bola* shows one aspect of controversial ideology when compared to that historical event. Clearly, I would say *bola* has hidden treasures of social and cultural value that should be explored and emphasized. I can ask myself; why are these peasants still applying this old mutual labor exchange system in contrast to market-oriented economy? How is the system regulated? Is it an 'inalienable possession', (Weiner, 1992) in their social life? These are my main queries in this study. (Weiner's use of the term 'inalienable possession' means 'mutually exclusive')

The government indicates the scientific techniques to be used for intensive farming purposes, but the rural peasant farmers cannot afford it easily and they are hesitant to apply them. They believe that the nature of scientific technology is unpredictable and uncertain, whereas tradition is more predictable and certain in achieving their goals. There are only about 200 households of *Maharjans* and *Rajbahaks* and a couple of other caste groups in Manamaiju village. Their main occupation is subsistence agriculture where there is no irrigation facility, only dependency on annual rains. The whole area of land is very fertile and the weather is particularly favorable for growing high yielding crops. There is no doubt over the peasants' efficiency in maintaining the land for farming. For example some of the *Jyapu* peasants have owned or rented land from other caste groups on the basis of a crop sharing system with landlords for many generations. Legally, there is full acceptance of multi-cultural values and complete social inclusion. However, exceptional cases of social exclusion can be seen in the village even among their own ethnic sub-groups. For example, *Maharjan* do not accept boiled rice from *Rajbahak* homes, and neither of these ethnic sub-groups accepts water from *Khadgi* in the same locality. Although open market policies and mass information technology is available to them, it looks as though they are far from the access of such modern facilities and are fully dependant on the system of *bola*.

There are three main reasons behind my motivation to study the *Jyapu* sub-caste and *Newar* from Manamaiju village. As a government service holder, I became interested when I read a

thesis paper from the Social Science and Anthropology Department, Tribhuvan University, Nepal, where the author, Govinda Bahadur Shrestha (2001), clearly pointed out the need for governmental and non-governmental organizations to preserve *Jyapu* cultural identity. Secondly, as a master's student of Indigenous Studies at the University of Tromsø, Norway, and in my capacity as a NORAD scholar, I know it is important to investigate the villages in Kathmandu Valley where urbanization processes are destroying ancient village practices. Fortunately, Manamaiju village has preserved this old tradition. I want to explore why they continue to be successful. Thirdly, this village has a childhood relationship to me as my mother comes from Manamaiju village. Although I am from the *Bhahmin* caste, not *Newar*, I have an attachment to the *Newar* people and a great respect for their farming system. My maternal uncles still live near this *Jyapu* village and they are renting out farming land to *Jyapu* ethnic groups for a 50% share in the crop. These are my reasons for the selection of this village and the exploration of their contemporary use of *bola* which I believe is an important scientific discourse for the indigenous people's resource management aspect?

Research Questions:

Q.1. What is the meaning of *bola* and how is it functioning in Manamaiju village?

Q.2. Why is the *bola* system still important in this village and what are the significant factors of it?

1.3 The Methodology and the Limitation of the Study

The field study ran from mid- June to the last week of August, 2005. During this period I incorporated two methods of primary data collection. One was qualitative and the other quantitative. In the qualitative method, I used observation, interviews and conversations. I selected four local *Jyapu* households who apply the *bola* system, as key informants. Additionally, I included the views, expressions, and expectations of various other *Newar* peasants with different occupations in this process. I visited a rice field where peasants were busy rice planting so I could observe their *bola* system in action and I had a series of conversations with them. I also visited the local authority office and interviewed various other local non-*Newar* groups to explore and gain more information to cross check the ideologies of the system.

In relation to the quantitative data, I carried out a household census of a small section of the village to gain additional information of the *bola* system. This information contributes a supplementary part of my thesis. For this task, I selected Ward No. 7 which in August 2005, integrated four different localities and contained 72 households. I used the national voter list, as prepared by the Election Commission of Nepal, for the preliminary basic data. The household number, location, and persons' names, ages and so on are included in the list provided by the village authority. Visiting all the households and completing all the questionnaires were the basic part of this method. The questionnaires (Appendix: VI-B) shows asks for a variety of information, but I only used its relevant part for the quantitative outlook of the *bola* system in the course of data analysis. In addition, I consulted several public libraries and organizations for publications and documents in the course of secondary data collection. However, this study was limited by available time, costs and specific thesis context.

1.4 Organization of the study

I present six main chapters and a number of sub-chapters of the study. Chapter II is devoted to the general introduction of the *Newar* as a whole. The *Newar*'s historical relationship with the Kathmandu Valley, and their major social and cultural aspects, are important facts to know before entering my social setting and their cultural atmosphere. It also highlights *Jyapu* and their *bola* system. The sociology of reciprocal farm labor among peasants and indigenous agriculturalists is the theoretical background for the study discussed in Chapter III. It puts forward the guidelines for the particular area and the context of *bola*. Chapter IV provides detailed information on Manamaiju village, including its ecology, economic, social and cultural aspects relating to the *bola* system based on my collected information. Chapter V is devoted to the *bola* system in Manamaiju village. It explores the system and its significant factors based on observation and quantitative aspects in the present day context. Chapter VI encapsulates this study drawing a conclusion based on the results and discussion.

Chapter II: The *Newar* of Nepal: Society and Culture

2.1 Short Introduction

In his '*Dibya Upadesh*', an holistic guidance for nation building and foreign affairs, the late King Prithvi Narayan Shah, founder of the modern kingdom of Nepal, imagined Nepal as a common garden of four *Varnas* (races) and 36 *Jats* (castes). When he conquered Kathmandu Valley in 1769, it was dominated by the indigenous *Newari*, people of the ethnic group *Newar*. In the process of national unification a number of priests, warriors and advisory persons called *Pahadiya*, entered Kathmandu Valley with the king and started to introduce their *Khas* (Nepali) language inspired by Sanskrit and Hinduism. This process began the cultural assimilation of the *Newar* with other groups. The total population of Kathmandu Valley is now estimated to be around 1.6 million (2001), the majority of them being *Newar*. They believe in both Hinduism and Buddhism. The whole Nepalese social structure is based on Hindu rules including the *Newar* who, in addition, maintain a separate caste structure based on their traditional job descriptions. This creates the upper and lower class division among them. However, the *Newar* cultural identities have a long historical value in Kathmandu Valley. Their incredible and lovely arts and sculptures can be seen in the temples, palaces, stupas and shrines all over Kathmandu Valley. In addition, *Newar* cultural heritage extends all over the world. In this chapter I introduce the *Newar* of Kathmandu Valley pertaining to the districts Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, their social and cultural aspect along with *Jyapu*, a major rural population group who are successfully maintaining *Newari* tradition. It has a close relationship with my study village.

In general, Nepal is known as a country of multi-ethnic and multi-caste groups and cultures of which *Newar* is one. The *Newar* society looks more compact than others with houses attached to each other. The urban *Newar* are mostly educated and commerce and business have become their main occupations. That is why they are more capable of going abroad in order to gain higher education. For example, *Malla*, *Shrestha*, *Pradhan*, *Shakya*, *Bajracharya*, *Tuladhar* and others are well-recognized *Newar* clans. Additionally, outside of Kathmandu Valley, other *Newar* settlements can be seen. For example, the *Ilam*, *Dhankuta* and *Palpa* are typically settled in the most renowned hilly areas thus adding to their rich cultural identity. The *Newar* are interlinked with the *Guthi* system, a powerful social structure organised to

maintain their traditional and cultural values. Their *bola* system is a traditional labor use system which is equally valuable to their economic and cultural life. The *Newari* food and their cultural entities have numerous opportunities within the development of national tourism today.

2.2 The Newar: An Indigenous Nationality

Nepal's total area is approximately 147,181 km² and is divided into three major ecological belts, Mountains (Himalayas), Hills and *Terai* (plain). The distribution of different ethnic groups or indigenous nationalities varies in the presence of high mountains, turbulent rivers and dense forests. The mountain region is the ancestral homeland of such indigenous ethnic groups as *Sherpas*, *Thakalis*, *Lepchas*, and *Bhotes* to name a few. Likewise, *Tamangs*, *Magars*, *Gurungs*, *Newars*, *Rais*, *Limbus*, *Chepangs*, *Kusunda* and others are found in the hill regions. The *Terai* regions are dominated by groups including *Tharus*, *Majhis*, *Danuvars*, *Rajbansis* and *Meches*. (Landor: 1905:52, Gurung 1973:25-33, Tamang 2054 BS and Tamang, 2000:5). The population trend of Kathmandu Valley shows non-Newar people like *Brahmin*, *Chhetri*, *Magar*, *Gurung*, *Tamang*, *Sherpa*, *Rai-Limbu (Kiratis)* and others are migrating from the different ecological belts of country in large numbers.

On the back ground of the multi-cultural national identity, the indigenous languages and cultural values are addressed by the political system. For example, I would like to include here a ministerial statement which was published in a daily newspaper as follows:

"KATHMANDU, Oct 29 - Minister for Local Development Khadga Bahadur GC on Saturday said that the sovereignty and independence of the country would be preserved only if the indigenous languages and cultures were preserved properly."¹

The above message also refers to the *Newari* language and cultural values in this respect. Further more, there are no clear and effective legal measures to protect indigenous people's rights in Nepal such as the ILO Convention No. 169. Nepal has not yet ratified it. There are no lands and resource claims issues of indigenous peoples in Nepal such as there are in Norway. The preservation of distinct cultural identity by equal religious treatment, increased

¹ 'The Kathmandu Post' posted on 29/10/2005
(<http://www.kantipuronline.com/Kolnews.php?&nid=55801>, 30/10/2005)

representation of indigenous nationalities in national politics and administration level and whole development processes are the main issues in Nepal today. In this regard, the government launched a legal act entitled, “National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities Act, 2058”, (NFDIN), which commenced on the 7th February, 2002. According to the act, the definition of indigenous nationalities is: “a tribe or community as mentioned in the Schedule (see the Appendix 1) having its own mother language and traditional rites and customs, distinct cultural identity, distinct social structure and written or unwritten history” (NFDIN, 2003, p32). The objectives are stated as being: “(a) to make overall development of the indigenous nationalities by formulating and implementing the programs relating to the social, educational, economic and cultural development and upliftment of indigenous nationalities, (b) to preserve and promote the language, script, culture, literature, arts, history of the indigenous nationalities, (c) to preserve and promote the traditional knowledge, skill, technology and special knowledge of the indigenous nationalities and to provide assistance in its vocational use, (d) to cause the indigenous nationalities to be participating in the mainstream of overall national development of the country by maintaining a good relation, goodwill, and harmony between different indigenous nationalities, castes, tribes and communities, (e) to provide assistance in building an equitable society by making social, economic, religious and cultural development and upliftment of indigenous nationalities.” (*Ibid*, p: 34). The foundation was established one year later in Kathmandu Valley and implemented the rules from 2005 by the provision of the act. The Prime Minister is the chairman of the Governing Council of the foundation which has recognized a total 59 Indigenous Nationalities (*ibid*, p7) including the *Newar*.

The census of 2001 records about 37.2% of the total population as indigenous nationalities, but NFDIN claims it should be as much as 42% on the basis of those categorized as ‘Others’-unidentified population groups from the census list. Additionally, one other autonomous organization working in this field, Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) has a network of 59 indigenous member organizations from all over the country including the *Newar*.

2.3 The History of *Newar* in Kathmandu Valley

The history of *Newar* has a close relationship with Kathmandu Valley, but there is no confirmed date of their arrival in the Kathmandu Valley. Their historical, magnificent art and culture contributed to the Kathmandu Valley being included in the UNESCO world heritage list in 1979. Regarding different writers' views of its history, Shepard writes "There has been speculation as to where the *Newar* came from since the earliest Western travelers entered Nepal." (Shepard, '85:35-36). One hypothesis is that they are simply the aboriginal people of Kathmandu Valley, (Furer-Haimendorf, 1956). Another proposition, based on the *Newar* foundation myth for the Kathmandu Valley and the ethno-linguistic evidence of *Newari*, classed as a Tibeto-Burman language, considers early *Newars* to be immigrants from the north (Hodgson 1971; Levi 1905). Still another hypothesis, based upon *Newar* clan names which can be traced back to ancient India, places *Newars* as the descendants of ancient Indo-Aryan immigrants from the south (Nepali, 1965). Another writer, Chattopadhyay (1980:3) refers to Colonel (1811) when stating; "The *Newars* are the earlier people, and as already mentioned, the chief inhabitants of the valley. To them are almost wholly confined metal working, agriculture, painting, architecture, sculpture and the literature that Nepal possesses." A Nepalese socialist, Janak Lal Sharma, refers to Jorg Griarsan as saying "*Newars* were the pre-rulers of Nepal whose prime location was Kathmandu Valley before the *Gorkhas* conquest the valley" (Sharma, 2039:298). Further more, Whelpton says, "The language and culture of particular groups have been shaped by influences both from the north and the south. The prime example is the *Newars* of Kathmandu Valley, who speak a Tibeto-Burman language, but this urban civilization in many ways reflects that of Hindu India before the Muslim conquests."(Whelpton, 2005:3-4). On the base of these historical logics and statements we can say the *Newar* are an indigenous people whose cultural identity has their influence from Tibet and India.

According to folklore, the whole Kathmandu Valley was a lake covered by water until early 3rd or 4th century AD. At that time, the Buddhist god *Manjushree* cut the hill with his holy sword and drew away the water from the valley to the south and allowed *Newar* to settle here. An interesting fact is that the geological evidence shows an ancient lakebed which provides a justification for the high fertility soil of Kathmandu Valley. In relation to archaeological

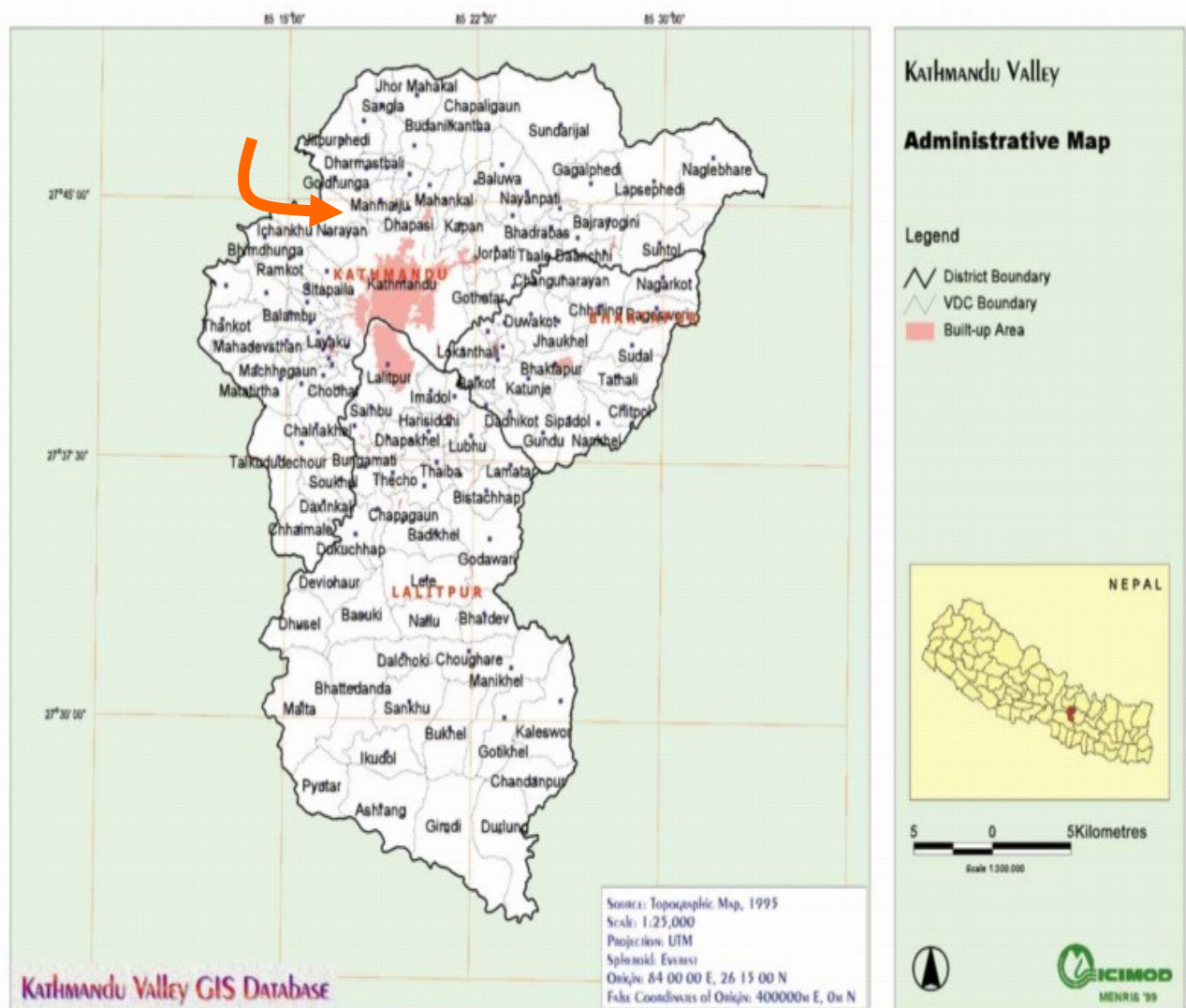
facts, the earliest record of *Newar* has been dated to the *Lichavi* Dynasty from 5th century AD. It was ruled continuously for approximately 600 years followed by the *Malla* Dynasty from the 12th century and ended in 1769. The first *Newari* language (*Nepal Bhasa*) inscriptions were found in the ancient manuscript *Nidan*, dated 901 AD, and on a stone tablet from 1173 AD located in the courtyard of Bajrayogini Temple at Sankhu in Kathmandu.² This historical evidence attests to the deep roots of *Newar* culture in Kathmandu Valley. For instance, Asia's hallmark pagoda architecture, *Thangka* paintings, sculptures and metal craftsmanship are world-renowned for their glory. Moreover, the fine temples and palaces of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur are the fabulous creation of *Newar* architects, artisans, and sculptors.³

The geographical features of Kathmandu Valley show a moderate climatic belt, the elevation varies from 1372-2732 meters above sea level and residential areas are surrounded by hills. The farms are situated on flat and hilly ground including some on terraced land. The land, *bagmati*, and its 8 branch riverbeds are especially fertile for rice farming. The following administrative map of Kathmandu Valley includes all its villages and towns including Manamaiju village. The village is indicated by an arrow on the following map.

² This information is based on the Internet web page <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newar>, p: 1.

³ *Ibid*

Map 1: Administrative Map of Kathmandu Valley by Village Development Committees including Manamaiju village



Source: http://www.gisdaynepal.com.np/Maps/MapCatalog/NepalMaps/KValley/Administrative/Map_15.jpg

2.4 Newari Castes and Social Groups

As a whole, the Nepalese peoples' collective identity can be structured at least three ways: 1) On the basis of 'Hindu Barnashastra' –*Brahmin, Kshetriya, Vaishya and Sudra*; 2) Ethnic groups who have their own mother tongue and cultural identities; 3) Others who have different religious beliefs.⁴ According to these categories, *Newar's* identity can be classified the second way. The Nepalese caste system looks a little controversial when trying to clearly

⁴ From Internet source article "Untouchability How Long Will It Prevail?", B.K. Rana <http://nipforum.org/untouchability.doc> - Microsoft Internet Explorer

identify all the social groups. The *Newar*'s majority is in Kathmandu Valley. They believe in both Hinduism and Buddhism. According to the 2001 census, there were 80.6% Hindu, 10.7% Buddhists and the rest were of other religions making up the total population of the country which stood at 23.2 million. It is not possible to determine how many *Newari* castes belong to Hinduism and how many to Buddhism. It is believed that the domination of Hinduism is increasing over Kathmandu Valley which has a long historical influence of 'Sanskritization' (adoption of Hindu rituals). It led to them into a unique syncretism tradition (Chattopadhyay, 1980:4). Their religious toleration can be seen by the presence of both religious priests in the same particular ritual work. The *Bajracharya* is a priest for *Newari* Buddhists and *Deubhaju* is a priest for their Hindu society (Sharma, 1982:299).

The census of 2001 also identifies a total of 101 caste and/or ethnic groups inside the country where *Newar* make up 1/6 portion of the total population. The registered total figure is 1,245,232 (5.48%).

The *Newars* have their own separate social hierarchical structure in the same society where Hindu caste hierarchy is already in practice. It seems the caste hierarchical system of *Newar* has a symbolic and moral value system to maintain their deep rooted culture and to define their identity (Parish'96:25). The coexistence of different castes and different cultures is itself a distinct characteristic of Nepalese society. The Nepalese caste system can be seen in the following two ways:

The Caste Hierarchy of Former Law Code (*Muluki Ain*), 1854:

Actually, the first written Law Code, *Muluki Ain*, was introduced in 1854 A.D. It outlined the whole Nepalese social hierarchy based on traditional Hinduism and legalized it with the interest of social integration (Ødegaard, 1997:9, Lie, 1999:25). The caste system was already established in the *Lichavi* Dynasty, and Nepalese social structure was divided into '*Char Varna chhattis Jaats*' (Four races and thirty-six castes)⁵. The *Newar* castes were incorporated within the Law Code. Indeed, it was a social discriminatory model at that time because it classified the Nepalese social castes according to purity and impurity, (Ødegaard, 1997:8). At the same time, the degree of punishment was charged on the basis of caste hierarchy.

⁵ Jagadish Chandra Regmi, 2036 BS (1979): 'Nepal ko baidhanik parampara' (Nepalese Constitutional Systems) Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal; p.53

According to the Law Code, the castes were classified into five levels (Appendix II). The top three of them remain 'Pure' while the last two levels 'Impure'. There was legal discriminatory sanction for social exclusion in the name of 'Pure' and 'Impure' groups. This law was active for more than a hundred years, until 1963. After this year it was abolished and another introduced, the New Law Code *Naya Mulki Ain, 2020 BS*. Today this traditional caste system still dominates urban and village societies of Nepal due to its enduring sanction. I refer here to the table of Appendix II, where Benedicte Lie (1999) has compiled and distinguished the *Newar* castes from *Parbatiya* and other ethnic groups according to the old Law Code. The caste hierarchal system is ambivalent to cover all Nepalese people on the one hand, yet on the other hand it complicates the process of social change and development in relation to the present scientific world.

The *Newar* caste system according to hierarchical position (Appendix III)

The *Newars* have their own caste hierarchy which was introduced in Kathmandu Valley in the period of King Jayasthiti Malla (1354-1395 AD). It was also supported by the Hindu four *Varnas* system, *Brahmins* (the priests), *Kshatriyas* (the warriors), *Vaishyas* (the merchants) and *Sudras* (the servants), (Prabhavananda and Isherwood, 1944:85). The main characteristic of this hierarchy was the classification of *Newari* castes and sub-castes in relation to different professional jobs according to the *Varna* system, for example, from *Deo Brahman* (Priests) to *Chyame* (Sweeper). The findings of the historian Regmi show that Jayasthiti Malla broke down the *Newar* into 36 different castes groups and also validated 13 castes for *Tagadhari* (wearers of holy cord), (Shrestha, 2058 BS: 3). According to the king, the job classifications for *Newar* were for example, *Jyapu* (farmer), *Khadgi* (butcher), *Rajkarnikar* (confectioner), *Vajracharya* (Buddhist priest), *Tuladhar* (weigher craftsmen) *Tamrakar* (copper craftsmen), *Manandhar* (oil presser), *Shakya* (goldsmiths), *Ranjitkar* (dye related workers), *Nakarmi* (blacksmiths), *Kulu* (drum-maker), *Chyame* (sweeper), *Joshi* (astrologer), *Chitrakar* (painter), *Napita* (Barber), *Silpikara* (artisan), *Vyanjanakara* (cooks), *Dhobi* (washerman), *Mali* (gardener) and others. (Wikipedia –The *Newar*, p1-2, Chattopadhyay, 1980:116-118). Interestingly, the above information indicates that most *Newar* today are still holding their traditional jobs from previous same-caste members.

Appendix III (Gurung, 2000:38)⁶ shows there are five major levels of *Newari* castes, *Jat*, and within them several *thars* (family names). The *thar* of every person reflects his or her caste identity in every locality. The top four levels are respectable. In other words, all Level I-IV categorized castes and *thar* holders belong to ‘water acceptable’ *Jats* (or *Lah Chale Jyupim* in *Newari*) in their society. But those who belong to Level V, either ‘touchable’ or ‘untouchable’ are ‘water unacceptable *Jat*’. For example, *Khadgi* of Manamaiju village belong to this group their traditional work is as ‘butcher’ in the village.

2.5 Cultural Aspects of the *Newar*

Besides the caste system, another important aspect of the *Newar* community is the *Guthi* system. Everyone is bound to this system by birth. There are various types of *Guthis* in their society which regulate and maintain their social norms and disciplines. Commonly, there are three types of *Guthis*, namely, *Sana-guthi*, *Si-guthi* and *Dewali* or *Dhou-guthi*. The *Dhou-guthi* is related to religious worshipping and feasting in temples or other religious spots. The *Sana-guthi* and *Si-guthi* are closely related to the death and funeral processes. The *Si-guthi* has the responsibility to carry the dead body to the funeral place and set it alight. The *Sana-guthi* arranges the relevant materials for the funeral process and goes with *Si-guthi* to offer further assistance. The *Guthis* are permanently bound and the eldest person is elected as leader, *Thakali*, who directs and manages the *Guthi*. If a female *Thakali* is elected then she is called *Thakali Nakin* (Sharma, 2039 BS: 300).

In general, the traditional houses of *Newar* locality are attached to each other. The old houses are made of raw bricks with muddy joints of bamboo and wood. The height of the houses in a traditional *Newar* settlement indicates their ranks and *Jat* identities. For example, in Manamaiju, all the *Maharjan* houses are higher than *Rajbahak*. In rural areas 2-4 storied houses are very common, (Sharma: 301). Their marriage system is based on their own *Jats* and *Thars*, and the bride or groom is decided on by the nearest *Newari* village of Kathmandu Valley.

One outsider’s view about the *Newar* of Kathmandu Valley, Lie, states with reference to Løwdin (1986), that “The *Newars* are proud of their culture and tend to think of themselves as

⁶ It has been prepared through the contribution of the writers Nepali (1965) and Gellner (1995)

being true culture bearers of Nepal, referring to the development of crafts, the cities, and the complicated network of kin and *Guthi* relationships. They form a highly self aware group, with many distinct traditions that mark them off from other ethnic groups and peoples.” (Lie’99:29). Further more, a comparative study of the Nepal Human Development Report (2004) prepared by UNDP for indigenous groups of Nepal, highlights the *Newar* hold second top position as legislators, senior officials, managers and professionals after the *Thakali* people, but first position as technicians, associate professionals, clerks and office assistants. In comparison, the *Brahmins* hold the top most position of all.⁷ It proves that the *Newar* has a strong social and cultural position in comparison to other indigenous groups in Nepal. But one thing is clear; the top *Newar* position hardly be represented for the *Jyapu* who live in the rural areas suffering from vicious cycles of poverty.

The *Newar*’s mother tongue - *Newari* (*Nepalbhasa*)

In the whole national context 92 different mother tongues were identified by the census of 2001. *Newari* (*Nepalbhasa*) speakers made up 3.39% of the total population. The reality is that most *Newar* also use *Nepali*, but very few of them can write their original script which is based on Tibeto-Burman language (Løwdin ’86:7, Lie ’99:30). Outside the Kathmandu Valley other *Newar* speak *Newari* but with dialectic variances. According to the history of language, *Lichavi* rulers used *Sanskrit* in their inscriptions so this influence is not a novelty for them. After *Lichavi*, the *Malla* period accepted *Newari* as a literary language with its own characters due to patronization of Buddhism. When the *Shah* King, Prithvi Narayan, conquered the Kathmandu Valley, *Sanskrit*, *Nepali* and other foreign languages began to influence *Newari*.

There is also historical evidence of *Newar* cultural expansion into Tibet. Chhattopadhaya (1980) illustrates as saying “The evidence from metal-working, carpentry and the related arts is indecisive. It is indeed true that the cleverest smiths in Tibet are the *Newars* who have gone there; further, that the Tibetans are clumsy carpenters and jewelers”⁸ (Chhattopadhaya, 1980:24).

⁷ [Http://www.un.org.np/pdf/nhdr2004/anex4.pdf](http://www.un.org.np/pdf/nhdr2004/anex4.pdf) (table 12 p.5)

⁸ Hue: Travels in Tartary, Thibet and China 1844-6. (Translated by Hazlitt), London (no date), Chap. V.

The actual name given of the *Newars* in Lhasa, by Hue is *Peboun*. Levi rightly (ibid, Vol. I, p. 307) concludes that the reference is to the *Newars*. This point is settled by Tysbikoff’s statement that the *Newars* are the

Music, Dance, Food and Dress of the Newar

Newari traditional music is maintained by a kind of ‘music *guthi*’ who also perform traditional dances on very special occasions and at festivals. Sometimes they perform traditional love songs, mask dances, satirical performances from the period of *Jatra*. The *Newari* identity with its food is also a significant part of their cultural life. For example, the varieties of buffalo meat, home made wine made from rice or millet, *thon* and *ayela* respectively, *baji* (bitten rice); *dhau* (curd), and different types of beans and peas are so familiar. The *Newari* restaurants are very popular in Kathmandu Valley because of their hygiene, service and delicious food. There are a lot of foods with symbolic meaning connected to rituals and myths. For example, *yomari*, rice bread steamed in various shapes, such as people and animals, is served specially on a day of *Yomaripunhi* which falls on the full moon when farmers finish the harvesting new rice crops in October. Its symbolic meaning has a relationship with the god of wealth *Kuber*⁹.

In Bhaktapur some *Newar* are in still engaged in the weaving, carving and preparing of the cloths for their traditional dress. For example, the *Haku-patasi* is a famous traditional women’s dress in the *Newar* ethnicity.

Newari Festivals and Rituals

“*Parbate bigre mojle, Newar bigre bhojle*”

This is a very common proverb in Nepalese society. It means “*Parbate (Brahmin-Chhetriya)* are ruined by participating in amusements (sexual activities) and the *Newar* by conducting numerous feasts”. Most of the *Newari* festivals look like synonyms of varieties of feasts. *Newari* culture is very closely linked to the ceremonies and rituals of the year. Most festivals are tied to Hindu holidays, to Buddha’s birth and to the harvest cycle of food crops. For example, *Gunhu Puni* is celebrated continuously for nine days and it starts with food offered to frogs in the farmer’s fields on the first day. On the second day, people who have lost a family member in the preceding year, dress up as cows called *Gai-jatra* and parade through

cleverest dyers and smiths in Lhasa and that these Baudhas are called Ba (1) bo in distinction from the Gurkhas of Nepal.

⁹ Food items and its social and ritual significance is to be found in detail in the following web page:

<http://web.telia.com/~u18515267/Appendix1.htm>

town. It is believed that the cow helps souls enter heaven. And on the last day, called *Shree Krishnastami* - the birthday of lord *Krishna*, an incarnation of lord *Vishnu* is held. The Buddhist *Newar* especially believe in *Kumari*, a living goddess in Kathmandu Valley. Worshipping *Kumari* and *Bhairab* in the period of *Yanya Punhi* or *Indra-jatra*, invites the dedication of the Hindu god king of heaven and the god of rain. Another important festival is *Buddha Jayanti*, the birth day of Lord Buddha, meaning “Festival of Peace”. The *Dashain* and *Tihar (Deepawali)* are national festivals belonging to them as well. During the *Tihar*, the *Newar* separately celebrate New Year, called *Nepal Sambat*.

There are many rituals concerning the stages of life from birth, first rice-feeding, childhood, puberty, marriage, seniority and eventually death. It is very complex to explain the nature of these rituals in this short writing. For example, the *Barha* ceremony is related to the 11 days separation of a virgin girl from all male family members at the stage of “menarche”¹⁰. Menstruation is considered impure so before menstruation begins the girls are separated from all males and sunlight as well. Only on the 12th day must the girls pay homage to the sun. In this ceremony many relatives gather to handover presents to the girls and finalize the ceremony with by feasting. To show the elderly family members respect, they have the ritual *Janku*. It is performed between the ages of 77 and 106 and there are only five rituals for *Janku*.¹⁰ In worshipping the living goddess *Kumari*, the virgin goddess, a prepubescent girl is selected by the *Newar* home of Buddhists (*Shakya* caste)¹¹. This is one of most important religious rituals in Kathmandu Valley.

2.6 General Overview of the *Jyapu (Newar)*

I would like to include some historical and descriptive information about the *Jyapu* as a sub-caste of *Newar*¹². They are known as peasant groups whose way of life is very much interconnected with mud in Kathmandu Valley (Sharma, '52 BS p.29). The ‘*Jyapoos*’ are a hard working people and efficient farmers, (Dwivedi, 1976:123). Parish says “A ‘*Jyapu*’ is a member of the farming caste who make up a majority of Bhaktapur’s inhabitants” (Parish, '96:25). Poonam cites the *Jyapu* has the majority population in Patan- Lalitpur. In

¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newar> (p.2)

¹¹ <http://web.telia.com/~u18515267/CHAPTERII.htm> (p.9)

¹² From the article “Villagers of the Valley” by Anup Pahari, published in a journal: HIMAL. Jan/Feb, 1992

Kathmandu District there are also several *Jyapu* villages. Hence, in some places it is called *Jyapu* and in others, *Jyapoo*, but in my further writings it will be referred to as *Jyapu*.

In *Newari*, *Jya* means ‘work’ and *Pu* means ‘comprehensiveness’. This shows the *Jyapu* is not a person, but an occupation (Govinda, 2001:5). In Hamilton’s Account (1819) it is said that they are cultivators of own land using the hoe, their women spin and weave (Chhattopadhyay, ’80:62). This shows historical evidence of the *Jyapu* women’s involvement in cottage industry during that period. It is said that Jaystithi Malla broke down the *Jyapu* as a class of hard workers classified into 32 sub-castes groups. This kind of classification of a caste system increased the social discriminatory acts upon the upper and lower classes.¹³ By this fact, inside the *Jyapu* groups there are different sub-castes, *Thars* such as *Maharjan*, *Dangol*, *Suwal*, *Kumhal*, *Pahari*, *Singh*, *Duwal*, *Awal*, *Koju*, *Saiju*, *Bhail*, *Bataju*, *Dhwanju* and *Makaju* (Sharma, BS 2032:30). It is also said that *Suwal* serve in the capacity of menials, and in the worship of *Matsyendranatha* (*Ibid*, p: 89) who is believed to be a god of rain and has a strong connection with the great festival of Lalitpur called *Bhoto-jatra*. This day is celebrated as a public holiday in Kathmandu Valley. According to Oldfield’s Account (1880) and Hodgson’s Account (early 1880), Oldfield says “Japu as cultivators; the Newari synonyms are Bali and Doka-Kawmi high castes.” Another historian, Hudgson, says “Jopu as next to the Bangras among Buddha margis pure, are these. They were originally all cultivators, but some have now become traders and porters.”(*Ibid*, p: 101). These expressions reflect the *Jyapu*’s identity and their occupations from an historical point of view.

According to the Nepalese caste system, the *Jyapu* remain as *Sudras* (laborers), (Bista, 1992), and from another point of view they remain as *Matwali* (*thon* or liquor user) (Tamang, ‘2000:28).¹⁴ The *Jyapu* are *Namasinya Matawali* (Appendix II) by birth and they prepare *thon* not only for domestic use, but also for offerings to the gods and goddesses as well as guests at special ceremonies and occasionally to children. For example, during rice planting it is compulsory to serve *thon* to the laborers. From the holistic point of view, their “castes are made up of *phukis* (patrilineage); *phukis* are made up of households; and, all households have affines and are affines themselves in relation to other households — if not in the present,

¹³ Devi Prasad Sharma Kandel, 2047 BS (1990) ‘Aadhunik Nepal ko Itihas’ (Nepali) Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu, Nepal; p.568

¹⁴ “The current socio-economic status of untouchables in Nepal” in occasional papers in Sociology and Anthropology, Vol. 4 (1994); T.U., Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal.

then in a past generation. Furthermore, the members of the *guthis* are householders.¹⁵ Every Jyapu household is inter-connected with *Guthi*, as a religious association for them and they speak *Newari* (*Newa Bhaye* in *Newari*). Most *Jatras* (festivals) are conducted under the leadership of *Jyapu* (Sharma, BS 2032:30). The various types of *Jatras* are closely related to the peasants' life. From June-July between *Sithi Nakh* and *Gatha Muga*, a very special period, they do not perform any *Jatra* or music unless the rice plantation work is finished. On the day of *Sithi Nakh*, they clean all the water resources, common religious places and courtyards (Sharma, BS 2032:30). After completing the rice farming and until the day of *Gatha Muga*, they start to perform traditional music, songs and dances. They worship Lord Shiva as the God of dance, also called *Nas Dhou*. There should be a temple of *Bhairab* and *Ganesh* in their locality. They believe in *Aaju Dhou* (Ancestral God). They also celebrate the *Nag Panchami* (Festival of Mythical Serpent) as do other Hindus.

The formation of the traditional house and its stories has separate meanings in *Jyapu* localities. For example, the ground floor of the house is called *Chhindi* in which domestic animals and birds are kept as well as being used for general storage. The first floor is called *Matan* and is for living purposes, while the second floor, *Chot*, is used for the storage of foodstuffs as an open space for feasting. The top floor is called *Buingal* and is utilized as a kitchen and for religious practices. Another important aspect of their farming life is the hand-hoe (tool for digging) and *kharpana* (a pair of bamboo hanging baskets), both are to be found in every *Jyapu* home. The *Jyapu* culture respects women very much. For example the rice trans-planting work has been performed by female workers believing them to be a notion of *Laxmi* (Hindu deity of wealth and prosperity). Rice is also believed to be a notion of *Laxmi*.

2.7 The *Bola* or *Parma* System of the *Jyapu*

The terms *bola* and *parma* have the similar meaning of a reciprocal labor exchange system for agriculture. It is a traditional labor use system based on reciprocity. Nobody can answer exactly when it began. There is no written literature about it. However, I found some reference to it on the internet where it said “The farmers work their fields individually, family-wise, and sometimes, particularly during periods of high labor input, in *bola*, a form of labor exchange wherein the fields are worked in teams.”¹⁶ This expression also highlights the

¹⁵ <http://web.telia.com/~u18515267/CHAPTER I.htm>

¹⁶ <http://web.telia.com/~u18515267/CHAPTERII.htm> (p.12)

meaning and nature of *bola* for agricultural tasks in the base of labor exchange. This system is based on the requirement of farm labor during the peak hour of labor intensive, usually during rice plantation. The system follows the idea of reciprocity, that is, give and take. There is no monetary value for the exchanged labor in the system. It depends on the faith and trust of each of the farmers who maintain it, and its tradition to provide and serve a meal once and drinks several times on the workday.

It has been expressed that “The system of *Parma* in farming is when the family cannot manage all the work and we pay others to do the job. In other places the wages are about 50 Rupees¹⁷ but in our village we give only 20 Rupees or 1 *Pathi* (measurement) of food grain. If you have work but the others don’t, then we can pay back the ‘parma’ later also. Like we can finish our work and sometimes when they need it, I go and work for them.” Jay Singh (M/55, Nepal 13).¹⁸ This expression illustrates the *parma* system as being similar to *bola*. Here we establish the main point as being the obligation of labor exchange. Likewise, Messerschmidt (1981:43) states “Voluntary labor organization called *Nogyar* by the Gurungs, *Porima* by the Limbus and *Parma* by the caste groups are most ubiquitous in the Hills. It is basically a reciprocal labor exchange system used mostly during the peak agricultural season. The basis of recruitment includes neighborhood, gender, age, clan and moiety.”¹⁹ This expression says this type of system prevails in different names in different groups.

The foreign writer Hiroshi Ishiee from Japan has studied the Nepali culture in a village near Kathmandu Valley where the majority of peasants are *Jyapu*. They had once practiced the *bola* system, but during his study time in that village he found that the system had already collapsed. He has described two types of *bola* systems, one is *Samuhik bola* (participate/commune) and other is *Sanrachana rahit* (non-structural bola), (Ishie, BS 2044:72). This inspired me to think about the system and how is it running in Manamaiju village.

¹⁷ Nepalese rupees that equivalent approximately NRs10=1 NOK, and 1 Pathi=8 Mana (approximately 4 Kg)

¹⁸ http://www.mountainvoices.org/N_th_Community_Activieies.asp - 03.05.2005).

¹⁹ Depicted from Internet source from the site: (www.nepaldemocracy.org/institutions/traditional...).

Chapter III: The Sociology of Reciprocal Farm Labor among Peasants and Indigenous Agriculturalists

In this chapter I highlight the general aspects of reciprocal farm labor concepts with examples matching its interrelated social and cultural aspects in Manamaiju village.

Karl Polanyi wrote the following about the idea of reciprocity:

“Reciprocity is enormously facilitated by the institutional pattern of symmetry, a frequent feature of social organization among non-literate peoples. The striking “duality” which we find in tribal subdivisions lends itself to the pairing out of individual relations and thereby assists the give-and-take of goods and services in the absence of permanent records.” (Dalton, 1968:10)

This definition directly relates to my field study of *bola* in which labor has been exchanged on the basis of give and take in the course of rice farming. It is of interest to understand more clearly the reciprocal labor exchange practices in other parts of world. In some countries this practice only relates to agricultural activities, but in others it is related to both agricultural labor and other daily activities. For instance, in referring to a region in the Andes, Steve Froemming has cited the following with reference to Guillet²⁰:

“During peak periods, family labor is usually not sufficient and other forms must be recruited. If there is available manpower and necessary cash available, the contractual labor paid in cash will be recruited. Otherwise, exchange labor between individuals or households will generally be resorted to. If the manpower need is quite large or involves extremely tedious work...then more exchange labor would be needed than an individual or a household could reciprocate. If this is the case, the peasant has two options. The first is to contract labor and pay in kind...The second option is to invite individuals to a festive work party. This possibility is most feasible for an individual who has a large quantity of food and drink at his disposal together with some cash reserves if entertainment is expected. If sufficient labor cannot be recruited by any of these means then the peasant must cut back on the size of his operations” (Guillet 1980:155-156).

The above illustrates the peasants’ labor management techniques in relation to either paid labor or festive work party, both of which are to be tested against my *bola* system. Another example is taken from Kurdish practice where reciprocal labor exchange, known as *Zebari* or

²⁰ Gullet, David W. 1980 “Reciprocal Labor and Peripheral Capitalism in the Central Andes, *Ethnology* 19:151-167.

*Zebare*²¹, operates not only within farming circles, but also with daily activities such as animal husbandry, wedding preparation and other celebrations. This shows a broad use of labor exchange practice, and even though they are applying this system on the basis of reciprocity in the present context, it is an important aspect relating to my *bola* system. In addition to this, Fedric Barth has identified a reciprocal labor exchange system in Darfur²² (Firth, '67). This example is applied to millet farming and house constructing, the motivational factor being millet-beer. This inspires me to investigate the motivational factors behind *bola*.

I used the following questions as a guide to promote discussion on this in the coming chapters. 1. How has the *bola* system remained as a part of reciprocity? 2. Why is reciprocity practiced here in the Manamaiju village? 3. What are the characteristics of this system? 4. Is there any other alternative labor mechanism for rice farming in this village?

3.1 General Features of a Peasant Village in a Developing Country

Here I describe some general features of peasants' villages in developing countries like Nepal. In many parts of the world, villages are demarked into a number of wards or small units and the people of each ward acknowledge loyalty to their wards. In other words, the physical and social boundaries differentiate the various groups of people and among them; lineage plays a major role in formalizing the number of households in each village. The heads of the households in most villages are patriarchal descendants, that is, strictly through the males of a common ancestor (Shanin, '71 p.38). These households are interlinked by their existing social organizations. People's interpersonal relationships are developed by such factors as sex, age, kinship, occupation, and wealth. A key person or leader is selected in every lineage group on the basis of age, maturity and to whom the peasant groups show their respect and loyalty. The leader or key person of the village chairs the decision making process in most of their social spheres. In their world, it is believed that strictly following the traditions means to strongly maintain the culture. There are rare occurrences of adopting modified social values. The traditional peasant society has been guided towards economic self-sufficiency by mystical and

²¹ Information took from the subject of "reciprocal labor" through the 'Google' search engine (Internet).

²² From Fedric Barth's article "Economic Spheres in Darfur" published in Raymond Firth's edition given in references part.

magical patterns of thought²³ (*Ibid*, p.281). These may be related to the power of the gods and goddesses, ghosts or spirits of their ancestors. Therefore, they are more inclined to fulfill the social rituals rather than individual desires.

In this regard, my query is related to observing and exploring the extent the circumstances mentioned above relate to Manamaiju village. What social values are preserved in this village? What are the indicators of traditionalism or modernism that can be seen in the village? Are there any gender-biased issues? How do the villagers perceive the *bola* system within their social, cultural, economic and political thought? What are the basic cultural values which support the *bola* system in this village?

Historically, no foreign country has colonized Nepal, nor has Nepal faced any colonial or post-colonial policy interventions. In accordance to Nepalese agricultural studies, the global impact of ‘Green Revolution’ of the 1960’s, especially from India, started to influence Nepal slowly in the following years. With this in mind, I wanted to see how modern agricultural techniques have been applied and what their effects on traditional knowledge have been.

3.2 Relationship between Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and Reciprocal Labor Exchange

I consider the reciprocal farm labor exchange system and its practices as a form of indigenous knowledge (IK). Until a couple of decades ago, IK was thought of, by the western scientific world, to be an irrational and unscientific knowledge. From the 1970’s onward IK became recognized and accepted as part of the scientific discourse as a major role-player within the modern trends of development as Arun Agrawal illustrates by referring to Warren²⁴ (Agrawal, 1995:416):

“Indigenous knowledge is an important natural resource that can facilitate the development process in cost-effective, participatory, and sustainable ways (Vanek, 1989; Hansen and Erbaugh, 1987). Indigenous knowledge (IK) is local knowledge – knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. IK contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities. Such knowledge is passed down from

²³ Kazimierz Dobrowolski, “Peasant Traditional Culture”, *Ethnografia Polska*, Vol 1, 1958 pp19-56 translated by A.Waligorski.

²⁴ Warren, D.M. (1991) ‘Shifting Cultivators: Local Technical Knowledge and Natural Resource Management in the Humid Tropics’, *Community Forestry Note 8*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization

generation to generation, in many societies by word of mouth. Indigenous knowledge has value not only for the culture in which it evolves, but also for scientists and planners striving to improve conditions in rural localities". (Warren, 1991:1)

This clearly shows the importance of local knowledge and its broad applicability, but it is in contrast to western knowledge. Another important factor is that IK is the most basic asset of indigenous peoples because they have long successful tradition interlinked with natural phenomena. For instance, when we examine the Sami people of Norway, their cultural identity is reflected in reindeer herding and hunting. Hunting, fishing, gathering, agriculture and animal husbandry, herbal use and traditional healing, land fertility protection techniques, shelter construction and maintenance techniques, meteorological forecasting and sustainable use of natural resources are some of the important aspects of IK worldwide. In Manamaiju village specifically agriculture is the main aspect.

In addition to indigenous knowledge, there are success stories of reciprocal labor exchange in collaboration with scientific knowledge. It is said that "During the 1980's, researchers in multilateral and bilateral development agencies began to recognize the significance of indigenous knowledge for sustainable development, both for environmental conservation and technologies for agricultural productivity. For example, scientists in the CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) system began to value participatory technology development, using the traditional practices and indigenous knowledge of local populations as a starting point. The Centre for Indigenous Knowledge for Agriculture and Rural Development (CIKARD) has promoted indigenous knowledge systems as a critical resource base for development and the design of sustainable agricultural systems."²⁵ During the 1990's, a collaborative study of local knowledge and western agricultural science focused on a "value-based, context-specific and influenced by social relations of power"⁶. It has also highlighted the need for research to come to terms with contrasting sets of ideas, values, representations and performances in the local knowledge systems in order to meet the desired goals.²⁶ An important scientific aspect of this study is in finding out how suitable the *bola* system is when matching modern knowledge and market oriented tasks.

²⁵See "Science, Traditional Knowledge and Sustainable Development", prepared by The International Council for Science and the United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; ICSU Series on the Science for Sustainable Development No.4, p. 14.

²⁶ *Ibid*

3.3 The Occurrence of Reciprocal Farm Labor Exchange System in Manamaiju Village

Rice farming is not only the prime source of food but also the source of employment and income for the rural poor. Rice farming requires manpower and water supply simultaneously. A local proverb states; “*Nepal’s agriculture depends on the gamble of the monsoons.*” Normally the monsoons come in June, the prime time for rice planting. The monsoons continue into September, but sometimes they arrive late and they can vary in quantity. Only when the fields are covered in water can farmers rush out to plant the rice. During this period, all farmers are very busy. Rice planting is a challenging job; one has to manage the labor supply within the certain number of days available for planting. How does the *bola* system manage the labor exchange in appropriate ways for all peasants involved? Is there no other labor alternative for such situations in the village? This is my pre-assumption in this research.

I would like to refer to the points of view of Charles J. Erasmus. He wrote about the occurrence and disappearance of reciprocal farm labor in some South American countries, a subject relevant to my topic of *bola* and its occurrence in Manamaiju village. He describes two types of reciprocal farm labor. One is “festive” and another is “exchange”. He further says, “The festive form is known by several names such as *convite* (Colombia and Ecuador), *minga* (southwestern Colombia and highland Ecuador), *minga bailada* (north coast of Ecuador) and *mingaco* (Chile). Names such as *ayni* (Peru), *cambio de mano* (Colombia), and *vuelta mano* (Chile) indicate the exchange form.” (Erasmus, ’56:445). About the potato farming in the Peruvian Andes and *ayni* as reciprocal labor are also highlighted by Johan Potteir (Pottier, ’99:136). Hence, I can also see the causes of its occurrence in respect to Manamaiju village.

Erasmus also states; “The distinctions made between exchange and festive labor generally concern the degree of obligation to reciprocate labor as well as the quantity and quality of the food and/or drink served the workers. In the first case the obligation to reciprocate is very strong and any food and/or drink provided are usually considered ordinary fare. A day’s labor is expected in return for each day given; and if one is unable to meet an obligation due to sickness etc., he must send someone in his place. According to prior arrangements, those exchanging work may feed one another in turn, take their own food with them to the fields, or return home for lunch. At festive labor parties the host wines and/or dines his worker-guests

in extra-ordinary fashion, and his obligation to reciprocate their labor is not only weaker but in most cases obviated. In case of illness, for example, he would certainly be under no obligation to send a replacement. In western South America the two categories are not always mutually exclusive on the basis of these criteria. Reciprocity, particularly among close relatives, may be very strong in some festive forms as is the case at house construction work parties in the Jauja valley of Peru and around Otavalo, Ecuador. In general, however, festivities usually exempt the host from reciprocating the labor of at least some if not all of his guests.” (*Ibid*, p.445/446). In this context he later emphasized the ‘exchange’ labor type as the reasons of its permanency, nature and deep inter-personal relationships as it became more formalized when equipment was shared or jointly owned (*Ibid*. p.455). My interest relates to testing which types of labor motives are more relevant to this village.

In terms of the disappearance of the labor exchange system, Erasmus says; “In addition to modifying reciprocal labor, machinery has eliminated it in many places, as in the case of the Michigan harvesting and threshing “rings”. Likewise in Chile the *mingaco* has been steadily disappearing with the greater use of harvesting and threshing machinery. And some haciendas near Otavalo, Ecuador, tractors now perform the plowing that *minga* workers once did by hand.” (*Ibid*, p.455/456). These experiences also provoke me to collect information about the possible use of other labor techniques in place of *bola*. In relation to the gender aspect, the research and development projects experiences of FAO, such as in small landholder agriculture, report that women farmers are largely responsible for the selection, improvement and adaptation of plant varieties. In many regions, women are also responsible for the management of small livestock, including their reproduction (Conference report, 2004:5-6). My fascination with this is in finding how we could evaluate the sense of gender participation in the village with regard to the *Newar* woman’s role in agriculture and *bola*?

3.4 Sociology in relation to the Reciprocal Farm Labor Exchange System

Social anthropological concepts also highlight the understandings of people’s own use of labor techniques such as the *bola*. My concern is very much related to the ideologies of economic anthropology. In the present context of globalization and liberal market mechanisms, the people’s way of thinking is changing whether they live in villages or towns. For instance, the young generations of third world countries want to go abroad for better income or study opportunities, creating an impact on the other members of the society which

may eventually change his or her living standards by the outcome of the opportunity. In the Nepalese context, the long national cultural assimilation policy and the impact of social security are quickly mobilizing the urbanization process. These socially changing factors are affecting those who are applying traditional ways of life. My study focuses on the *Newar* of Manamaiju village and how they feel about these social changes with regard to the *bola* system. Another important aspect of sociology is cultural domination. It is known that if there is a strong cultural identity in any society, there will be little chance of social change. Manamaiju may be one example of this. In this respect I explored the *Jyapu* culture especially in this village during my field study. For example, the *Ropai-Jatra* (festival of rice-plantation) was celebrated during my field study where I could observe *bola* in operation and how it is supported. While there are several other important festivals and ceremonies supporting the *bola* system, lack of time made it impossible to cover them all. Another burning issue related to land is the urbanization process and its affects on almost all the town-linked villages of Kathmandu Valley. From this influence my village is not exceptional. With the encroachment of farmland and increasing cross-cultural values, the tendency is to change traditional lifestyles. Under these circumstances how could we observe the *bola* system and social change in Manamaiju and its future prospects? In this relation the quantitative research method could be effective to measure exact number values of the *bola* system.

CHAPTER IV: Manamaiju Village

4.1 Location and Physical Features

Manamaiju is one of the 57 Village Development Committee (VDC) areas in Kathmandu District in Nepal. The village is surrounded by two rivers, Mahadev Khola and Sangle Khola, both are branch rivers of the Bishnumati and a part of the Bagmati. Due to the lack of sufficient water during the winter months, there are no irrigation facilities along these rivers. The surrounding and neighboring areas are a town area - Balaju (Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Ward No.16) lies to the south, Futung and Kavresthali VDCs are in the north, Dharmasthali and Goldhunga VDCs in the west, Gongabu VDC in the east. Administratively, the whole Manamaiju VDC is divided into 9 wards where more than 25 different caste and ethnic groups live. The village has lots of fertile land for high yield crop of rice, but due to urbanization processes, the farmland is being converted into settlement areas, creating another issue for the agriculture system. The total land area of this village is estimated to about 6523 Ropani²⁷ (local land measurement) and its average altitude varies from 1322m to 1367m above sea level. It ranges from 27°45' to 27°46' north latitude and 85°18' to 85°19' east longitude.

The name of Manamaiju village is also that of the deity whose famous temple is situated in the village in Ward No.3. According to a myth, the deity Manamaiju fulfills human desires or wishes of the villagers. There are two governmental secondary schools, two junior school campuses and 15 private boarding schools. The public buildings in the village consist of one post office, one sub-health post and one VDC building. There are graveled, and some seasonal roads interlinks to the neighboring village and town. There are four community forests over the village preserved by local people. One national agriculture service sub-center has been located in the neighboring village which has portfolios to six surrounding villages including Manamaiju.

²⁷It is based on the village profile (unpublished) of Manamaiju VDC. 1 Ropani = 74X74 Square feet (0.12571 Acre)/16 Ana.

Firstly, I investigated the *Newar (Jyapu)* and their use of the *bola* system in five out of the wards of this village. The compactly *Jyapu* settled wards 3,4,5,6, and 7 which are known as; *Jyapu* village, Manamaiju village and is also called Madanpur by its old name. Some other ethnic and caste groups also settled in the outskirts of the *Jyapu* locality. It is an historical fact that the *Jyapu* are a very labor conscious and hard working agricultural people. This village is also recognized as one of the typical *Jyapu* villages of Kathmandu valley.

4.2 Ecological Aspects of *bola*

Rice, the main food crop, is cultivated once a year and is helped by the monsoon rains which start normally from mid-June. The months of October and November are the period of rice harvesting. After the rice is harvested, these peasants also cultivate wheat and potato crops in the same field. It seems the peasants have a sound knowledge as to the arrival of the rains and when their fields are covered by water; the rice planting is quickly done. The rice cultivation work runs continuously for approximately two weeks from the starting of it and the whole village's farming atmosphere looks like a ceremony. The favorable combination of enough rain, warm temperatures, soil, fertilizer and labor are important aspects of rice cultivation. The peasants normally use both types of fertilizer- organic and chemical and it is confirmed that they are using only local seeds. In the case of *bola*, they don't have any type of labor related tensions, but for those who seek paid work during this time it means that he/she has to face uncertainty having an appropriate reserve of cash for wages. Today, only the *Newar* peasants are preserving a traditional variety of rice called *Taichuin*, imported from China around three decades ago. This type of rice is very popular for making 'beaten-rice', a basic food item for feasting and snacking purposes.

There is no clear historical evidence of the peasants' arrival into the village. But it is said they came for cultivating purposes from Thamel, a town area of Kathmandu District about 4km south-east from the village. The land tenure system is also a key part of their farming life. According to land tenure history, it is said that a long feudal system influenced the lands of Kathmandu Valley until 1959 AD. Before the launch of the 'Birta Abolition Act, 1959', the lands were supposed to be a gift or reward to *Brahmins*, members of nobility, government officials, priests, members of religious sects and others who had pleased by the ruling officials (Tamang, 2000, p.27). There was no need to pay taxes on 'Birta' land. The 'Land Reforms Act, 1963', automatically converted 'Birta' land into *Raikar* land (for private use). However,

some *Jyapu* peasants still have this type of 'Birta' land from their fathers and forefathers without it having been converted into *Raikar*. This shows there is dual ownership of some land, one from actual landlords who may have disappeared, and another from the peasants' tenancy right. One other type of land is *Guthi* land which has religious and historical values inherent. These days, this type of land is also convertible to *Raikar* by official processes. *Guthi* land has been formed by donations from either people or rulers for the protection of temples, public places, and cultures. In this village, some *Maharjan* have this type of land under the ownership of *Bhagwan Bahal Guthi*, formed by *Thamel's Pradhan*. By having this land, *Maharjan* have to regularly worship the Manamaiju temple and organize a grand feast for all *Jyapu* villagers as a cultural practice. *Pradhan* has remained one of the upper caste groups of *Newar* and at one time had great political power in Kathmandu Valley.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics

There are several *Jyapu* villages in Kathmandu Valley. Dharmasthali, Tokha, Sankhu, Chhapagaon, Bungamati, Thimi and Sunakothi are some of them and they are sources for finding marital partners. The whole *Newar* population figure of Manamaiju village is 2649 (Appendix IV). According to census data (2001), *Newar* represent the second largest population group after the *Chhetri*. In this village, *Maharjan* and *Rajbahak* are the two main sub-caste groups of *Jyapu*.²⁸ It is estimated that around 175 households in this locality are *Maharjan* and 25 are *Rajbahaks*. These peasant groups are successfully maintaining their cultural values and Newari identity together with the traditional farming system *bola*. An available household's list shows the distribution of *Jyapu* in; Ward No. 6 as being a residential area of only *Maharjan*, Wards 3, 4 and 5 are of a majority part of *Maharjan*, and Ward No. 7 is mix of including other *Parbate* caste groups who migrated in from the western part of the country a few years ago. The *Rajbahak* only live in Ward No. 7 of this village.

²⁸ The Appendix mentions clearly 'Maharjan' as *Jyapu*, but for the 'Rajbahak', it is not mentioned like that. I included 'Rajbahak' here as a group of *Jyapu* in accordance to my key informants' expression on my field study.

4.4 Economic Characteristics

In the village there are a total of 2539 households of which 995 are engaged in agriculture, livestock and poultry farming. The rest are outside of these economic activities (Census, 2001). According to the village profile, there are only eight small industries, among them, six only are related to rice and flour milling which plays a large role in the local peasants' economic activities.

In this village, most *Jyapu* peasants have their own farm land and some of them have rented-in land on the basis of crop sharing. Most of them have a production of subsistence level farming, but some have capacity to sell some of the rice, usually those who have more than 10 *Ropanis* of land. Most peasant families are supplementing their agriculture life by doing off-farm jobs; these are normally laborious jobs near the village and town. I found most of *Jyapu*, generally male family members, are engaged with such jobs as masonry, carpentry and other laborious work on daily wage basis. Because increasing land costs, they can not buy more agriculture land. According to them they don't want to sell it whenever they have serious money problems. New comer demand and the pressures of urbanization are influencing the farmers to sell land. However, their main interest seems to be as successful cultivators even if there is no profit in farming, they think of it as a glorious part of their life. This shows they have great sentimental relationship with the land. Bamboo is also an attractive economic supporting natural resource for the village. Many of the younger people dream of finding ways to travel to the Gulf and other developed countries in search of better wages and higher education. For instance, I discovered that some of their family members are already in Japan, Malaysia, Qatar and other countries.

4.5 Social Characteristics

Multi-cultural values and multi-ethnic relationships are the basic characteristics of Nepalese society. In the rural areas, the people's mutual solidarity and cooperation are the most important factors in maintaining their social harmony. The traditional caste system prevails in most of the rural areas. In *Newar* society, the inter-caste marriage relations are strictly handled by their *Guthi* system. It also keeps watch on the feelings of the upper and lower class division of their society. But it has a very strong social commitment interconnected for the preservation of traditional life and in order to uphold the *bola* system. In this village the

Maharjan think of themselves as one rank higher than *Rajbahak* and therefore, they do not accept cooked rice from a *Rajbahak*'s home. The settlement structures also separate them. For example, the houses of *Maharjan* are situated in the upper part of their locality while the *Rajbahak*'s settlement is in the lower part of it. Most of their houses look very old and are made of raw bricks with muddy joints. Inside many homes use bamboo for flooring and for the roof. Wood stairs are also very common in their old homes. Normally their houses are two to four storied high and the roof is covered by either brick tiles or straw. Generally, in comparison to the *Rajbahak*, the *Maharjan* seem better off. For drinking water, some *Maharjans* have managed to equip themselves with private taps, but *Rajbahaks* are still depending on the public taps and well water. I found the education background of most of the *Jyapu* peasants' to be under the primary level. Access to modern communication facilities such as telephone and Internet are poor in the village. The important *Guthi* social structure of in this village is *Malami Guthi* (related to death process) and plays as role of *Si* and *Sana Guthi* as already described in Chapter II.

4.6 Cultural Characteristics

Manamaiju Village is very interesting for its natural beauty and Newari culture. It is surrounded by several patches of bamboo and the whole *Jyapu* locality is situated on the top of a small hill with a clear view of the city. A row of attached houses with open spaces in front is the general outlook of this locality. These open spaces are used for drying and temporary storing purposes of agricultural products. Most of the houses have wooden hangers out of windows on the top floor where such items as garlic, onions, red peppers and maize can be seen hanging to dry. Some festivals such as *Ropai-Jatra* (Rice-Planting Festival), *Gai-Jatra* (Cow Festival) and *Balaju Baais Dhara Purne* (*Manmaiju-Jatra*) are the most important cultural activities in their lives. On the day of *Balaju Baais Dhara Purne* (sometime in April) there would be *Deo-Puja* (great worship of the deity Manamaiju) including traditional music, *Dhime*, and a grand feast for all villagers. While carrying out my field study, I had the opportunity to see both the *Gai-Jatra* and *Ropai-Jatra*. The *Gai-Jatra* is related to the "Festival of Remembrance" of deceased family within the previous year. After *Gai-Jatra*, *Ropai-Jatra* commences; it has a strong relationship with their cultural and economic life. On that day, early in the morning, all the *Jyapu* women group together to parade around the village wearing the traditional dress - *Haku Patasi* and various traditional ornaments. In the afternoon, the men's group performs an enactment of the rice planting through dance and

music, wearing women dresses. The festival reveals the common goals and common joys for their farming life and the *bola* system.

There is no religious conflict in their society. Most *Newar* believe in Hinduism and Buddhism jointly. Amongst their settlement I saw small temples to the lords *Ganesh*, *Ajima* (*Chundevi*), Buddha's shrine and *Bhajan* or *Kirtan Ghar* (religious songs and music playing house) as well as Manamaiju Temple with its surrounding common areas. It is normal for the elderly to be seen using their traditional clothes; speak their mother tongue (*Newari/Nepal Bhasa*) and especially using the *kharpan* (a pair of bamboo hanging baskets). *Kharpan* are useful to carry their farm tools, drinking pots and foodstuffs to their work. They are also commonly used for taking green vegetables and food crops to the market. Nowadays they can also use motor vehicles for this.

Chapter V: The '*Bola / Parma*' System in the Manamaiju Village Today

This chapter concerns my findings regarding collected field data and information on *bola*. It is a system where everyone from the same locality joins together to help each other complete their agricultural tasks on the basis of mutual reciprocity. On this background their social, economic and cultural values look like an 'inalienable possession' (Weiner, 1992) to the village. I would like to elaborate the facts of the present day condition with the help of qualitative and quantitative data, collected during June-August, 2005. The qualitative analysis is a main part of the study whereas the quantitative is supplementary. Both highlight the context and significance of *bola*.

5.1 Qualitative Analysis

Before entering into the subject matter, I will briefly introduce my four key informants who follow the *bola* system. My assumption is that these peasants represent the *bola* system for the whole *Jyapu* locality. The selection of four key peasants was based on my observations and time limitations. In addition, I also selected other informants from different occupation groups with whom I interviewed and conversed in order to highlight the significance of *bola*. There are many other relevant informants; however, it is not possible to record them all in this short study. Of course, their direct and indirect contribution during my study was highly valuable and I have tried to include their information as far as possible.

The key informants (peasants) who uphold the system of *bola* in Manamaiju village:

1. Asthabir Maharjan, 63 years, Manamaiju-5, Kathmandu
2. Nhuchhe Maharjan, 70 years, Manamaiju-6, Kathmandu
3. Janak Rajbahak, 32 years, Manamaiju-7, Kathmandu
4. Gyan Bahadur Maharjan, 65 years, Manamaiju-3, Kathmandu

Other informants from different occupational groups:

1. Bhaktaman Maharjan, 43 years, Headmaster, Manamaiju Secondary School, Manamaiju-3, Kathmandu
2. Madan Prasad Maharjan, 60 years, Shopkeeper, Manamaiju-6, Kathmandu
3. Santa Maya Rajbahak, 66 years, peasant, Manamaiju-7, Kathmandu

4. Rameshwor K.C., 38 years, service holder, Manamaiju-3, Kathmandu
5. Man Shingh Maharjan, 68 years, peasant and social activist, Manamaiju-4, Kathmandu

My first contact person was the Headmaster of Manamaiju Secondary School, Bhaktaman Maharjan, a highly respected local. He is the elder son of the former chief of the village development authority and a nominated *Thakali* (leader) of their *Newari* locality. In Nepalese society, family background is very important to the locality and the development process. In the course of our conversation he said (translation from Nepali): “Traditionally we use the term *bola* in our locality as meaning a system of mutual farm labor exchange in which we exchange labor without wages, but we have to serve some meals and traditional drinks to *bola* members during the work day. This system is very similar to *parma* used by *Parbate* groups in other areas of Kathmandu Valley.” Another teacher told me about the scheduling of 15 days of summer vacation to coincide with the peak season of rice plantation, all in favor of *bola*. Within 2 days I finished my *bola* observations of my key informants who represented more than 200 Jyapu peasant households and their *bola* system.

During the qualitative data collection I posed the following research questions to my key informants and other informants:

- Q. (1) What is the meaning of *bola* and how is it functioning in Manamaiju village?
- Q. (2) Why is the system of *bola* still important in this village? And what are the significant factors of it?

5.1.1 Observations of *Bola* system

Asthabir Maharjan and his rice planting *bola*

Rice planting is a labor intensive period in the village. Normally it starts from the middle of June and finishes at the end of June, but of this year the monsoons were late by around two weeks. I discovered that it is not such a big deal to delay by one week, but more than that makes the peasant anxious about their farming cycle and the safeguarding of the rice plants. It was around at 10 am, June 28th when I noticed the open fields in preparation for rice planting. Two people were adjusting a water pump to balance the water level from a lower field to an upper field. After a while the peasant group started to gather. I noted that there were more

women than men in the field. Luckily, I saw one of them smiling at me from afar it turned out to be Asthabir Maharjan, the owner of the field.

At first he asked me in *Newari*: “*Ja tunla, Bajya?*” (“Did you have some rice ‘*baje*’?”) In Nepal, cooked rice is eaten twice a day, during the morning and evening, as a main food. This type of question is normally used when people meet each other for the first time at a mealtime. After my reply, I also spoke *Newari* to ask: “*Chhu hal khabar do?*” (“How are you?”). This manner of talking makes the meeting comfortable for him. He speaks Nepali well as do almost all *Newar*, so I did not have to face any language barriers in the village. The total area of rice plantation was about four Ropanis²⁹ and more than 35 workers were already gathered to work. Among *bola* members there were 24 women and 10 men in addition to his family members. When I asked the question about the function of *bola*, he started to explain: “It is our *Newari* (*Jyapu*) culture to take and to provide mutual labor as we need on our farm, and it is an obligation to obey this rule when someone gives their assurance of help. For example, today I am accepting labor help from these people, in return, maybe tomorrow or another day I will have to provide them help as well.” To take an example: if he needs the help of 30 people for rice planting work, then he calls for someone or everyone to come and help on the field in the capacity of a *bola* member. For the labor help they do not get any wage or money, but instead, they have the right to get the same labor when they need it. It means the labor receiver has a liability to pay labor to the amount of 30 days or people. He can either pay it back by himself or with the help of his family members, it does not matter. The nature of rice planting in this locality means that when the monsoon rain is sufficient then the rice planting work will begin and continue for approximately 2-3 weeks. He also talked to me about the difference between the male and female workers. The male is called *lathe* or *bause* (worker who does all the land preparation), the female is called *ropar* (worker who does transplants the rice seedling). I have included some pictures in Appendix V (Plate 1-2).

In keeping with these views of rice planting work and *bola* of the day, I noted that the men were busy with hoeing the filthy mud, mixing fertilizer into the land by using a tractor and traditional tools, some female and male workers were making the bundles of rice seedlings that had been grown around 3 weeks before from the corner of the paddy field. Most of the female workers had already started to transplant the rice seedlings where the field was ready.

²⁹ 1 Ropani = 0.12571 Acre/ 0.05087 Hectare

The combination of work looks like a joyful game. Only the female workers were actually planting in what looked like a row and stepping backwards continuously after each seedling was planted. Some children were also there assisting happily in the surrounding wet field but they did not participate in the *bola*. At the same time I asked Asthabir about the worker composition of the *bola* and he replied that some were his nephews, sister, brother-in-law, daughter and son-in-law as well as some of his *Guthi* members and neighbors. He pointed out to me a woman and a man who were busy in their work; “You can see she is my younger daughter and he is my son-in-law whose house is very near to my house.” It means some of them have close relatives very near to their own locality. He also clarified to me that if someone doesn’t have time to go *bola*, or who doesn’t have active family members in farming or perhaps farm only small pieces of land, then he or she remains as a paid laborer. However, getting paid labor from their locality is very tough. The current wage per day for their locality is 110 NRs³⁰ for *Lathe* and 70 NRs for *Ropar*. This clearly shows wage discrimination between male and female workers. He also claimed that they don’t have any working discrimination among men and women in the *bola* system. Meaning, instead of male workers they can send female or vice versa. It shows *bola* has quite flexible and equal value in the sense of labor utilization.

On 29th of June 2005, I was able to cover three *Newari* households’ rice planting sessions and their *bola*. I asked them Question No.1 and found most of their answers were quite similar to each other.

b) Janak Rajbahak and his rice planting *bola*

Janak Rajbahak was also busy rice planting on his several small pieces of land on the same day. The field was very near to his residence and situated a little lower than the whole *Newar* locality. There were 5 *bola* members including his family on the day. I took a moment to have a conversation with him about *bola*. He also spoke Nepali and said “This *bola* is a very old practice of ours, now you can see they are supporting my rice planting work today, after finishing my work myself or my family will have to provide five days of *bola* to when they summon us. And there is not any wage, but we should provide *Thon* (rice-beer), 3 to 4 times a day and launch at midday.” I was astonished as the small pieces of land was added up to not more than approximately 1 *Ropani* but the manpower was more than needed. When I queried

³⁰ It is approximately 12 NRs equivalent to 1 NOK (11.05.06)

him about what they do with the rest of time, assuming there is not more than a half day's work. He answered, "Yes you are right, after finishing these plots we have to move to another of our fields which is very near, only a few minutes from here." I saw he was using only a hand-hoe the traditional digging tool which is very popular among the *Newari*. Refer picture included in Appendix V, Plate 3.

I was curious about the *bola* system and why the peasants are saying it is reliable and very healthy in the village. I asked Janak if there were any incidents of betraying of this system. He seriously answered, "Well, it may happen rarely but not intentionally, when some *bola* members become ill or suddenly afflicted by an injury it is accepted that they don't participate, but in the end, he or she must provide labor later on. In that case; whether he or she can manage to find another person to replace them, or they can pay back the labor wage when possible. But accepting paid labor as pay-back depends on the will of the authority person." For example, among two persons, 'A' and 'B' who are *bola* members, 'A' provides labor to 'B's field and in return 'B' is to provide labor to 'A'. But if suddenly 'B' became sick, then his part of job might be suspended for a few days if he did not find a replacement. He may pay money to make up for the absence of labor to 'A', or 'B' has to serve labor the next time 'A' needs it. Normally *Jyapu* peasants have a strong internal power to keep his or her word and do not like to accept money. Janak also says, "Our practice is very long standing and honesty is our main currency along with pride. This labor exchange system has survived on the condition of receiving while providing". By this expression we can think their social commitment and moral values are of significant importance to their farming life and the *bola* system as well.

c) Bola and rice planting for Nhuchhe Maharjan

When I arrived at Nhuchheman Maharjan's field, there were 15 persons (11 were female) in the field including him. I asked him how many persons form the *bola*. He replied that, "Most of us are form *bola*". He proceeded to inform me about *bola* in similar ways to my previous informants, Asthabir and Janak. But he underlined the importance of *bola* for him by saying, "Without *bola*, perhaps we can not run our rice farming as usual. There are no guarantees in getting paid labor from our locality, nor can I not trust people from outside the locality to have the proper sense of achievement." After discovering he is *Maharjan* and having separately seen the rice planting work of *Rajbahak*, I asked him if there is any possibility to interchange the members of their *bola* between the two sub-caste groups. He said, "Yes, we

are in fact two different sub-castes, but we belong to the same *Newar* group and it is possible to interchange the labor, but according to our social norm we do not accept the *Ja* (boiled rice) from a *Rajbahak's* home. Apart from *Ja*, other drink items or dry food such as beaten-rice is acceptable.” Showing the importance of *bola* and its functioning matters he added, “We are all farmers and it is our pride to maintain our rice farming using *bola*. We think of this type work with the help of relatives and neighbors as our ceremonial work; you can see there we have some food and drink already secured to consume for today.” Refer to picture of the food stuff near the bank of field, Appendix V (Plate 5).

He continues as saying “*Thon* is served at 10.30-11.00 o'clock, again at 12.00 o'clock, *Khaja* (lunch) is served around 13.30-14.00 at mid-day consisting of *chiura* (beaten-rice), buffalo meat, *gedagudi* (different types of beans and peas), potato curry and *thon*. At around 15.00-15.30, *thon* is served again and finally at 16.30-17.00.”. He usually calls a *bola* not only for rice planting, but also weeding, rice harvesting and for the period of wheat and potato farming also. According to him, some tasks such as field hoeing, digging and clearing the mosses have been carried out either by him or with paid labor. By this observation I found the importance of *thon* and *Newari* traditional meals for the *bola* members indicating its festive mood.

d) Gyan Bahadur Maharjan and his rice planting with *bola*

Gyan Bahadur's field is just behind the Manamaiju temple, along with the school and his home. He introduced me to one of his brothers and two nephews in the field. His youngest brother, Kanchha Maharjan, was ill so his wife was in the field. Their target was to complete two lengthy fields of around 3 *Ropanis* on that day. I noted 15 female workers, *ropar* and five men, *bause.*, all members of the *bola*. Half of work was completed by the time the rain stopped at around 14.00 when they decided to have lunch. Four people were sent to Kancha's home, and a few including me to Gyan Bahadur's home, the rest most of female workers, decided to have lunch close to the paddy field. The field they were working in was actually Guti land (land for Manamaiju Deity) and was established by Thamel's *Pradhan* several years before. During the rice planting I heard '*Ropai Geet*' or '*Ropai-bhaka*', a very popular traditional melody and song during for the season. It surpasses the great message of happiness, and reflection of weather.

A discussion of *bola* with its historic connection

Now I want to present here some historical connections of the *bola* system. The Japanese scholar Hiroshi Ishee presented a dissertation paper researching Nepalese culture in a *Newari* village and a *Parbate* village of Katmandu District prior to 1987. According to Ishee, the *bola* system collapsed under the influence of social change around 1978 (Ishee, '87 p.63). There were two types of *bola*, one was called 'collective *bola*' and the other one was 'unstructured *bola*' (*Ibid*, p72). According to him, the workers would be hired from the neighborhood and apart from the assured working day, the person would be free to work anywhere. In relation to Manamaiju village the *bola* system looked quite similar to the 'unstructured' type as there was no formally fixed number of workers and it is arranged by their own family members, neighbors, friends and *Guthi* members.

When I asked the local peasants about the historical aspect of the *bola* system, Mansingh Maharjan said it has a close relationship with the *boje* system. Around 30 years ago *boje* would be called for a mutual labor force to dig black-soil from river-beds for filling in the rice, wheat and potato fields as a good fertilizer. After the introduction of chemical fertilizers, *boje* began to disappear from the village. Now this term is used for the common sharing of cash for traditional feasting program organized by *Jyapu*. Mansingh Maharjan founded Mansingh Dharma High School no more than a decade ago. Now he is a progressive social and religious activist. According to him, he is totally against of sacrificing animals to Manamaiju temple, an annual custom. He objects to the serving of meat and any kind of alcohol on his rice farm, that is why his family members are disappointed in him. But he pays *boje* (money) for Maharjan's *bola* and feasting also. Another peasant come a stationery shopkeeper, Ramkrishna Maharjan, says, "Once upon a time in the village, *boje* remained as working group of 10-12 people who held farming and feasting activities, but now this type of group is not in practice, we only have *bola* now."

He also supports the *bola* system as a key farming system in this village among *Maharjan* and *Rajbahak*. He adds, "I also apply this system in most of my rice field, but I also use paid labor". Another person, this time from the *Chhetri* caste says, "All my rice-planting work will be done using paid labor not by *bola*. I don't have more manpower and time to go for *parma* or *bola* as I have only four family members in my home, myself and my wife have jobs, and my two children are at school. So, this system is good for mutual labor exchange and having

some food and drink in the fields, but it is not useful to me because of my situation”. He claimed his is fully involved in social and other activities. Some non-*Newars* also noted *bola* as being costly from a monetary point of view because they have to provide a meal of meat and drinks of *thon* several times a day. However, most *Newar* peasants are still applying the system without calculating any monetary value for food.

To sum up my observations of *bola*, people’s opinions are mostly positive to the system. It preserves traditional behavior of *Newari* peasants in Manamaiju village. This system is favorable to those who have large family members as well as flexible time and the interest to share labor as well. Without any financial outlay, they can obtain labor and engage unemployed household members into the production system. There is a strong social power to preserve the continuation of *bola* by the greater involvement of the local *Jyapu* groups. The system is very old, but alive and well. However, in the case of those who have few family members and a shortage of time, then the *bola* system is not preferred and they have the compulsion to seek paid labor from the locality. At the same time, some of the *Newar* peasants need cash from non-*Newar* groups in order to sustain their life. In this situation inter-caste relationships are a necessity for the household economy. For example, the above named informant has to pay for labor, but this type of job seeking person very limited as most of the peasants have family with farm land in the village. *Bola* is a family based employment system is a production system of high social value. Their social commitment is the basis of their survival. According to my key informants, the *bola* system is simply the better method of employment for them. Indeed, the *bola* system is very close to the idea of ‘give and take’ as Polanyi expressed in the approach of reciprocity. In his article, “Economic Spheres in Darfur”, Barth explained about the motivational factor of reciprocal labor exchange, in his case study ‘millet-beer’, likewise in my village instead of millet-beer it is ‘rice-beer’ (*thon*). By the natural harmonious point of view, *bola* has interwoven local knowledge into their sustainable farming life. Erasmus gives some examples of the occurrence of labor exchange systems from his Andean experiences in which he highlights two types of occurrences, either it is ‘festive’ or ‘exchange’ (in accordance to Chapter III). In this regard, my study of the *bola* system is guided by ‘festive’ motives. The ‘exchange’ type only differs in that there is no food service. The provision of a free meal and drinks (*thon*) during *bola* matches with the ‘festive’ motive along with social commitment and mutual interdependence. Finally, it is seen that the *Newari* peasants’ active involvement in their *bola* system has not only the labor share provision also the provision of food and drink.

5.1.2 Significance of *bola* from the Social and Cultural Aspect:

5.1.2.1 *Bola* Holds a Social Harmony

In reference to my second question; how is *bola* playing a key role to maintain social harmony in Manamaiju village? My informant's expressions and views guided me to think over the socio-economic and cultural aspects. Asthabir replied by firstly giving his family background as the head of his household he has charge of twelve family members. In addition, he two married out daughters. Only he and his wife (Buddalaxmi Maharjan) are regularly active in the *bola* system. His three sons are married but two of them are busy with their home constructing jobs as masons, and the middle son is a public service employee. His three daughters-in-law are all busy with their household chores and childcare matters. Altogether, four grand children under 10 years of age attend the local school. He said, "I have no work besides agriculture, so together with my wife we take part in the *bola* several times. This is our duty also." He added, "Because this is our traditional duty which our father and forefathers also performed. In our time there was no such facility of education like today, so I don't have any education, but I tried as far as possible to give an education to my children. However, they left school and started earning at a very early stage doing masonry work." His sons earn extra cash to contribute to the household's expenses. The output from the land was hardly sufficient to sustain their household. He also highlighted the importance of *thon* for *bola* to maintain a good working environment and happiness in the field. Of the *Newari* group, other caste groups like *Brahmin* and *Chhetri* normally dislike *thon*. He looks happy with his farming life holding not only his own farmland, but also maintaining rented land from a *Brahmin* family near the village. In return he has to share 50% of his crops. This illustrates the *Newar* peasants maintaining social inter-caste relationships with non-*Newar* groups at the same time.

Janak's experience told me that his father and brother now live in near the town, but he and his family live in the old farm house. He said, "When the time of *bola* comes my father, mother and we two brothers will all be engaged by the owners of those fields and will share their dinner for the day." On the question of communication about *bola* arrangements, he said, "We usually have daily meetings with our friends and neighbors, so there is no communication problem; it is an easy going on process." He added, "It is our main duty to

perform our farming duties first, after which we think about our side-jobs like masonry and so on. I asked about the number of times *bola* members can be expected to be used. He replied, “After rice-planting, approximately three more times we are engaged in the fields for weeding and we also have the rice harvesting in October.” He clarified that except from the rice harvesting, own household members do the work of weeding from time to time. His farming lands are small and so the weeding work can be done regularly when passing by.

I turned to Nhuchhe Maharjan; he had completed his rice planting on July 9th after three rounds of work from *bola* members. His elder son and 9 family members live in the old family home. He lost his wife at the age of 30 but never remarried so now he is living with his younger son’s family. He says, “According to *bola* and the obligatory rules, if I could not pay back labor during the rice planting season, then my part will be credited for ‘weeding’ or for ‘harvesting’ or even until next year’s season”. It shows the peasant’s interpersonal relation is an ongoing process within the *bola* system. He argues that *bola* members have a mutual understanding for *Jyapu*’s social pride and self-reliance motives. He informed that after finishing the entire rice planting work, they begin the enjoyable festivities and ceremonies with the help of communal involvement. I asked a cross-question about the possibility for paid labor in the village, he said, “Yes, in some exceptional cases mostly on the *Rajbahak*’s side, you could find this. For those who have small fields for rice farming, few family members or an unwillingness to do laborious work in the fields then they can reject the *bola* system. I don’t have to comment about personal desire or whatever, but we are around 200 households here in this locality and most of us still believe in *bola*.” He also told me that there were no problems with the *bola* system. In fact his answers clarify that they are flexible to adopt the *bola* system based of their requirements and most of them are still applying *bola* to keep social harmony.

The next day I was with Gyan Bahadur, he highlighted that social commitment gives rise to a social power when achieve their farming goals. But he also expressed his dissatisfaction with increasing modern individualistic trends, such as selling land and buying motorcycles or constructing new homes. He told me that we should preserve our land for our future generations and keep our social harmony and *bola* system as well. He highlights as saying, “It is the most important factor in our *Jyapu* society; we maintain glory with our devotion to our farm land and its historical continuation.” He focused his arguments comparing them to *Parbate* groups who are culturally very different from the *Newar*. For example, they don’t

keep or consume liquor in their homes in contrast to the *Jyapu*. He also mentioned the *Newari* language, their own decision making process through the leadership of the *Thakali* (leader of village), the socio-cultural organization of *Guthi* and *bola* as a distinct parts of the *Newari* identity. On the question of subsistence from the products of land he said, “I can’t say our farm outputs are sufficient for all because most peasants are compelled to search for side jobs in either masonry, carpentry or other unskilled labor work in order to maintain our agricultural life. On the other hand there is no profit in agricultural output in the present context because although the price of rice supposed to be constant, there is cheaper rice available in the markets and the cost of living is continuously increasing in contrast to our output.” Even though the economic rewards from the rice farming are not attractive, he stressed the greater importance of preserving social harmony and their *Jyapu* culture.

Having completed my study with my key informants, I turned to my other informants. In this connection I met my childhood friend, Bhindra Maharjan, about 43 years and now a successful mason for a good company. He says *bola* is the *Newari* labor management technique based on our caste occupations which is a metaphor of our social life.” He further says, “I have to maintain my daily job so, except for my own farming, I can’t be involved in neighbors’ farms in the capacity of a *bola* member. Instead of me, my family members are actively holding this system. They can maintain closeness and a cheerful inter-personal relationship during the time.” According to him, this system is like a powerful tie among their clan, lineage or regional belongingness. I also met local schoolteachers and students who also positively highlighted *bola* as a social glory. The whole scene of *bola* demonstrates a glimpse of healthy human behavior in mutual cooperation, solidarity, and belongingness and enjoy by enjoyment during the rice-planting season.

I asked Madan Prasad, a *Maharjan*, peasant and local shopkeeper, about the political perspective of the village. He also manages some farming lands of *Chhetri* castes near the village. He said, “We *Jyapu* of this village don’t like to have an interest in politics and we don’t have any powerful political leaders in any position from local governmental level. *Bola* has become a part of our social life and survival of the household.” This means this village has a lack of political attachment. He also reversed question me so that I could see the village and its development process by myself. In fact, I also noticed that their locality is suffering from the lack of physical and infrastructure development. For example, lack of a drainage system, poor roads, and careless maintenance of old houses; dependency on public taps for

drinking water and unfortunately, uncontrollable use of alcohol in their locality. Most of the peasants I met have a regressive point of view of local political development. The reasons behind it look to be mainly their poor economic condition and uneducated backgrounds. Illustrating the lack of health consciousness, one rich peasant ironically said, “For me, if I do not take a shower then it may cause me to get a fever, but some of the peasants in our locality get a fever if they have a shower”. This provides an indication of the low health consciousness in the area. I found nobody who had a negative impact on the *bola* system even among those who do not have land for farming. Their self satisfaction and happiness with the *bola* system reflects its significant role for their farming and social life.

Newari *guthi* and its relationship to *bola* and labor exchange

As a social-cultural structure, the *guthi* plays a very supportive role to the *bola* system because of the great belief the *Newars* have of their *guthi* system. All *Newari* households are interconnected by it and they always remain a member of the *guthi* system, *guthiyar*. There are two main types of *guthi*, namely the *Malamai Guthi* and the *Deu-Guthi*. The *Malamai Guthi* plays the role of both *Si-Guthi* and *Sana-Guthi* in arranging and managing the entire funeral process after the death of any *Guthiyar*. The role of *Deu-Guthi* is related to worshipping of local deity, in this case, of *Manamaiju*. Every year there is a great festival organized by this *guthi* on the day of *Manamaiju Jatra* or *Baisakh Purnima* (full moon day of April). The *bola* practice is very much interlinked with subsistence farming and traditional knowledge. For example, Santa Maya, a *Rajbahak*, a peasant, says, “In our *Jyapu* locality our farming is based on *bola*, otherwise it doesn’t work as the local people do not believe in working for a wage. It is our culture that we only serve the *Parbate* groups for money.” She also explained about the *bola* is fully supported by *guthi* members as there is a cash problem during the rice planting due to the lack of a regular income source. This situation provides them with two options in the sense of labor force utilization for farming. One is labor reciprocity within their locality and the other is labor service to *Parbate* groups for money. It proves that there is a good combination of cooperative management and market systems within two different caste groups. Here the role of *guthi* contributes as a cooperative partner for the system.

5.1.2.2 Significance of *bola* in terms of cultural aspect

The *bola* has a significant role in representing *Newari* culture in Manamaiju village. Beyond my own experience, it looks like an inseparable subject matter for their subsistence life. Here I want to focus some of its cultural aspects.

Newari Language

In any society the medium of communication has a vital role to make their social, economic, cultural and political life easy. When I was in the field at the time of *bola*, I noted the *Newar bola* members were talking to each other in *Newari*, but Nepali when they spoke to me. From an anthropological point of view, the importance of local language was to create relationships of 'you' and 'our' among their whole social and cultural life. It does not matter whether their language is oral or written. The important fact is its utilization. In this village the *Newar* peasant groups are *Maharjan* and *Rajbahak*, they have their own living patterns and they can not inter-marry. But they have no difference of language and common festivals which creates a feeling of brotherhood in their locality. Their own language makes them on intimate terms to facilitate good networking. In turn, they make a relationship with *Brahmin* and *Chhetri* by speaking Nepali. The *Brahman* and *Chhetri* caste groups do not understand *Newari*. It makes sense that they have the flexibility to create inter-caste relationships that form an important part of human relations. By the use of their own language they can maintain a close relationship to other *Jyapu* villages and cultural practices. In terms of *Newari* usage and its preservation, one peasant grandmother has deep concerns exemplifying her grandchildren who are studying at a local English school. The Nepali and English languages are influencing them continuously by the school education system, at the same time; the impact of television encourages the promotion of non-*Newari* languages. She expressed an assumed expectation of the knowledge of the *Newari* language from our younger generation which has close relationship with culture and tradition. It is a fact that there is no way to stop the modern trends and their multicultural effects these days. I found she felt a deep consciousness to preserve the traditions and language.

Religious ceremony, cultural belief, music

There are no distinctive differences in the treatment of Hinduism and Buddhism in the village. Nhuchhe says, "I have two priests, one a Hindu *Brahmin* called '*Puret*' who holds our *Sidapat* (offerings given to ancestor's remembrance). And the other a Buddhist, called *Gubhaju*,

notably for the purposes of *Puja* (worship) and *Narayan Puja* (worship of the Hindu Lord Vishnu).” He added, “We used to divide *Shaiyadan* (donated materials and cash in the name of deceased family members) to each priest equally.” This statement clearly shows the equal importance of both priests despite their two religious groups. A verbal invitation is sufficient in the locality to convey messages for special religious ceremonies and rites. There are several cultural beliefs surrounding farming life. For example, *Newar* do not use a plough believing that the bull is Mahadeva’s (the Hindu Lord Shiva) steed and the fear of his displeasure in not putting his steed to work (Keshar, 2004:45). This belief is related to Hindu religious values and it has a connection with another great festival, *Goru Tihar* (Festival of the Ox). Another traditional belief, feeding frogs some mixed beans and peas during the day in the rice field during *Janhai-purnima* (full moon period of August), is said to encourage the frogs to eat the insects from the fields. It shows an example of the superstitious beliefs of the *Jyapu* peasants in Manamaiju village.

Musical instruments are kept in a certain house and are not to be use until the rice planting is totally finished in their locality. They also do not engage in any festive party and fun until the work is finished, except the singing of *Asare Geet* during rice planting which is without accompaniment. Roughly, the tasks of rice planting covers seven weeks (June-July) the deadline are the *Ghantakarna* festival³¹. This day is also celebrated in this village and is called *Sansar Puja* (world worship). It relates to the correction activities unknowing contamination between the different peasant groups during *bola*. In the same day evening they participate in a common feast after worshiping *Manamaiju* near the temple. In reference to *Newari* music, Ramkrishna Maharjan, head of the music group, informs me that: “Recently we have only 18 people maintaining the musical custom of playing *Dhime* (Newari traditional music). We play 3 times a year; during the *Gai-jatra* (Cow Festival), *Ropai-jatra* (Festival of Rice Planting) and *Baisakh Purnima* (festival of Manamaiju). This is for the preservation of our cultural and religious values.” It shows they have balanced festivals such as *Gai-jatra* for spiritual and ancestral purposes, *Ropai-jatra* is related to the economy and reciprocal labor exchange and *Baisakh Purnima* is related to religious worship of the Manamaiju deity and common feasting.

³¹ Based on Dhruva K. Deep’s article about “Greenest Time in Nepal” (p.1) depicted from Internet source as <http://www.catmando.com/casinosnepal/july/greenist.htm> - 02.03.2005

Local festival *Ropai-jatra*: A cultural mirror of *bola* and rice planting

There are several religious and culturally important festivals and ceremonies in this village, such as *Ghantakarna/Gathamuga* (Festival of throwing away evil spirits), *Nagapanchami* (Festival of Snakes), *Gai-jatra* (Cow Festival), *Ropai-jatra* (Festival of Rice Planting), *Gokarna Aauncy* (Father's Day), *Matatirtha Aauncy* (Mother's Day), *Manamaiju Jatra / Baisakh Purnima* (the full moon of April) and *Buddha Jayanti* (Lord Buddha's birthday) and so on. They are all related to a deep religious faith in God, feelings for fellow beings and of course feasting and enjoyment with friends and family³². *Ropai-jatra* shows its relevancy to both rice and *bola*. Based on my own experiences I would like to highlight the whole peasant involvement I witnessed during the day of rice planting which included traditional song and dance. I refer to photos included in Appendix V (Plates 9, 10). The main attraction of this festival seems to reflect the message of rice farming and reciprocal labor use techniques, mutual commitment and cultural demonstrations through various activities.

On the day of *Ropai-jatra* from morning to evening, they are busily occupied with a series of different activities. Early in the morning the women, more than a hundred, start a long march wearing traditional clothes and ornaments from around the locality. In afternoon the demonstration and representation shifts to the male party. During this time I saw that almost all of my informants were there. They had colorfully painted faces and were dressed in unusual clothing; some of them were full of humor and laughing with enjoyment. The main attraction was a number of male groups wearing women's dresses and preparing to show a performance of rice planting and how is it done in fields accompanied by the melody of song and dance. I carried real rice plants in their hands and there were more than 25 people dancing and singing to loud *Jyapu* music. They were using Nepali words in their songs; emphasizing the importance of the *kodali* (hand-hoe) and rice farming with its related common feelings. The whole surroundings were crowded with people of every age group. Some women were watching from their windows while at the same time they were busy preparing a variety of *Newari* dishes for the final feast. It was a great spectacle for me to observe.

³² *Ibid*, p.2

Thon: a motivational factor of the bola system

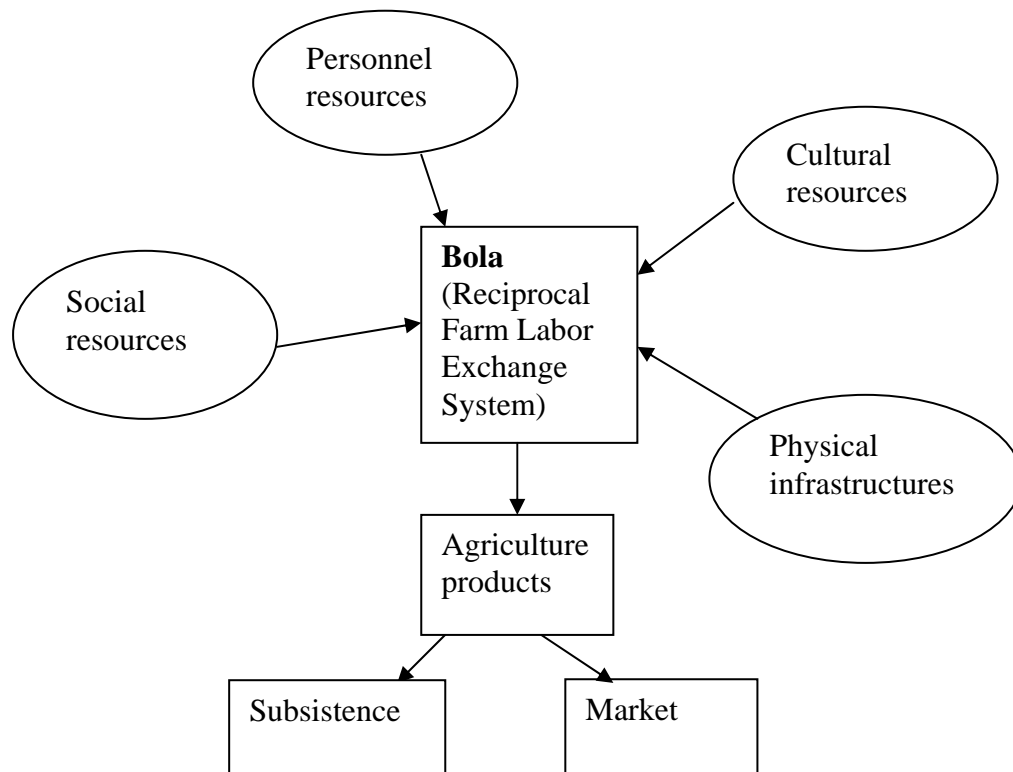
Almost all *Newari* peasants are in favor of *thon*, a beer made from rice. *Newari* women are very efficient at making it. In their culture, *thon* remains a sacred liquid, as it is also an item of offering to the Gods and to child in place of milk. Moreover, it is a reputable menu item for guests and every feast in their locality, particularly for *bola* members at rice planting when the *Jyapu* make it domestically and serve during this period. Traditionally the other castes like *Brahmin* and *Chhetri* don't like to touch it because of their social and cultural values. It is believed that the *thon* creates a boundary in between the cultural relationship of the *Newar* and *Parbate*. Additionally, a meal containing buffalo meat is also served during the workday which is also a traditionally neglected food item for the *Parbate* group, which is why *bola* is specific to the *Jyapu* group. So in this way we can see the special importance of buffalo meat and *thon* in *Jyapu* farming culture which supports *bola* very efficiently. It may be cost expensive than wage labor sometimes but they do not care about it. When I asked some local *Parbate* groups about their rice farming they stated that their main problem was labor contact during rice planting. But when paid for their labor there is no such food provision. They support the *Newar* community and their strong cultural values for rice farming. Their ethnic history and social hierarchy also supports it. It is expected that without having *thon*, they cannot serve to work. Based on this background, *thon* is the best attraction and motivational factor for their *bola* system. I witnessed the importance of the rice meal, drinks (liquor) and snacks (beaten rice) to the *Jyapu* and their *bola* system.

During the 1960's there was 'festive reciprocal farm labor' in Colombia, Ecuador, and Chile according to Erasmus. Likewise, according to Guillet, the 'festive' work party was popular in the Andes region during the 1980's and 1990's as it was motivated by food and drink. The provision of a meal and drinks during a *bola* work day gives it the focus of a 'festive party'. Barth also indicated millet farming and reciprocal labor exchange in Darfur as being motivated by millet-beer. In this relation here in Manamaiju the *thon* has deep relationship with rice-beer.

A basic conceptual framework of the *bola* system in Manamaiju Village

The following diagram is the general conceptual framework of the *bola* system based on my observations and collected information.

Figure 1: A Basic Conceptual Framework of the *Bola* System in Manamaiju Village



Short explanation:

The figure shows an association and direct relationship between the *bola* system and its inputs and outputs functionality.

Personnel resources: Household members, relatives, kin, friends, neighbors

Social resources: *Newari Guthi* (social structure), reciprocity, social commitment

Physical resources: Land, rain, soil, temperature, additional (e.g. fertilizer, tools etc.)

Cultural resources: language, religious ceremony, belief, music, the festival *Ropai-jatra*, *Newari* food and drink (buffalo meat and *thon* specially)

Agriculture products: Rice, wheat, potato for family subsistence and money from the market

To sum up, including the above framework, this chapter highlights the *bola* system which is based on traditional knowledge and the idea of reciprocity. Reciprocity is dependent on a give and take system of manpower in Manamaiju village. In addition to *bola*, the influence of modernity and the occurrence of paid labor can also be seen in their farming life. The peasants are not resisting a paid labor system from their locality, but it is automatically shaded by their social and cultural values. It is difficult to say exactly which knowledge is more useful, either traditional or modern. It depends on the emphasis of social and cultural values in a particular place of indigenous people. In this way, I looked at the *Jyapu* culture and their family based reciprocal labor use system - *bola* in rice farming. Their strong social commitments, mutual solidarity, the consciousness of cultural values and subsistence agriculture are the strong points of the *bola* system. It has also been identified that they have no regular money-earning source, except laborious jobs and by the selling of agricultural products. Normally there limited peasant male labor force are also engaged with other laborious jobs, such as masonry, but the labor of most of the other family members is depended upon as a basic characteristic contributing to their economic life. I found that the *Jyapu* women are very efficient both inside home and outside farming, especially during the rice planting in which they showed a great level of involvement. The peasants experience cash flow problems during the farming year. They receive no financial reward from their rice production given the constantly low price level at the markets which is controversial to their economic life. They consume most of their own agricultural production keeping the household subsistent and although some are able to sell their remaining produce it is without making an appropriate profit. Even though the economic situation is not in their favor, their *bola* system supports the required labor supply. The *bola system* means they do not need cash for labor as they utilize the household's members' labor. The sharing of food and drink (liquor) is embedded in their cultural values making allowing them to utilize their home reserves. The rice production system is based on local resources such as local seed, labor reciprocity, household consumption and distribution. The *bola* system is based on the provision of labor receiving-while-providing. From a social and cultural point of view the *guthi* system, *thon*, buffalo meat and *Ropai-jatra* are some the significant factors in supporting the system. Finally, the *Newari* peasants are not only capable of maintaining their own farming system, but also successfully handling those of other groups, for example, that of the *parbate*, demonstrating the cooperative involvement for sustainable agricultural development for the whole village.

5.2 Quantitative Analysis: A Complementary Part of the *Bola* System in Manamaiju Village

5.2.1 A Quantitative Outlook of the *Bola* System in Ward No 7

The following is a quantitative outlook of the *bola* system in Ward No 7 of Manamaiju Village, where the data collection was carried out between July-August, 2005. There are mixed population groups in the ward, each having different cultural values, but the majority of the population group is *Jyapu* whose main occupation is agriculture. There are four localities in this ward; *Kothu Tole*, *Palinza*, *Nayabasti* and *Manamaiju* (the same name as the village), but the *Kothu Tole* is the main locality in which the *Jyapu* group lives.

I want to make it clear that the purpose of this quantitative outlook is to illustrate the supplementary parts of the *bola* system. In my previous chapter, some *Jyapu* mentioned that the paid labor practice prevailed in this village in the fields of those belonging to the caste *Rajbahak*. This inspired me to quantify the exact number of households applying the *bola* system. This study also numerically describes the households who apply the different labor techniques of either traditional or modern.

There are two main objectives for the purpose of this study:

1. To find out the total number of households and the population of this ward to show the general demographic situation.
2. To find out the total number of farming households and their labor use methods based on the information given.

For data collection purposes, I prepared a set of questionnaires (Appendix VI-B) and carried out a census survey of all households except those under construction. For this purpose, preliminary household information of the ward was taken from the 'Voter-list' (Nepali) prepared by the Election Commission of Nepal and provided by village Development Committee. It was prepared in mid-April, 2004, and provides information on a total of 57 households only, but since then new households had arisen. I collected information from the newly added households which remained within the ward boundary. The data classification and analysis carried is only in relation to the above objectives.

The Findings:

To meet first objective, 57 households were identified in the preliminary information. However, 15 new households were established over the one and half years since the census increasing the total to 72 households, a 26% increase. This provides additional information to think about regarding the increasing pattern of the urbanization process and the decreasing amount of agriculture land. The total population is 432 persons from 72 households. The number of females is 224, and there are 208 males. Additionally, in accordance to their *Thar* (caste) identity (Appendix: VI -A), out of the population of 432 people, 260 are classified as *Newar* and 172 as non-*Newar*.

The result of my second objective, with the help of achieved field information, is illustrated in the following tables:

Table 1: Number of Households by Farming Households

Ethnic/Caste groups	Farming Households	Non-farming Households	Total Households
Newar (Jyapu) -			
Rajbahak	23	6	29
Maharjan	14	1	15
	37	7	44
Others*	1	27	28
Total	38	34	72

* Non-*Newar* (*Adhikari* as *Chhetri* caste) – labor use from own family members
Source: Field visit, August, 2005.

The above table presents a total of 38 farming households (53%) out of the total of 72 households. It indicates that out of those 38 farming households, 37 of them are from *Newar* (*Jyapu*) groups and one only is from another group. Within the *Newar*, there are 23 households from the *Rajbahak* caste and 14 from *Maharjan* who have farming land. The table also indicates 34 households who have no farming land and out of them 27 are from non-*Newar* groups. It is to be noted that one household having farming land uses ‘own family members’ for labor use techniques who are from non-*Newar* groups such as *Chhetri*. The next table only deals with the *Jyapu* farming households in terms of their labor use methods based on my collected household information.

Table 2: Number of *Jyapu* farming households by labor use system

S.N.	Method of Labor use	Households	Percentage
1.	<i>Bola</i> system	26	70%
2.	Paid labor	4	11%
3.	Own family members	3	8%
4.	Both <i>bola</i> and paid labor	4	11%
	Total	37	100%

Source: Field visit, August, 2005.

Above table shows there are 26 *Jyapu* households (70%) out of 37 applying the *bola* system of reciprocal farm labor, and only 4 households (11%) are using paid labor. In addition, there are 3 households (8%) applying labor use of their own family members and 4 households (11%) using both the *bola* and paid labor systems. So it is clear that more than 70% of the *Jyapu* households are still applying the *bola* system as a traditional method.

Finally, we can say *bola* is based on local knowledge and traditional practices that have an interconnection with the idea of reciprocity, whereas, paid labor connects to the idea of modern technology and market economy. The majority of farmers in this locality are applying the *bola* system. Hence, this quantitative outlook could also be representative of other wards where the *Jyapu* (*Maharjan*) are applying *bola* as a reciprocal labor exchange system.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

This study highlights the interrelationship between one indigenous group, the *Newar*, in Nepal and their local knowledge in relation to their farming system. According to various literatures, the *Newar* is one of 59 Indigenous Nationalities and a prime ethnic group of Kathmandu Valley. One of their majority caste groups is *Jyapu* whose traditional occupation is farming. The valley is administrated as three districts, Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. Kathmandu Valley has a background of successful rice farming spanning the years. For my study I have selected Manamaiju village from Kathmandu District where the second largest population group is *Newar*. The farmers of this village cultivate a mixed farm which is very labor intensive. Rice is their main food crop and also a major part of their economy. They carry out their farming on the basis of a reciprocal labor exchange system called *bola*, others caste groups in Nepal use the term *parma*. The system is based on the idea of reciprocity and it is also known as a primitive economic behavior. This type of system is disappearing from the villages where modernity is rapidly increasing and the market economy is growing in powerful. However, in Manamaiju village the system prevails and appears to be very successful. Although it has a market economy attachment with the city, the agricultural output is subsistence level and reciprocal labor is the top most preferred method of labor recruitment in the village. The exploration of the *bola* system and its significant factors were my main objectives of the study. I found the system to be very relevant in maintaining their subsistence life and in protecting their cultural identity.

I have explained aspects of the *Newari* people, their indigenous identity, history, their caste system, cultural artifacts, the nature of *bola* and *Jyapu* in Chapter II. It shows there are various *Newari* rural areas in Kathmandu Valley where their main occupation is agriculture. The *Jyapu* groups applying *bola* are a good example of combined sustainable agriculture and harmonious cultural activities which are key parts of the local knowledge. It is not possible to draw a conclusion about their socio-cultural values in this short writing. I have tried to show their appropriate knowledge and ways of life. There are many caste and sub-caste groups of *Newar* who belong to a ranked system of upper and lower status castes. This provides the framework of social discrimination within the society and it is formed on the basis of their traditional work description. It was established in the period of Jayasthiti Malla around 15th

century BC. Additionally, the history of the cultural assimilation process began from the period of King Prithvi Narayan Shah when he conquered the Kathmandu Valley in 1769 AD. The *Newar* have a majority population and a successful economy from agriculture, industry, commerce and business. They believe in both Hinduism and Buddhism without having any religious conflicts. The *Jyapu* are the most hardworking group and at the same time, a majority group of *Newar* who are seriously maintaining the *Newari* culture by simple living.

Looking specifically at the *Jyapu* of Manamaiju village, we can see that they occupy around 50% of the total land area of the Village Development Committee (VDC). There are more than 200 households of *Jyapu* divided into two sub-castes; *Maharjan* and *Rajbahak*. I also found a couple of other *Newari* caste groups in the village. The liberal economy and market oriented systems surround them but they still believe in their own knowledge and values, thus they adopt modern techniques less than traditional. Their main economic production and base of subsistence is rice farming which is regulated mostly by *bola* and is supported by their society and culture. *Bola* is a system where everyone joins together to help a member of the community by performing agricultural tasks without the transaction of wages. It is based on their mutual trust, requirements and cultural consciousness. Politically, they look very weak and passive; however, their *bola* system is supported by social dignity and self-reliance motives. Their peaceful cultural habitation, food reserves and its exchange practice during *bola* are a distinct ways of their agriculture life.

The general features of the village shows there are no advanced physical infrastructures even with the appearance of modern technologies. But the peasants are happy with their own Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in the form of *bola*. In fact IK has inherent power of cost-effective, participative and sustainable development. I observed their *bola* system carefully during the rice planting season. For this purpose I selected four *Jyapu* households as key informants, as well as consulting with other *Jaypu* peasants and different occupational locals, to explore the idea of reciprocity regarding *bola* and its significant roles. I discovered that they are coping with both traditional and modern techniques of labor recruitment. According to my quantitative data of a small part of the village, it shows more than 70% *Jyapu* are still maintaining this system of *bola* which denies the use of paid labor.

The physiographic situation and ecological atmosphere are very suitable for continuing with the *bola* system in the village. The whole Nepalese caste system places them as *Sudra Varna*

(servant group) according to the Hindu rules. They are also known as *Matwali* (alcohol user by birth). This indicates that their *thon* (rice-beer) has deep cultural values which are a negligible part for other castes such as *Brahmins* and *Chhetris* near the village.

The *bola* has interwoven the notion of cost-effective methods for their rice production. During the rice planting, the huge amount of labor is organized by this system without costing money as they consume their own reserve foodstuffs during the workday. A *bola* workday looks like a ceremonial day of embedded cultural value. I observed that during the *bola* workday a meal which includes buffalo meat, was served at midday and *thon* several times throughout the day. *Khadgi*, a sub-caste of the *Newar* having a traditional butchering occupation, also live in the village.

The system plays participative and sustainable roles as well. Their historical background and traditional caste system strongly support farming as an honorable job. Additionally, their social structure, *Guthi*, also strongly supports this system because *Guthi* members are stakeholders of it. The social solidarity, positive networking and mutual cooperation among the *Jyapu* peasants are effective factors in their subsistence farming. The *bola* system has a greater involvement of female workers which provokes the importance of gender roles and respectful social status as well.

After the land, labor is the major production factor of these peasants. Their labor sharing system has two types of cooperative roles. One is inside their own locality where they share labor without monetary transactions, but whenever out of their locality, for example, working for *Brahman* and *Chhetri* caste groups, they provide farm labor for cash. This shows a good example of inter-caste relationships as well as positive participation for the benefit of production. In this way they support modern market systems by providing labor to other localities and selling the reserved crops as well. They are also preserving their own knowledge and traditions without having significant changes. Inside the village, some different caste peasants have farming land, but lack of sufficient family members or lack of time means they must pay for labor; usually their labor demand is supplied by the *Jyapu* groups. There is no gender discrimination and labor can be calculated as a loan until the next year, or it can substitute by others. These are the flexibilities of their labor system.

The *bola* system looks like a festive work party where a large amount of food and drink is freely and cheerfully served and consumed. Buffalo meat, *thon*, potatoes, and many types of beans are the typical *Newari* foodstuffs for the meal. Food and drink are motivational factors inherent to the system. Feasting is an inseparable part of the *Newar* culture.

I found that in the village, their mother tongue, *Newari*, is mostly spoken. Their main means of oral communication is *Newari*, not only at home, but also in the fields. They have an equal command of Nepali which they speak for the sake of outsiders.

Newari festivals play a significant role in boosting the *bola* system. The *Ropai-jatra* (Festival of Rice Planting) focuses on the awareness and urgency of rice planting by the use of cultural demonstration. In fact, this festival is a cultural mirror of their farming life. Female groups form a cultural procession; males have the social commitment of singing and dancing during the festival. I have not found any one-language term to describe exactly its significance to their agricultural life. Rice planting and *bola* look like a mutual exclusive for their economic and cultural life through the essence of the festival. For economic gain, many *Jyapu* are engaged in house construction related works, such as masonry and carpentry, in order to help support their agricultural life culture.

Finally, although the idea of reciprocity is old, it is still relevant to my study. In Manamaiju they are applying their own Indigenous Knowledge, as it is useful in their production and exchange system. *Bola* is supported by their mutual interdependence, cooperative involvement and cultural consciousness. Hence, it plays an important role in keeping a distinct *Newar* identity and in making their farming life economically sustainable. In this regard, *bola* might be a source of inspiration to other indigenous agricultural worlds.

Glossary

B.S: Bikram Sambat; the official calendar of Nepal which is 56.7 years ahead of the solar Gregorian calendar (AD)

Baje: Called for *Brahman* or Priest and also meaning of grand father

Bause/lathe: Male worker during rice plantation

Bhotojatra: Showing the vest of rain-god as 'Matchendranath' in *Lalitpur*

Bhaye: Newari term for language

Bhoye: Feasting

Bola: Reciprocal farm labor exchange practices of Newar in Kathmandu Valley

Dugnad: Norwegian concept of communal work projects as labor sharing

Gurung: An ethnic community of Nepal

Guthi: A form of social and cultural organization which formulates their traditions and customs

Guthi land: A charitable land which is donated or separated by landlords in the name of a God/Goddess to worship or perform festivals.

Ja: Cooked rice, a Newari term ('*Bhat*' in Nepali)

Jat/Jaat: This term means a caste or ethnic group in Nepalese society

Jati : A Sanskrit word which means different caste and race groups

Jatra: Festival of Humor, carrying gods/deities in a procession along the ritual demarcated route

Jyala: wages of labor

Jyapu: Peasant groups of *Newar*, one of Nepal's largest ethnic groups

Khadgi: A caste of *Newar*

Kirat: Ethnic groups of *Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar, Yakkha* who believe on 'Kirant' religion

Lah Chale Jyupim: The Newari term meaning as 'water acceptance'

Lah Chale Majyupim: The Newari term meaning as 'water unacceptance'

Limbu: An ethnic community of Nepal

Maharjan: A sub-caste group of *Newar*

Margi: The follower of a particular religious myth

Matwali: By birth an alcohol user

Muluki Ain: The legal code of 1854

Nepal Sambat: Newari calendar which dates from 880 AD.

Newar: An ethnic community of Nepal

Paani: Water (*lah* in Newari)

Parbatia/Parbate: Hill people referring to *Brahman*, *Chhetri* etc.

Parma: System of farm labour exchange

Pathi: A traditional measurement scale, 1 pathi =8 mana; 1 mana = around 1/2 Kg.

Pradhan: One of Newar castes

Phuki: Patriarchal lineage

Raikar: A private land which is registered on government record

Rajbahak: A sub-caste group of Newar

Ropani: A traditional measurement of land in Nepalese hills and valleys; 1 ropani equivalent 74x74 sq.feet or 0.12571 Acre or 0.05087 Hectare

Ropar: Female worker who transplants the rice seedlings during rice planting

Shivamargi: Those who follow the god Shiva's divine rule (Hindu)

Tagadhari: Sanskrit term which means 'wearers of the sacred thread'

Terai: Sub-tropical plains of the southern part of Nepal covering total of 17 % area

Thar: Lineage, family, father's name

This term also used in Hindi, Newari and Nepali languages.

Thon: Newari term for home made liquor (white rice-beer), is very much popular in Jyapu society; in Nepali term it is called *Jand*

Tole: Locality or a small area in Nepali, in Newari it is 'Twa'

Varna: Sanskrit term which means actually color of people to distinguish between Aryans (race)

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- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newar> - (01.01.2005)

Appendices:

Appendix I: Schedule of Indigenous Nationalities of Nepal

1. Kisan	2. Kumal
3. Kushwadiya	4. Kushunda
5. Gangai	6. Gurung
7. Chepang	8. Chhantyal
9. Chhairotan	10 Jirel
11. Jhangad	12. Dolpo
13. Tangbe	14. Tajpuria
15. Tamang	16. Tin Gaunle Thakali
17. Topkegola	18. Thakali
19. Thami	20. Tharu
21. Thudam	22. Danuwar
23. Darai	24. Dura
25. Dhanuk (Rajbansi)	26. Dhimal
27. Newar	28. Pahari
29. Free	30. Bankariya
31. Baramo	32. Bahra Gaunle
33. Bote	34. Bhujel
35. Bhote	36. Magar
37. Majhi	38. Marphali Thakali
39. Mugali	40. Meche (bodo)
41. Yakkha	42. Rai
43. Raute	44. Rajbansi (Koch)
45. Rajhi	46 Larke
47. Limbu	48 Lepcha
49. Lhopa	50. Lhami (shingsawa)
51. Walung	52. Byasi
53. Sherpa	54. Satar (Santhal)
55. Siyar	56. Sunuwar
57. Surel	58. Hayu
59. Hyolmo	

Source: "The Indigenous Nationalities of Nepal" published by National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities: An introduction" 2003 (p54)

Appendix II: The Nepalese Caste Hierarchy according to Law Code, 1854

(Lie, 1999:25)

Ethnic affiliation
(P = Parbatiya,
N = Newar)*

I. Wearers of the sacred thread /Tagadhari (Odegaard'97:9)	
Upadhyaya Brahman (bahun)	P
Thakuri (the royal caste)	P
Jaisi Brahman	P
Chetri (Ksatriya)	P
Rajopadhaya Brahman ("Deva Bhaju")	N
Indian Brahmans	Other
Ascetics	P
"Lower" Jaisi Brahman	P
Certain high Shrestha groups (e.g. Josi)	N
II. Non-enslavable alcohol-drinders/Namasinya matwali (<i>Ibid</i>)	
Non-threadwearing Shrestha	N
Vajracarya/Sakya/Uray-Tuladhar <i>et al.</i>	N
Maharjan (Jyapu)	N
Various Newar service castes	N
Hill tribes (e.g. Magar, Gurung)	Other
III. Enslavable alcohol-drinker/Masinya matwali (<i>ibid</i>)	
Tibetans (incl. Tamangs); some small tribes; Tharu	Other
IV. Impure but "touchable" castes/Paani nacalnya choi chito halnu naparnya (<i>Ibid</i>)	
Khadgi (Butchers, Milk-sellers)	N
Kapali (death Specialists, Musicians)	N
Rajaka (washermen)	N
Carmakar (Drum-Makers)	N
Muslims (Bangle-sellers)	N
Westerners (mlecch)	Other
V. Untouchables/Paani nacalnya choi chito halnuparnya (<i>ibid</i>)	
Various Parbatiya castes	P
Dyahla (Sweepers)	N
Kyamkhalah (Sweepers, Scavengers)	N

Höfer in Gellner 1995:11

* The classification by ethnic affiliation is problematic because Parbatiya cannot be an ethnic group comparable to the Newar. People of Aryan background inhabiting the hills are commonly called Parbatiya, as opposed to Aryan people from the Plains. The name Parbatiya is used to designate a heterogeneous group.

Appendix III: The Newar Caste System According to Hierarchical Position

(Gurung, 2000:39)

Water acceptable <i>jats</i> (<i>Lah Chale Jyupim</i>) = Their <i>Purohita</i> (family priest) is a <i>Brahman</i> or <i>Vajracharya</i> and their body purification rite is performed by <i>Nau</i> (barber) <i>jat</i>		
Levels	Jat	Thars
Level I	Deo Brahman	Rajopadhyas: Purohit for all Hindu Newars
	Bare	Vajracharya: Gubaju or Purohita for all Buddhist Newars Shakya: Commonly referred to as 'Bare' in contrast to Vajracharya. Temple priests with rights of membership in Newar Buddhist Vihara and also traditionally Gold and silversmiths.
Level II	Chhathare (Shiva-margi)	Joshi : Astrologer Malla : Descendants of royal family Pradhan, Amatya and other sub-castes are descendants of royal advisors
	Panchthare (Shiva-margi)	Karmacharya (acaju) tantric priests Shrestha mixed offspring of Chhathare and Panchthare Thimi Shresthas Dhulikhel Shresthas
	Uray/Udas	Tuladhar - Merchant Baniya - Merchant Sikarmi - Wood worker, house builder Tamrakar (Tava) - Metalsmiths Coh(n) - Karmi-stone worker Awa - Mason Kanskar - Worker in bronze Tamot - Stone worker (not recognized as Uray because they eat chicken)
Level III	Jyapu	Maharjan/Dangol - farmers (majority in Lalitpur area, Patan, Bungmati etc) Suwal - Bhaktapur Hindu Jyapu, numerous other subcastes Kumhal - Potter, not accepted as Jyapu by all Pahari - farmers from outskirts of the valley, not accepted other jyapus
Jats whose body purification rite is performed by Nay		

Level IV		<p>Gathu/Mali – Gardeners (provider of followers for worship)</p> <p>Nau – They provide barber service, cutting and painting nails in purification rituals to all levels above this level</p> <p>Chitrakar/Pun – Painter, painting picture of various deities as well as houses and temples</p> <p>Chapa/Ranjitkar – Dyer of cloth</p> <p>Manandhar/Salmi – Oil pressers</p> <p>Kow – Newar blacksmith</p>
Water Unacceptable Jats (<i>Lah Chale Majyupim</i>)		
Level V	Touchable jats	<p>Sanga/Sangat – Dhobi</p> <p>Bha – Dyers of red cloth</p> <p>Nay/Kasai/Khadgi – Butchers</p> <p>Kusle (jogi) - Musicians</p>
	Untouchable jats	<p>Kulu – Cobblers, drum makers</p> <p>Pore – fishers, skinners, traditionally executioners</p> <p>Chyame – Night-soil remover</p> <p>Hara Hura – Offspring of Pore/Chyame</p>

Appendix IV: Population by Caste / Ethnic Group of Manamaiju VDC

S.N.	Caste/Ethnic Groups	Population
1.	Chhetri	3654
2.	Newar	2649
3.	Brahman-Hill	2285
4.	Magar	394
5.	Bhote	383
6.	Rai	197
7.	Thakuri	55
8.	Muslim	41
9.	Yakkha	35
10.	Damai/Dholi	31
11.	Sarki	30
12.	Limbu	29
13.	Sanyasi	28
14.	Sherpa	23
15.	Gharti/Bhujel	21
16.	Tharu	14
17.	Majhi	9
18.	Yadav	6
19.	Sonar	5
20.	Hajam/Thakur	3
21.	Churaute	3
22.	Thami	3
23.	Dhobi	2
24.	Kumal	1
25.	Unidentified Caste	36
26.	Unidentified Dalit	6
	Total	10959

Source: Population Census 2001, Village Development Committees/Municipalities (table 11), CD Launched by *His Majesty's Government/Nepal*
National Planning Commission Secretariat, Central Bureau of Statistics,
 Thapathali, Kathmandu, Nepal and UNFPA.

Appendix V: Plates

1. The author with Asthabir, a peasant of Manamaiju Village, during his rice plantation



2. Asthabir's rice planting; the women's involvement in the *bola* system



3. Janak's father and other *ropars* (female workers) rice planting on terraced fields



4. Nhuchhe Maharjan using both chemical and organic fertilizer on his rice field



5. Members of *bola* and the side of the field Newari foodstuffs and *thon*



7. Gyan Bahadur and others are having *thon* (rice-beer) during *bola*



9. Male performances of *Ropai-jatra* (festival of rice planting)



11. Peasant housewives having *thon* during *Ropai-jatra* festival



Appendix VI- A
The Total Population by Sex of Manamaiju Village, Ward No 7*

Households S.N.	Total	Male	Female	Households S.N.	Total	Male	Female
01	8	3	5	02	7	3	4
03	11	6	5	04	3	2	1
05	6	3	3	06	8	5	3
07	5	2	3	08	4	2	2
09	8	4	4	10	1	1	-
11	5	3	2	12	7	4	3
13	9	4	5	14	5	1	4
15	4	2	2	16	5	2	3
17	7	3	4	18	7	4	3
19	11	5	6	20	3	2	1
21	5	3	2	22	2	1	1
23	3	1	2	24	5	3	3
25	5	1	4	26	1	-	1
27	11	3	8	28	6	4	2
29	5	3	2	30	7	2	5
31	4	2	2	32	2	1	1
33	4	2	2	34	4	2	2
35	5	3	2	36	4	2	2
37	8	4	4	38	4	3	1
39	5	2	3	40	7	3	4
41	20	10	10	42	15	9	6
43	10	5	5	44	5	2	3
45	5	3	2	46	5	2	3
47	4	2	2	48	3	2	1
49	10	6	4	50	4	-	4
51	4	2	2	52	5	3	2
53	6	2	4	54	6	2	4
55	5	4	1	56	3	2	1
57	6	3	3	58	6	4	2
59	5	3	2	60	7	4	3
61	6	2	4	62	5	2	3
63	10	5	5	64	7	1	6
65	5	2	3	66	9	3	6
67	6	3	3	68	6	3	3
69	1	1	-	70	8	3	5
71	8	4	4	72	5	3	2
				Total	432	208	224

* Total Newar's population (according to 'Thar') – 260, Non-Newar -172

Source: Field study of July-August, 2005.

Appendix VI- B

(NB: only for research purposes)

A Set of Questionnaires For a Study on Indigenous People's Knowledge in Rice Plantation Based on the *Newar* of Manamaiju Village Nepal

July-August, 2005

Prepared by

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A set of questionnaires for a Study on
Indigenous People's Knowledge in Rice Plantation
Based on Newars of Manamaiju Village
Nepal
July-August, 2005.

(Please! Give your answers openly. Your answers will be kept secret and be used for research purposes only)

Name of Interviewer:

Age:.

Relationship to Head of Household:

Ward No..... Name of Village:

House No.:

Date:

1. What is your main occupation?

- (a) Agriculture
- (b) Animal Husbandry
- (c) Business
- (d) Service
- (e) Others

2. Please provide your family members descriptions as follows:

S. N.	Name	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Edu-cation	Trai-ning	Mother Tongue	Rel-igion	Occu-pation	Others

3. Do you and your family member have own land holding?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 3.1 If yes, what type of land do you have?
 (a) Raikar (b) Guthi (c) Both of them
- 3.2 For rice plantation purposes, how much land do you own?
 (a) Less than 2 ropanies
 (b) 2-4 ropanies
 (c) 4-6 ropanies
 (d) 6-8 ropanies
 (e) More than 8 ropanies
4. Do you rent-in any land? (a) Yes (b) No
- 4.1 If yes, what type of rented land do you have?
 (a) Raikar (b) Guthi (c) Both of them
- 4.2 For rice plantation purposes how much rented land do you have?
 (a) Less than 2 ropanies
 (b) 2-4 ropanies
 (c) 4-6 ropanies
 (d) 6-8 ropanies
 (e) More than 8 ropanies
5. Do you have any livestock (cattle, goats, chickens etc)? (a) Yes (b)
 No
- 5.1 If yes, how many cows do you have?
 (a) One (b) Two (c) Three (d) Four (e) More than four
- 5.2 How many buffalo do you have?
 (a) One (b) Two (c) Three (d) Four (e) More than four
- 5.3 How many goats and / or sheep do you have?
 (a) One (b) Two (c) Three (d) Four (e) More than four
- 5.4 How many chickens do you have?
 (a) Less than 5 (b) 5-10 (c) 10-15 (d) More than 15
- 5.5 How many ducks do you have?
 (a) Less than 5 (b) 5-10 (c) 10-15 (d) More than 15
6. Is the output from your agriculture activities sufficient for your family survival?
 (a) Yes (b) No
7. For what use do you utilize the products of your agricultural output?
 (a) Sales (b) Domestic use (c) Both of them
8. Do you have any loan for the purpose of rice farming during this year?
 (a) Yes (b) No

8.1 If yes, from where did you borrow or loan?

- (a) From a financial institution
- (b) From a rich person (Sau/Mahajan)
- (c) Both of them
- (d) Others

9. Which source of drinking water do you consume for your family?

- (a) Tap
- (b) Well
- (c) Tube well
- (d) Others

9.1 Of the above, are you using; (a) Private (b) Public

10. If someone in your family gets sick then what measures will be taken in your home?

- (a) To see the doctor
- (b) To see the *Dhami Jhakri*
- (c) To incantation (*Pujne/Manchine*)
- (d) Others.....

11. Do you have any irrigation facility in your rice field? (a) Yes (b) No

11.1 If yes, which is the main source of it?

- (a) River (b) Kulo (c) Well (d) Tube well

12. Which is the main fuel used in your home for daily food cooking?

- (a) Fire wood
- (b) Stalk of rice, wheat, maize etc
- (c) Kerosen Oil
- (d) LP Gas
- (e) Electricity

13. What types of labor force are being used in your rice field?

- (a) Paid labor
- (b) Parma (Bola)
- (c) Own family members
- (d) Others

13.1 If you use the Parma (Bola) system, then which type of its formation do you prefer?

- (a) By the regular group of Parma members
- (b) By irregular group of Parma members
- (c) Both of them
- (d) Others

13.2 How trustful do you believe this system of rice farming to be except in exceptional cases?

- (a) Highly (b) Moderate (c) Low (d) Very low

13.3 Do student in your locality involve himself or herself in the Parma system?

- (a) Yes (b) No

13.4 Does the Parma system supply sufficient manpower when you need it at the time of rice planting?

- (a) Yes (b) No

13.5 Are there any problems with the Parma system in this village?

- (a) Yes (b) No

If Yes, please specify in short:

13.6 Can paid labor supply sufficient labor at the time of rice planting?

- (a) Yes (b) No

13.6 Do you think Parma is a verbal agreement among the community members to supply the labor?

- (a) Yes (b) No

13.7 With regards to labor networking which is the most effective system do you think?

- (a) Paid labor system
(b) Parma system
(c) Both of them
(d) Others

13.7 How do you rate the social and cultural bonding among the people of this locality through the Parma system?

- (a) Very high (b) High (c) Low (d) Very lo

14. How do you get the necessary agricultural knowledge for your rice plantation?

(Tick one or more)

- (a) By local source
(b) By governmental staff (JT, JTA)
(c) By media (radio/TV)
(d) By Journals
(e) Others...

15. What types of agricultural input are you using in your rice farming? (Tick one or more)

- (a) Local or Organic fertilizer
(b) Mineral or Chemical fertilizer
(c) Pesticide or Insecticides
(d) Local seeds
(e) Improve seeds
(f) Using local agricultural instruments
(g) Using modern instruments (Water pump, Tractor etc)

16. Are you engaged in any of your Indigenous /Nationalities groups? (This question is only for Newar in this study)

- (a) Yes (b) No

If yes, please give the name of organization:..

17. Finally, do you have any comments or suggestions on your local socio-cultural aspects?

- (a) Yes (b) No

If Yes, please specify in short:..

Thanks for your cooperation.