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LIVES, LIVELIHOODS, AND LANDSCAPES;
**A STUDY OF LAND USE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN NORTHEASTERN
NEPAL**

By
JENNIFER LEIGH ANDERSON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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In
GEOGRAPHY

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2006

THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Jennifer Leigh Anderson for the Master of Science in Geography were presented June 4, 2003 and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Jennifer Leigh Anderson for the Master of Science in Geography presented June 4, 2003.

Lives, Livelihoods, And Landscapes; A Study of Land Use and Social Change in Northeastern Nepal

This thesis explores the forces of change in lives and landscapes that have altered the Lamosangu-to-Everest route in northeastern Nepal and shows how a transect in photographs and conversations across the east-central Himalaya allows us insight and a greater understanding into the processes and consequences of this change.

Three forces of change over the last twenty-five years dominated discussions with local informants: the rise of the “People’s War”—Nepal’s Maoist Insurgency—beginning in 1996; the Democratic Revolution of 1990; and dependence on tourism for livelihood after the establishment of Sagarmatha National Park in 1976. Understanding the cultural-historical context for these forces is necessary to understand the concerns of today’s residents living along the Lamosangu-to-Mount Everest Base Camp transect.

The visual and ethnographic evidence discussed in this thesis takes a larger role than strict analysis of conspicuous large-scale land use change and I hope the

comparative 2001 images will be used as benchmarks for future research as well as for further exploration into the ways people and place have been represented.

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ACRONYMS

ADB:	Asian Development Bank
CGI:	Corrugated Galvanized Iron
CPN (M):	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
DNPWC:	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation
FAO:	United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization
HMG/N:	His Majesty's Government/Nepal
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
INGO:	International Non-Governmental Organization
IUCN :	The World Conservation Union
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
RNA:	Royal Nepal Army
SATA:	Swiss Agreement for Technical Assistance
SNP:	Sagarmatha National Park
UML:	United Marxist Leninist
UNDP:	United Nations Development Project
UNEP:	United Nations Environmental Program
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
U.S.:	United States
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development
WWF:	World Wildlife Fund

Chapter 1. Introduction

In September of 2001 I went to Nepal to conduct research, intending to analyze twenty-five years of changes in lifeways and landscapes along the trail corridor linking Sagarmatha (Mount Everest) National Park (SNP) with the original trailhead at Lamosangu, as documented in photographs and discussed by local informants I would meet along the way. My research was based in the techniques of repeat photography: the precise duplication of photographic images taken years earlier, also known as rephotography. But in the course of my fieldwork I discovered that the transformations I intended to examine were not to be found in photographs. Although I was able to document minor landscape change at some rephotographic sites (as discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis), it was the changing lifeways of my informants, who have been buffeted over the last twenty-five years by rapid transformations in economy, society, and politics that seemed more significant and interesting.

Accordingly I seek in this thesis to explore the forces of change in lives and landscapes along the Lamosangu-to-Everest route, and to show how a transect in photographs and conversations across the east-central Himalaya allows us insight into the processes and consequences of this change. Three such forces in particular arose in discussions with local informants in 2001: the rise of the “People’s War”—Nepal’s Maoist Insurgency—beginning in 1996; the Democratic Revolution of 1990; and dependence on tourism for livelihood after the establishment of Sagarmatha National Park in 1976. I researched the cultural-historical context for these forces to

understand how they came to be the concerns of today's residents living along the Lamosangu-to-Everest route. Thus, my revised goal in this thesis is to explore the forces as well as the manifestations of change in people's lives and landscapes in the Dolakha and Solukhumbu Districts of northeastern Nepal.

1.1 Methodology

Repeat photography and informant interviews are the core of the thesis; supplementary library work provides the context for understanding the information obtained through photographs and interviews. Taken together, these materials help to explore and explain the alterations in lives, livelihoods, and landscapes along the Lamosangu to Mount Everest Base Camp transect (Figure 1). The pairs of images are the means of progression along a transect through time, place, and issues.

Rephotography is an effective tool to study large-scale land use/landscape transition (Byers 1987, Ives 1987, Klett 1991, Vale 1973, Vale and Vale 1983). Change or the absence of change in the landscape is evident in photographs of the same place compared across time. Rephotography has sometimes challenged assumptions about ecological degradation in developing nations (Byers 2000, 2002, Fairhead and Leach 1996), as well as in developed countries (Vale 1973, Veblen and Lorenz 1986). Replicated images reveal landscape transition through time but cannot explain reasons for, frequency of, or duration of change. For these reasons, and to satisfy personal curiosity, I elicited narratives of change from local people living or working in areas located near photosites. The complex interplay of social, political,

and economic forces recounted in these narratives led me to investigate deeper into the history of such processes in Nepal once I returned from the field.

Figure 1. Lamosangu-to-Mount Everest Base Camp Transect

1.1a Repeat Photography

To discern landscape/land use change I used the remote sensing method of repeat photography, also referred to as rephotography. I rephotographed a selection of images taken in the fall of 1976 along the Lamosangu-to-Everest route by environmentalist David Brower, as well as images photographed by geographer

Barbara Brower between 1982 and 2000. These images were made available for the purpose by Professor Brower, and were selected as rephotography prospects because they captured a significant number of locations along the route.

Between September 2001 and December 2001 I found and photographed forty of these photo-sites, but not all images are discussed in this text. I include images positioned at roughly equal intervals along the transect, for which an associated local narrative was collected.

Seasonal changes in Nepal are reflected in the landscape, of course, and I took my photographs throughout the autumn of 2001 to rule out seasonality as a factor with the fall 1976 images. I replicated photographs first taken in other seasons to compare changes in the built environment, and implied cultural/social change.

At most sites, I could relocate original photo-sites exactly; only in a few situations, where vegetation had taken over or new structures had been built, did I need to adjust photographic positioning. I recorded initial observations of apparent change, which I later compared to and included in the image analyses. Additionally I maintained a precise photo log of exposure, date, time of day, location, aspect, and GPS coordinates so others may re-replicate the 2001 images (Appendix 1).

To conduct rephotography one should ideally employ the same model of camera, lenses, and film used by the original photographer. But because different photographers with different camera bodies, lenses, and film types photographed the original 35mm slides, 35mm equipment was chosen based on reliability and accuracy: two Nikon F3-T camera bodies, 50mm-macro, 85mm, and 24mm Nikon lenses, and Provia F 35mm film. I chose fixed lenses, as opposed to zoom lenses, for edge-to-

edge sharpness. Hyper-focal focusing, for maximum depth of field, with a consistent aperture of f/8 provided maximum sharpness. David Brower photographed his images with Kodak Kodachrome 35mm film, then the most color accurate and archivable film, but Provia F 35mm is now regarded as the best in color neutrality and archivability among 35mm color films.

My experience as a professional photographer had prepared me for rephotography, but to prepare for conversations with Nepalis, I participated in Cornell University's Intensive Nepali Language Course the summer of 2001, before departing for Nepal in fall of 2001. The helpfulness of the Nepalis I encountered, and the fact that many along this tourist route speak some English, meant that even this rudimentary training in the language was sufficient to allow meaningful conversations. The original photographs of David and Barbara Brower useful as icebreakers to begin conversations with people I encountered near photo-sites, and most people participated with enthusiasm.

The informants were all involved either directly or indirectly in tourism. I had hoped to collect narratives from informants with more varied experience, but during my three months of field research I failed to find anyone who was not involved in tourism. Informants included porters, day laborers, trekking guides, and dairy and vegetable farmers who sold their goods to lodges; Sherpa lodge owners and their family, and Tibetans working for Sherpas in Sherpa-owned lodges, shops, and homes. Any names within this text have been changed to protect the participants' privacy.

My method for collecting narratives was consistent at every photosite. When reaching the vicinity of a photosite, I began searching for people living or working

nearby. I tried to speak primarily with older residents, as older people are a wealth of information especially when asking about local change over the last twenty-five years. I had planned to spend two to three days in each photosite area to collect further information, but if finding the exact photosite location took longer than planned I adjusted my stay accordingly. When searching for photo-sites, even if I had already identified the location, I always asked the people I encountered where they thought the photograph was taken. I found that when I showed the older photograph (printed from the original slide), asked about the location, and explained when it was taken, the photographs became a useful tool that served as an 'icebreaker' to expand the conversation to other issues and concerns. Usually the informant would call over family or friends to examine the image, and often crowds of twenty or more people gathered to look at the photograph taken of their village twenty-five years ago. Older people often recalled their parent's livelihood when they were small children, what their childhood was like, and/or how the Maoist insurgency has changed their lives since the mid 1990s.

After the initial response to the photograph I asked their opinion about change in their village since the original photograph was taken, "*tapaaiko bicharma, aja bhanda pachchhis barsa agi tapaaiko gaau kosari pariwartan bhayo?*" [In your opinion, compared to today how has your village changed in twenty-five years?] With almost every photograph, no matter which village I was in or near, the overwhelming response was pride and happiness at how much the village had grown, or the scale of "development" that had come. Initially I framed my questions to avoid directing the informal discussions in any manner, letting the conversation go where it may.

However, in instances where no one mentioned environmental or land use change associated with the establishment of Sagarmatha National Park I began encouraging people to speak about these issues. Yet, even with this nudging, residents and Nepalis working in the study area continued to speak about economic and social change. The increase in tourist dollars since the establishment of SNP has meant new economic opportunities, access to education abroad, higher quality and more secure food supply, and, most importantly, a reason for men to stay in the village as opposed to migrating to Kathmandu, India, or as far as the Gulf States for work.

The Maoist People's War was also on the minds of the people with whom I spoke. The Maoist insurgency was typically mentioned when I asked about change, as most residents stated that everyone now lives in "fear": fear that their children will be kidnapped and/or forced to join the Maoists, fear that the Royal Nepal Army will wrongly accuse them of complicity with the Maoists and imprison their loved ones, and fear that their tourism-related livelihood will come to an end as tourist numbers steadily decline. In Sagarmatha National Park there is a large military presence and because of this presence many residents of SNP believed they were safer than people living outside of the SNP boundary. However, many residents of SNP expressed fear that Maoist insurgents were pretending to be porters to stake out the area and establish mountain camps unnoticed. Written on the first suspension bridge upon entering Sagarmatha National Park was written, in both English and Nepali, "Long Live the Maoists." This harbinger greeting set the mood found in many villages, both in and outside of Sagarmatha National Park boundaries.

1.2 Organization of Text

The text that follows reverses my own journey to better understanding of life and landscape change in Nepal, beginning with an introduction to the physical landscape, efforts to protect it, and the political history of Nepal, before reporting on transect photographs and findings. In Chapter Two I introduce the dynamics of the Himalayan environment—particularly the difficulty commentators have had in separating natural and human agency in Nepal—and the establishment of Sagarmatha National Park. Chapter Three develops the context for the Maoist insurgency by explaining something about the social and political history of Nepal. Chapter Four details my field research along the Lamosangu-to-Everest route by providing image analyses and the correlated narratives. The unifying thread connecting the entire text is the transect that begins at what is now the Lamosangu-Jiri road, becomes the footpath to Sagarmatha National Park, and continues on to Mount Everest Base Camp. The intent of this chapter is to fit the images and stories collected in the field into the wider framework of change in Nepal, and to explore the local patterns and effects of change. The trail defines the spatial scale of this case study, and the images define the temporal scale. Chapter Five concludes with a summary and suggestions for future research. Suggestions include the re-replication of the 2001 images, continued rephotographic and ethnographic monitoring, and landscape change evaluation. These techniques of monitoring and evaluation could help identify and visually illustrate concerns of Solukhumbu and Dolakha residents, guide Sagarmatha National Park management, provide clues as to possible alternative solutions, identify contemporary

Himalayan landscape processes, and assist in identifying demographic change resulting from a host of affects stemming from the Maoist insurgency.

Chapter 2. Environment

Nepal is comprised of three broad parallel physiographic areas, the *Himal* (Mountain), the *Pahad* (Hill), and the *Tarai* (Plains) regions (Figure 2).

Nepal Himal is home to Mount Everest (8,852m; known as Sagarmatha in Nepali and Chomolungma in Sherpa and Tibetan), which is part of the great divide of the Himalaya that defines Nepal's northern political border with China (Qinghai or the Tibetan Autonomous Region), and forms the northern border of the Solukhumbu District, the primary study area of this thesis.

South of the Himal lies the Pahad, identified as the low-mountain belt between 1,500 to 4,877 meters and covers 64 percent of Nepal's total area. The Pahad region includes the Kathmandu Valley, the country's most urbanized and populated area. South of the Pahad is the Tarai, a piedmont region and a northern extension of the Gangetic Plain. This alluvial land situated on the Nepal-India border is a lowland tropical and subtropical zone that covers seventeen percent of Nepal's total land area and incorporates several large valleys. Tarai elevation averages between 600 to 1,220 meters but the lowest point in Nepal, 70 meters, is located here.

Nepal's challenging topography has made movement and communication extremely problematic, contributing to the multitude of languages and cultures found within a relatively small geographic area. Nepal's 2001 census listed 103 caste/ethnic groups, primarily Indo-Aryan and Mongoloid, and 92 languages (HMG/N MOPE 2003): Nepal is said to be a land of 22 million minority citizens.

Today in many areas of Nepal the people of these many groups make their livings much as their ancestors did, for Nepal remains a country of mostly subsistence farmers, whose small holdings or rented fields, terraced into hillsides, often fail to provide sufficient production to sustain the household through a full year. Thus wage labor supplements agriculture for most rural Nepalis. Nepal's extreme landscape has long isolated communities and ethnic groups, resulting in the significant cultural differences noted above; perhaps more than in many other areas, the peoples of Nepal are intimately entwined with place (Zurick and Karan 1999).

Figure 2. Physiographic Regions of Nepal

2.1 The Study Area: Lamosangu to Mount Everest Base Camp

My field research was conducted in the Pahad and the Himal, within the districts of Dolakha and Solukhumbu. The cultural and physical context of the study region is necessary to discuss as they play a fundamental role in resident and visitor's

sense of place. Lamosangu (740m) and Jiri (1,905m), the first two villages rephotographed along the transect of study, are located within the Dolakha District. The majority of photo-sites and conversations are from the Solukhumbu District, home to Sagarmatha (Mount Everest) National Park and the highest photo-site—Mount Everest Base Camp.

2.2 Dolakha

The sounds of guns and bombs are never far away in rural Nepal these days. And so it is here, in the scenic Dolakha town of Jiri (Funyal 2005).

Compared to the Solukhumbu District, the Dolakha District is lower in elevation; agricultural productivity is higher, and the district has experienced more industrial economic development. Despite this economic development, in 2001 the Maoists proclaimed the formation of its *jan sarkar* (people's government) within the Dolakha District (Shneiderman and Turin 2004). Historically, ethnic groups and castes lived in separate settlements in this mountainous region. However, in the past fifty years, since the first development projects in Nepal began, the Dolakha villages of Lamosangu and Jiri, the first two places rephotographed along the transect, have undergone relative extensive economic development. This has resulted in many different ethnic groups and castes coming together in search of economic opportunities. Thus, the social makeup of this area has changed and currently there are a considerable mix of cultures, ethnic groups, and languages.

Traveling up through the hilly and terraced Sun Koshi Valley from Kathmandu on the Chinese financed the Arniko Highway takes you to the Dolakha village of Lamosangu. China has contributed the majority of funding for projects located in the vicinity of Lamosangu and near to the Arniko Highway, including the Sun Koshi hydroelectric plant near Lamosangu. Branching off from the Arniko Highway, the Lamosangu-Jiri road, built with Swiss funding and completed in the mid-1980s, begins at Lamosangu. Jiri is now the last stop from Kathmandu and is the place where the trail begins to Solukhumbu.

Jiri serves as a transport mecca, where porters and tourists alike begin their trek to numerous destinations, including SNP. There are plans to extend the road 20km farther to the village of Khimti, where a hydroelectric project is under construction (*Kathmandu Post* 2002). This extension would completely change the socio-economic dynamics of Jiri, as road construction did in Lamosangu, and would most likely lead to new patterns of migration in the region.

Since the 1950s Switzerland under the Swiss Agreement for Technical Assistance (SATA) with Nepal played a prominent role in the funding, design, and the maintenance of roads in Nepal (USAID 2003). The road to Jiri was first thought of in 1958, when the Swiss began the Jiri Multi-Purpose Development Project in Dolakha, establishing a number of interrelated projects including a hospital, a technical school, a dairy farm, and numerous forestry projects. Swiss planners worked closely with forestry officials and were later included in the Jiri community forestry program (Schaffner 1987).

Historically, differing ethnic groups and castes lived in separate settlements in this mountainous region. But because the Dolakha villages of Lamosangu and Jiri have been the focus of numerous economic development projects, many ethnic groups and castes from outside the area have moved here in search of economic opportunities. Additionally, buses from Kathmandu, the Tarai, and as far off as India, bring goods to trade or to sell and for porters to carry up into the highland roadless areas. Buses also bring tourists looking for porters, guides, and lodging and allow residents easy access to lowland cities. Before 1985 Lamosangu residents reaped the economic benefits of this collocation, but now residents of Jiri receive them. Thus, in the past fifty years, since the first development projects in Dolakha began, the socio-economic makeup of this area has changed.

In Jiri there is a considerable mix of cultures, ethnic groups, and languages. The largest groups include Sherpa, Newar, Tamang, Rai, and Jirel. The Jirel, related to the larger Nepali ethnic group of Magar, compose a very small minority of the national population, but the largest population of Jirel is found in Jiri. Jirels have traditionally followed Tibetan Buddhism, as do the Sherpa, but as many Nepalis who have been educated in government schools, required to teach the Hindu state curriculum in Nepali language, the Jirels are increasingly following Hindu beliefs. Jirel have traditionally subsistence farmers who grow all types of vegetables, grains, and fruits, cultivating the gently sloping hills and river valleys of Dolakha. Today many Jirels living in Jiri are involved in tourism either directly by owning lodges, working in lodges, running teashops, or working as porters or guides, or indirectly

through farming and dairy production and thereby selling vegetables and dairy products to the lodges (Bista 2004: 85).

In Dolakha and in the lower elevations Solukhumbu there are settlements of the Tibeto-Burman speaking Rai. Because Rai villages are at considerably lower elevations, the topography of the landscape is relatively gentle and rolling, especially in comparison to high altitude settlements of the Sherpa. At these lower elevations the growing season is considerably longer; thus a variety of vegetables, fruits, and grains are grown in Rai villages, as well as cotton. Many Rai continue to be subsistence farmers and during the winter months, Rai farmers will often travel to Kathmandu and to the Tarai to trade their goods and buy necessities (Bista 2004: 38). Numerous Rai households receive additional income as male family members are often recruited into the Indian or Gurkha British army.

Another ethnic group that makes up Jiri's population is Newar, original inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley. Newar society is fit into a complex caste hierarchy that includes both Buddhist and Hindu groups, which is fit into the larger and prevailing Hindu caste system of the state. Until recently most Newars spoke as their first language Newari, though this is changing because of government education policies. Many Newar parents expressed deep dismay that their children speak as their first language Nepali, their second English, and may only know a few words of Newari. Most Newars live in Kathmandu, particularly in the area of Ason and Durbar Square in Kathmandu, as this is the historic location of one of the three kingdoms that now comprise Kathmandu. Generally, high caste Hindu Newars constitute the successful business and banking class of the major urban areas of Nepal. The Newars

of Dolakha are both high caste landowners and low caste subsistence farmers who take on portering jobs to pay their land taxes and to send their children to school (Bista 2004).

The Tamang, another Tibeto-Burman speaking ethnic group, are one of the larger populations within the multitude of ethnic groups in Nepal. The Tamang are also one of the most exploited and marginalized groups in Nepal. The trafficking of Tamang girls and women for prostitution in India is a serious crisis in Dolakha, even more so in the neighboring district of Sindupalchok (Ahmad 2001, Bhusal 2003, Sangroula 2001). Many Tamang have migrated to Jiri in search of economic opportunities, primarily portering goods that are brought in by buses to Jiri, carrying these goods up into Solu and Khumbu. On the trail to Solukhumbu it is not unusual to see barefoot Tamang men carrying tanks of cooking gas, a refrigerator, many sheets of plywood, or a pool table strapped to their head for delivery in one of SNP's numerous lodges.

2.3 Solukhumbu and the Sherpa

The Solukhumbu District, a Mountain District within the larger Sagarmatha Zone (Figures 3 and 4) is comprised of four areas, Solu, Pharak, Kulung, and Khumbu. Solu, also known as *Shorong*, is located in the southernmost area of the Solukhumbu District and is situated between 2,300 meters and 3,100 meters; the town of Junbesi, discussed later, is located here. Pharak is located north of Solu and south of Khumbu;

Lukla is one site along the transect located here. Khumbu, source of most sites along the transect, lies in the northernmost area of the Solukhumbu District.

Figure 3. National Parks (N.P.) and Development Zones of Nepal

above 4,000 meters. Today these areas often contain ersatz or permanent tourist structures rather than seasonal grazing sites (Stevens 1997).

Figure 4. Solukhumbu Regions (Adapted from Sherpa 1999:9)

The Sherpa are a small minority in Nepal, but in the district of Solukhumbu the Sherpa are the majority. The Sherpa are believed to have emigrated from the eastern Tibetan province of Kham, about 2,000 km from their present homeland, four to five hundred years ago (Sherpa 1999, Adams 1992, 1996). Migration to what is now Nepal was most likely to escape the Mongol overlords and associated political pressures at that time (Bishop 1990).

It is thought that the Sherpa chose to settle in Khumbu because of the proximity to the region's lucrative trans-Himalayan trade routes between China and India and elsewhere. Draper states, "There is evidence that the early Khumbu settlers were perhaps motivated by the entrepreneurial opportunities that lay implicit in the interstitial position of Khumbu on the trade route between Tibet and Solu. . . Why else would people choose to settle in such a harsh environment?" (1988: 141).

The first Sherpa settlers are thought to have cleared forested areas for their herds of yak to graze and to cultivate crops, to have developed indigenous strategies of natural resource management (Brower 1993: 43). Since these first pioneers small-scale farming for subsistence and trade has been primary within Sherpa livelihood. Today, farming still takes place during the summer monsoon months when buckwheat, barley, and potatoes are grown and harvested in early fall (Brower 1991, Sherpa 1999). However, because of Khumbu's high elevation and harsh growing conditions, herding and trade have been the priority, allowing the Khumbu population to exceed its agricultural carrying capacity (Ortner 1999: 63).

Until the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950, trading, both north into Tibet (today the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China) and south and east into other

regions of Nepal and India (Figure 5) was the most lucrative of Khumbu's economic activities (Fisher 1997). Trade enabled certain Sherpas to become relatively affluent, who then passed their wealth on to heirs. These heirs had a head start in the tourism industry, as they had the financial means to build lodges and other tourist facilities in the 1970s.

Figure 5. Nepal's Political Border

All of the villages in the Khumbu and the Pharak regions, regardless of whether they are on or off the main tourist trail, are directly involved in tourism (Stevens 1997, 2002). With increasing wealth and contacts, Sherpas have more alternatives within the tourist industry and have chosen less dangerous lines of business. In addition to working as mountaineering and climbing guides, operating trekking agencies in Kathmandu, lodge ownership, and guiding for trekking groups is favored and often just as profitable. There are many important Sherpa clan names,

however, increasingly Sherpas are taking the last name of “Sherpa,” showing pride in Sherpa heritage and acknowledging that the name Sherpa is now internationally recognized, as Sherpa and trekking or mountaineering have become near synonymous (Ortner 1999).

Seldom referred to as *Bhotias* (a disparaging word for “Tibet people”) anymore, Sherpas are respected (or emulated or envied) for their entrepreneurial success, and the Sherpa’s “style” is even imitated. In Kathmandu, high caste Nepali women can be seen wearing silk versions of traditional Sherpa dress and Royal Nepal Airline’s female flight attendants wear traditional Sherpa dress as uniforms (Sherpa women’s dress is almost indistinguishable from the clothing of women throughout the Tibetan cultural region). Because of the Sherpa’s entrepreneurial prowess, increasing affluence, and world fame, the Sherpa have apparently begun to dismantle the contempt long held by high caste society. The presence of the world’s highest mountain in the Sherpa’s backyard contributes to this process.

In the late 1960s the first appeals for environmental protection of the Everest area (Khumbu) were heard, voiced primarily by visitors who perceived the region as being on the verge of ecological ruin (Eckholm 1975, Lucas 1977, Mishra 1973). Blame for this impending environmental disaster was placed primarily on local villagers’ excessive use of forest resources, which was driven by the increasing demands of tourists for wood fuel in particular. Observers saw Khumbu and the Sherpa as fitting the current understanding of human-environment interactions attributed to the entire Himalaya. This assumption about environmental degradation at human hands has been called the Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation

(THED), and has been the subject of considerable research and debate (Ives and Messerli 1989).

2.4 Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation

The Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation (THED) reasoned that deforestation was a recent phenomenon and caused by the land use practices of highland farmers of the Himalaya. According to THED, the rapidly increasing population of hill-farming peasants was clearing forests at an accelerating rate to meet expanding needs for farm plots, cooking fuel, and fodder for livestock—whose grazing inhibited the re-growth of forest. Deforestation of steep slopes subjected to monsoon rains would cause massive landslides and intensify erosion rates. The hill villagers would be forced to replace wood fuel with animal dung, reducing the amount of fertilizer applied to agricultural areas and further depleting the soil of nutrients—requiring expansion of cultivation into former forest. And increasing erosion would contribute to the real crisis of Himalayan degradation: the flooding of the rivers in the densely populated Ganges plain (Bajracharya 1983, Ekholm 1975, 1976, Lucas 1977, Mishra 1973).

This intuitive feedback loop was readily accepted and promulgated by scholars, environmentalists, and multilateral organizations alike throughout the 1970s. In 1976, at the height of THED, Sagarmatha National Park was created, and both the motivation for creating the park and management strategies developed for it were

grounded in the then-prevailing understanding of human agency and environmental degradation (Brower 1991).¹

Sagarmatha National Park was officially established in July of 1976, and listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979. Sagarmatha National Park was one of the first attempts in the world to break away from the traditional Western conservation paradigm, or the ‘Yellowstone model,’ which requires the eviction of all human inhabitants residing within the newly proclaimed protected area (Stevens 1993). This was the policy used in the establishment of Chitwan National Park and Lake Rara National Park, in central and in western Nepal respectively. These earlier park policies made the Sherpa initially suspicious of the national park in their homeland (Keiter 1995). Although the Sherpa were allowed to remain in the newly proclaimed protected area, park planners continued to assume that Sherpa were at the root of presumed forest degradation. The SNP Management Plan implemented new forest laws making customary access and use illegal for the residents of Khumbu. Woodcutting was diverted to Pharak, outside the park, greatly increasing the labor and expense required to fulfill home and hotel fuel and construction needs (Brower 1991, Stevens 1993).

The main objectives of western officials involved (New Zealand forestry officials, the FAO, and IUCN) were the protection of wildlife, water, and soil

¹ The manner in which Sagarmatha National Park was established is not unusual. Peluso’s (1992) research shows that in less developed nations most “nature” conservation initiatives have been imported by the West and facilitate control by the state. Peluso and Watts’ (2001) research illustrates how militarization of National Parks is often legitimated by international conservation groups’ nature conservation efforts.

resources (Keiter 1995). HMG/N embraced the idea of nature conservation in Khumbu, primarily because it saw the development of a national park in Khumbu as a way increase tourist numbers, thus bringing in needed foreign currency, as national parks lure tourists (Honey 1999). Moreover, HMG/N viewed the establishment of SNP as a last stage in nation building: protected-area status legitimately placed state officials and military personnel in Khumbu,² and facilitating the integration of remote highland populations into the national Nepali culture (Fisher 1986).

In the 1980s, researchers around the world began questioning accepted equations of natural disturbance such as equilibrium theory, and simplistic highland-lowland models of ecological degradation (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987, Botkin 1990, Fairhead and Leach 1996), and challenged the practice of blaming subsistence farmers for large-scale land degradation (Adams 1995, Scott 1985, Watts 2000). Research in Nepal since the 1980s has shown that interaction between human practices and natural processes through time is dynamic and complex and still not completely understood (Bishop 1997, Brower 1993, Brower and Dennis 1998, Byers 2002, Ives and Messerli 1989, Thompson and Warburton 1985). Historically, the Nepalese feudal state's primary interests were collecting taxes and increasing military strength. Previous rulers of Nepal created incentives to convert hill forests to agriculture in order to

² During the initial years of the park, reports were made of the military using physical violence against residents, specifically against women and the poor, for disobeying forest rules (Ives and Messerli 1989, Stevens 1993). Antagonism between the Sherpa and the Royal Nepal Army continues as army personnel stationed in Khumbu do not always obey the forest laws they are supposed to be enforcing. The presence of the military further increases the demand for local natural resources (Lachapell and Freimund 2003).

collect land taxes; deforestation was also a consequence of the state's demand for smelter fuel, as well as for state timber sales (primarily to the British Raj in India for railway construction). Thus, much of the deforestation in Nepal occurred in past centuries as a consequence of the feudal state, rather than because of the recent livelihood activities of peasant farmers. In the pioneering text *Land Degradation and Society*, edited by Piers Blaikie and Harold Brookfield (1987), the authors argue that fundamental confusion about environmental degradation stems from neglecting such social and historical dimensions (Bishop 1990, Blaikie and Brookfield 1987, Rose and Scholz 1980). Other work has raised questions about human agency and erosion, and the connections between erosion and flooding (Ives and Messerli 1989). Research in Nepal reveals that most of Khumbu's forested areas today are little different from the 1950s (Byers 1987, 2002, Ives 1987). Byers' research found that "subalpine forest extent remains essentially unchanged from the 1950s" (2002: 3). However, as Byers goes on to state, alpine areas above 4,000 meters have become severely degraded in the past 20 years, since tourist numbers began to increase (Byers 2002). As a consequence of research inspired by THED, its explanations for land degradation and projections of disaster in Nepal—that helped spur the development of SNP—are no longer widely held.

Though most elements of THED have been refuted, concerns continue about the ecological and social sustainability within the Khumbu region. The population of the Himalayas is increasing at 2.6 percent a year, an affirmation of one element of THED with as yet undetermined consequences (Gurung 1993, Walder 2000). Forest resources still provide 80 percent of the fuel used in SNP, and during peak trekking

seasons the number of visitors rises to more than five times the resident population, causing demand for firewood to increase by 85 percent. Additionally, lodges owned and operated in Khumbu have increased from seven in 1973 to 224 in 2002 (*Himalayan Times* 2002, Nepal 1997). Since Khumbu tourist lodges use large amounts of fuel wood, as opposed to the amount used in local resident's homes, conservationists were concerned about the 20 foreign tourists who visited SNP in 1964, should be truly alarmed about the almost 27,000 foreign visitors who showed up in 2001 (Byers 2002). These issues raise concerns and continue the debate about the future of Khumbu's people and place, particularly given the complex affects of the Maoist People's War and its threat to life and livelihood.

Chapter 3. The People's War

The people of the Maoist-affected hills, historically backward and deprived of the socio-economic advances that the rest of the country enjoyed in the last half-century of development, are those who have found themselves in the crosshairs. As perhaps happened more than two centuries ago during the expansionary wars of the House of Gorkha, subsistence farmers are burdened not only economically, but also politically, having to support one side or the other and fend off accusations of being quislings and collaborators.

Kanak Mani Dixit 2002

In the not-so-distant past Nepal was portrayed as the tourist-friendly manifestation of legendary *Shangri La*. Seen as a harmonious Hindu kingdom, the last in the world, composed of simple villagers who worship their king as the reincarnation of Lord Vishnu and existed in happy isolation from the corruptive gaze and influence of the western world until opening her borders in 1950. However, violent and murderous political takeovers, feudal exploitation, entrenched cultural divisions, and interaction with a multitude of outside groups and cultures has long been a part of Nepal's history. The violent Maoist insurgency did not spring from a vacuum, but has been a long building storm (Dixit 2002, Hutt 2004, Rose and Scholz 1980, Shakya 2002, Shah 2002).

Throughout my three months of fieldwork in Nepal, almost every Nepali spoke about the Maoist conflict and its effect on their lives. Most said they favored the Maoist insurgency when it began, as the Maoists called for equity for all, and were fighting in the name of those marginalized by the monarchy and high caste

landowners, as well by the dominant political parties. However, the lofty ideals are counterbalanced by reports that the Maoists have murdered, kidnapped, and stolen from the low caste and marginalized ethnic groups they claim to be fighting for (Hemanth 2005, Shneiderman and Turin 2004, Thapa 2002). The Maoist conflict's roots and ramifications inform the ways Nepalis view their own future and the country's. This chapter provides an abridged history of Nepal and a succinct review of what has happened since 1996, the year the Maoists declared their People's War.

3.1 Unification of Nepal

The centralized political power structure of His Majesties Government of Nepal traces back to the 1700s, when Prithvi Narayan Shah (1743-75), a direct ancestor of the current Shah monarch King Gyanendra, and his band of Indo-Aryan subjects, who came from the region of Gorkha, secured Nepal's political unification (Shah 2002). The House of Gorkha ruled by a feudal system that privileged high caste landowners while subjugating and exploiting those considered low caste and non-caste ethnic groups. Since this time, unification of the nation has relied on the imposition of Nepali language and Hindu culture, thus securing the superiority and dominance of high caste society. This Hindu hegemony is known in Nepal as Nepalization, Hinduization, and/or Sanscritization (Brown 1996, Pradhan 2002).

Since political unification two families, the Shahs and the Ranas, have controlled Nepal. Since Prithvi Narayan Shah subsequent rulers have allowed and even encouraged the landed high caste Hindu elite to exploit the people and natural

resources of Nepal. Consecutive laws and legal orders reinforced the power of the landowners and further marginalized those in the political and economic periphery (Bishop 1990, Blaikie and Brookfield 1987, Pradhan 2002, Regmi 1978, Rose and Scholz 1980). The continued extractive and exploitative nature of the historic state is the undeniable source of the Maoist insurgency, as well as determining Nepal's current status as one of the world's most impoverished nations. Resentment towards this repressive centralized system has allowed the Maoist movement and ideology to gain massive support (Shakya 2002, Shneiderman and Turin 2004).

3.2 The Panchayat System (1960-1990)

In 1959, His Majesties Government of Nepal experimented with democracy. However, after just one year King Mahendra banned political parties and initiated the partyless, 'guided democracy' of the *Panchayat* (Burghart 1994). King Mahendra claimed the Panchayat system would be a more "suitable national political system based on indigenous village councils that would build democracy from the grassroots" (Rose and Sholz 1980: 49). As Nepal's authoritarian Panchayat prohibited the formation of political parties or any public display of discontent against the monarchy, the Panchayat was not a democracy.

Throughout the Panchayat period a concerted effort was made by HMG to evolve a unified nation-state, united through a common Hindu culture and Nepali language (Brown 1996, Burghart 1994). In the writing of the 1962 Constitution the word "Hindu" was added as a defining aspect of the state (Pradhan 2002: 26). Since

homogeneity was the goal, state policy viewed cultural and ethnic diversity as a threat to nation building. The Panchayat system reinforced the socio-economic inequality of earlier regimes and reaffirmed the authority of the high caste landed elite, while socially, politically, and economically marginalizing of the majority of the population (Metz 1995, Shakya 2002, Sharma 2002, Shrestha 1990).

3.3 The 1990 “Revolution”

Future political party leaders initiated the *Jana Andolan*, or the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), in 1990. The Jana Andolan was a reaction to numerous issues, but the one that spurred most average Nepalis to take to the streets was the trade crisis with India. Historically, Nepal has walked a fine line exploiting the enmity between its two powerful neighbors, China and India (Burghart 1994). As a result of what India perceived as a pro-China policy in Kathmandu, India placed a trade blockade along Nepal’s border in 1989, restricting the flow of 80 percent of all goods into Nepal for over one year (Hoftun 1994: 23). As a result of the trade embargo prices skyrocketed and a booming black market evolved, most effecting the poorest of the poor.

Primary issues for the vanguards of the Jana Andolan included the high level of corruption exposed in the Panchayat, a growing opposition to the Hindu hegemony of the Nepali state (Nepalization), recently implemented structural adjustment programs by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, increasing population and migration to Kathmandu, and, importantly, an increasing number of Nepalis

educated in the West with raised awareness of their democratic and human rights (Hoftun 1993: 22).

The Jana Andolan began as a non-violent campaign of *bandhs* (strikes) and demonstrations, becoming violent only when state authorities attempted to suppress the protests by force. The Jana Andolan lasted 50 days but throughout there was significant police brutality and indiscriminant shootings with more than 8,000 protesters arrested under the Public Security Act (PSA) (Hoftun 1993). The PSA has been used frequently in recent years and allows up to three years detention without charge or trial on grounds of “disturbing the peace and tranquility of the country.” Most of those arrested were detained longer than eighteen months in overcrowded and unsanitary holding places with the use of torture well documented (Amnesty International 2002, 2002a, 2002b, Brown 1996, Seddon 1994).

In November 1990 King Birendra acquiesced to the two dominant demands of the Jana Andolan activists, allowing political parties to organize and reducing the power of the palace (although, since 2001 King Gyanendra has frequently taken away these rights). To secure these demands a new constitution was signed. However, the 1990 constitution is essentially the same as the 1962 constitution, even retaining the word “Hindu” as a defining attribute of the state, and possibly it is worse as it removed women’s direct right to citizenship (Pradhan 2002). “Democratic” Nepal adopted the discourse of a representative parliamentary democracy and politicians adeptly used the rhetoric of populist participation, but very little actually changed (Brown 1996, Shakya 2002).

3.4 CPN (Maoist)

In the early 1990s, the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist) was a legitimate political party, then called Unity Center, and won seats in Parliament. In 1994, after it was obvious that the newly established Parliament would not be effective or even willing to challenge the feudal nature of the Nepali state, Unity Center broke away from the parliamentary political system and took the name CPN (Maoist).

In 1996, the CPN (Maoist) submitted 40 demands to Prime Minister Deuba. These included the abolition of royal privileges, the active pursuit of a democratic constitution, that the Royal Nepal Army be accountable to the government rather than the monarchy, land to be equitably redistributed, the abrogation several treaties with India, as well as outlawing the importing of Indian Bollywood films as they are seen as the reason behind moral decline within Nepali society (Hoftun 1994, Thapa 2002). Failing to even acknowledge these demands, the *Maobaadi* (those who advocate Mao's theory) launched the Maoist "People's War" in February 1996. The enemy is "the government of Nepal and its international supporters," the Maoist goal is to "smash the capitalist state and establish a People's Democratic Republic" (The Revolutionary Worker Homepage 2002).

3.5 The People's War

Since February 1996, 13,000 Nepalis have been killed (Hemanth 2005). The killing and violence greatly increased after King Gyanendra declared a State of

Emergency in November of 2001 (INSEC 2004: 10). In 2003 The Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC), a Nepalese human rights organization, reported that there were 18,763 incidents of recorded human rights violations, 52 percent committed by the Maoists and 48 percent by government security forces. INSEC also reported that the main crisis facing the nation is the displacement of people due to the conflict and insecurity, as some 38,191 people were displaced in 2002-2003 alone (INSEC 2004: 118).

The displacement and fear generated by the Maoist insurgency is part of the landscape and experience on the Lamosangu-to-Everest trail. During three months of fieldwork in the Dolakha and Solukhumbu Districts I spoke frequently with a guide named Krishna, as our paths crossed often while trekking through the mountains. Krishna is a high caste *Bahun* (Brahmin) from far-eastern Nepal. He and his younger brother arrived in Kathmandu five years ago after the Maoists came to their village demanding that they join the Maoists or be killed. They fled their village immediately. Once in Kathmandu, Krishna luckily found work as a guide with a trekking company, and for the last three years he has worked in the Solukhumbu region about five months per year leading treks.

However, as the oldest son Krishna is consumed with worry about providing for his aging parents who live alone in his village. His father is old and can no longer do physical labor, but the Maoists have found a less physically taxing task for him to complete, filling bullet shells with gunpowder. The Maoists have given Krishna's father a specific quota that he must achieve each week. Krishna has sneaked back to

his village a few times to be with his parents for the Hindu religious festivals of Dashain and Tihar, but each time he can only stay a few days and cannot visit friends.

Most residents of Dolakha and the lower regions of Solukhumbu expressed fear of being caught between the Royal Nepal Army and the Maoists, for both accuse residents of complicity with the other. In every village below Lukla someone mentioned either their “fear” or “hate” of the Maoists. In the villages between Jiri and Deorali about ten different young men in different villages or homes told me that they had plans to “kill the Maobaadi” and one young man said he was going to be “like Rambo” and attack Maoist camps alone.

This background helps to explain the concerns of the Nepalis I listened to as they discussed the changes occurring in their lives and landscapes.

Chapter 4. The Transect—Images and Narratives

This chapter highlights the concerns and issues raised by residents and people working in the study area, and provides image analyses of the rephotographed images. Differences in geography and local history are reflected in the different concerns expressed by informants along the transect. In Dolakha and Solu, the majority of residents talked about the effects of the Maoist insurgency and the positive affects of the Lamosangu-to-Jiri road. Informants in Pharak and Khumbu worried about Nepalization and loss of or rejection of Sherpa culture among youth. Almost all residents within the entire study area stated that tourism is still the best economic hope for the region, even considering the conflict. The transition from agro-pastoralist traders to a tourist/service-oriented economy has been well accepted and returning to past livelihoods is not a welcome notion. These general patterns emerge from the particular cases discussed below.

4.1 Lamosangu

Lamosangu (740m) and Jiri (1,905m) are villages located in the Dolakha District of Nepal. These villages were the first I rephotographed along the transect.

The images of Lamosangu, Figures 6 and 6a, have a western aspect and clearly show the effects of the Lamosangu-Jiri road. The pre-road/post-road comparison reveals that there are now more trees and woodland, a reversal of the ecological effects

commonly thought to accompany roads and road construction.¹ The replicated scenes show that houses now line this portion of the road and encircle the still remaining *stupas* (religious structures). The large trees now present might be volunteer trees, or perhaps the roadside land-owners planted them, as trees provide manifold benefits, including fodder for livestock, fuel, and protection from the elements. There are also power lines running along with the road, indicating this area now receives electricity, further reducing the need to use forest resources for fuel.

Visual evidence suggests a change in the local economy. The agricultural terracing behind the new homes is overrun with shrubs and trees in the 2001 image, and the road is now lined with small shops. These changes suggest livelihoods based on the land have shifted to ones based on road-side services, thus reducing the reliance on natural resources and increasing reliance on transient travelers. However, people I spoke to in Lamosangu said that non-Nepali tourists are rarely seen in the Lamosangu vicinity anymore, and the few who do only wave from inside a bus headed to Jiri.

A young man who lives in Lamosangu assisted me in finding the photo-site. This young man lives in Lamosangu with his parents but often travels to Kathmandu to visit his older brother who works at a hotel there. In 2001 the Dolakha District was proclaimed Maoist territory when the Maoists formed their *jan sarkar* (people's government) in Dolakha. His older brother was forced to leave their home as the Maoists had given him an ultimatum—join or be abducted.

¹ The Lamosangu-Jiri road is one of the first "green roads" built in Nepal and demonstrates that road design and construction does not have to be an environmentally traumatic event. A labor-intensive but more ecologically sensitive method was employed, as opposed to the standard more destructive but less expensive mechanized method.

Figure 6. Lamosangu 1976

Figure 6a. Lamosangu 2001

The older brother now sends most of his pay back to his family via his younger brother, which helps the family greatly. While searching for the photo-site, he spoke

about how the residents of the Lamosangu and surrounding areas are caught in the middle of this violent conflict. Both the Royal Nepal Army and the Maoists accuse Lamosangu residents of complicity with the other, creating an environment where residents are frightened to speak or even look at anyone, much less allow strangers into their homes for a meal or rest. Punishment, he said, for this mostly imagined collusion is the free use of physical violence, kidnapping, disappearance, torture, imprisonment, or death by either the Royal Nepal Army or the Maoists.

4.2 Jiri

Once heralded as the “Gateway to Everest,” the village of Jiri grew substantially because of a development project begun in the 1950s. Under SATA (Swiss Agreement for Technical Assistance) the Swiss began a series of works entitled Integrated Hill Development (Schaffner 1987). These development projects addressed agriculture, forestry, roads and communications, and education.² The Jiri Multipurpose Development Project was a part of the SATA Integrated Hill Development project. Hoping to attract locals and foreign tourists alike, this *bikas* (development) project resulted in a hospital, technical schools, a cheese factory, a hydropower plant, and the more recently finished Lamosangu-Jiri road.

² Road networks were sought by HMG/N to enhance national security and rural integration, thus enhancing “nation-building” as proclaimed by the state. Roads were also intended to facilitate both emigration from the hills to the Tarai plains and to encourage tourism (Brown 1996).

The Jiri photosite, Figures 7 and 7a, is located in front of a Hillary school, one of thirty funded by the Himalayan Trust (Sir Edmund Hillary's non-profit organization) in Solukhumbu and nearby regions. These images show Jiri's main street, the core of the Jiri Multipurpose Development Project. The original photograph was taken after the road was finished, in the spring of 1990, and looks west. The terracing appears unchanged and the surrounding woodland has noticeably increased, appearing both denser and covering a larger area—somewhat surprising considering the road cuts right through this terraced and rolling landscape.

Along the road in the center of the Jiri the number of lodges, shops, and housing has increased. The 2001 image shows and Jiri residents confirm that people have moved to town from the surrounding hills. Maintaining their agricultural terraces, they have relocated to Jiri's main street to participate in the service-oriented economy in the village center. The increased tree cover and tree growth here, as in Lamosangu, could also result from a lessened reliance on trees for fuel, as electricity now runs to Jiri—evident from the power lines seen in the 2001 image.

The largest change in Jiri, unseen yet quite palpable, is the Maoist presence. In Kathmandu many young male taxi drivers I have met are from Jiri; they were forced to leave their homes because of Maoist violence. In Jiri, lodge owners, shopkeepers, porters, and guides readily said that the Maoists were “around” watching them and monitoring tourist-related activities. Jiri residents said that in June 2001 nearly one

Figure 7a. Jiri 2001

Figure 7. Jiri 1990

hundred Maoists invaded Jiri demanding “protection” money from every resident and the destruction of all alcohol. Because of falling tourist revenues, and the high price for beer, they responded with an unambiguous “No!” The Maoists reacted by forcing

themselves into lodges and shops, smashing all alcohol found, and pilfering any rupees stumbled upon in the process.

Jiri residents explained that the actions of the tee-totaling Maoists were not to stop the sale of alcohol to tourists, but because it is “well known” that when Nepalese men drink they fight, and this is what the Maoists disapprove. More recently, the Jiri-watching Maoists demanded that tourists be denied rooms and, again, that no alcohol be allowed in shops and lodges. The residents and those working in Jiri with whom I spoke said that again, no one was paying attention to Maoist demands, hoping that group resistance would result in no single person or lodge being targeted.

To learn more about the affect of the Lamosangu to Jiri road, which connects Jiri to Kathmandu, I asked residents, “how has the road affected your day-to-day life?” Most replied the Lamosangu-Jiri road has made life “much easier.” Goods and supplies can be easily transported to or from Kathmandu or even the Tarai for purchase, sale, and trade, and since the road has come, anything one could possibly ever need is now available in Jiri. I also asked whether the road’s easy access to Jiri made residents feel more vulnerable to Maoist attacks. Most responded that the Maoists traveled through the forests on foot and typically only the government used the road to move in security forces. Thus, most residents felt that the road was not directly related to the high Maoist presence, but indirectly linked as with the road came more jobs and tourists and thus more money for the Maoists to “collect.”

4.3 Bhandar

Bhandar is a village of widely scattered, mostly Sherpa homes, one of the larger settlements between Jiri and SNP; tourism supplements farming in the lives of Bhandar's residents. The government plans to continue the road from Jiri to Bhandar. According to *The Kathmandu Post* (2002), "the locals are looking forward to its completion, in hopes that tourist dollars will follow." The UN's World Food Programme has provided 1,365 metric tons of rice to compensate local workers under the provision 'food for work' program (*Kathmandu Post* 2002). If the road is built, rephotography should show a dramatic transformation in this pastoral landscape.

The comparative scenes of Bhandar, Figures 8 and 8a, reveal changes in land use since 1976. Most evident is the newly cultivated area in the foreground where corn now grows. The most dramatic ecological change is the increase in tree cover. In the center and near the left side of the 2001 image there is an obvious increase in tree density and cover area. I asked perhaps ten residents about this noticeable increase in woodland, but no one had an answer; residents were pleased to see the comparison and learn this new information. Many Bhandar residents are involved in tourism, as lodge owners, guides, and/or porters. Possibly the increase in tree cover could be related to the reduced importance of subsistence agriculture and increasing reliance on the tourism.

Figure 8. Bhandar 1984

Figure 8a. Bhandar 2001

For Sherpa residents of Bhandar, the main topic of conversation concerned a caste Hindu couple from the Terai who recently moved to Bhandar to rent a lodge

from a Sherpa man who has since moved to Kathmandu. No one was very happy about this outsider competition. I asked what they thought would happen when the new road came, as the road will most likely bring more outsiders and more competition. Sherpa residents in Bhandar did not express worry about this potential competition, primarily because they thought the road would never be finished and thus it was not worth worrying about. Most said that the road would have positive affects, allowing easy access for tourists and making it easy for residents to Kathmandu to sell and buy goods. When I asked about the Maobaadi presence, residents said that the Maoists occasionally asked them for food and shelter, but in general did not bother Bhandar residents. No one thought the road would alter the Bhandar resident/Maoist dynamics.

4.4 Deorali

Deorali is located at the top of a 3,000 meter pass, and in 1976 this area was a field used for seasonal grazing by Sherpas from the nearby village of Junbesi, located below and to the east of Deorali. Today Deorali is a permanent tourist village run by Sherpas from Junbesi, and is comprised of large lodges and teashops. Most Deorali Sherpas were nostalgic for Junbesi and long to return. Deorali is, according to one resident, “too windy, too cloudy, and too cold.” Additionally, she thought that because there were only lodges there was no sense of community—only competition and jealousy between neighbors. Another reason residents stated for wanting to leave

Deorali was the Maoist presence. There are no images of Deorali to analyze, but the narrative itself is significant.

Most lodges in Deorali had embellishments not seen in other lodges: the red hammer and sickle painted on the outside walls; a calendar that each month pictured and eulogized Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, or Mao. In Nepal there are many legitimate, non-violent communist political parties working within the perimeters of government, thus these symbols might not have made a lasting impression, but because of my experience there, they did. On the morning of my stay, I saw five comrades standing in the center of the village dressed in Maoist uniforms (army camouflage with a big red flag sewn on the shirt front), each holding a large rifle, and with giant khukuris (Gurkha-style knife) hanging from their belts. I asked the woman at whose lodge I was staying, whose husband had gone to Kathmandu for supplies, if she was scared: “*tapaailaai dar laagyo?*” “*Laagena,*” (no) she answered, “*Maobaaadiharu samasya chhaina*” (Maoists are not a problem), but then said, “*Maobaadi naraamro chha*” (Maoists are no good). She explained that she pays them Nrs 5,000 a year (depending on the exchange rate this is about US\$72) plus food not to bother her. In a country where the average annual income is about \$230, this is a large amount of money.

While we watched the Maobaadi, someone from the lodge across the way brought out steaming cups of Nepali *chiya* (tea) for them. After finishing their tea they walked north, away from Deorali and into the forest. The lodge owner thought they lived in forest camps surrounding Deorali. Because Deorali is a tourist “village”

where, as mentioned by residents, there is little sense of community—has this allowed the Maoists easy access compared to other long-settled permanent villages?

4.5 Junbesi

Southwest of the SNP boundary by a few days walk, Junbesi is a popular stop for tourists trekking up from Jiri (though nowadays most tourists fly directly to Lukla, bypassing the six-to-eight day trek up to SNP from Jiri). Originally settled by one Lama *rhu* (clan), the descendents of that rhu continue to live in Junbesi today. Historically, Junbesi has had more interaction with the Kathmandu Hindu elite than other residents of the Solukhumbu region, and its residents have been among the more historically affluent Sherpa (Brower 1996).

Figures 9 and 9a are of the heart of Junbesi. Trees have grown in previously cultivated areas and there is more tree cover near the trail, seen on the right side of the 2001 photograph. Residents mentioned that locally organized community forestry projects (formed by Junbesi residents) along with privately owned forested areas provide the residents of Junbesi with additional income from timber primarily sold for lodge and furniture construction in SNP.

Further assessment reveals that the old wood shake roofs have been replaced with corrugated galvanized iron (CGI) roofing and there is a new chorten (Buddhist shrine) near the center of the village; the older chorten remains and has been recently

Figure 9. Junbesi 1976

Figure 9a. Junbesi 2001

repainted. Electricity now runs to Junbesi (evident from the power lines), lessening reliance on the surrounding forest for fuel. Down the valley, new houses that are quite large can be seen. Importantly, the landmark tree located in the center of Junbesi

remains. This tree is very special, as a resident *lu* (spirit) resides within it and protects Junbesi.

Recent actions by the Maoists in Junbesi were the primary topic of conversation initiated by Junbesi residents. During my seven days of research in Junbesi, a Sherpa couple who have owned a lodge for many years spoke in detail about the current situation. The wife relayed that during the summer of 2001 about 90 young Maoist men and women forced themselves into Junbesi's lodges demanding Nrs 500,000 (about US\$7050, depending on the exchange rate) for "protection" from each lodge owner. The Maoists stayed for over six weeks to "negotiate" a deal, meanwhile depleting resident's food storage for the year and, again, smashing any alcohol they found. This couple negotiated a deal, but the Maoists warned them that they would be watched throughout the 2001 fall tourist season and if they took in any tourists or served alcohol the Maoists would be back for retribution.

This couple served beer and housed tourists throughout the fall 2001 tourist season. In January 2002, true to their word, the Maoists returned to "punish" this couple, severely beating the husband and threatening to hurt the wife. The Maoists told them that they were targeted not only because of their continued involvement in tourism, but also because of the man's previous employment and continued involvement with the Junbesi Hillary School.

The Maoists had closed the Junbesi Hillary School a number of times, but the reason the Maoists closed the school the last time was because school officials had asked for donations from the parents for school upkeep and to supplement teacher's salaries. According to the residents I spoke with, the Himalayan Trust (founded by Sir

Edmund Hillary and currently a joint New Zealand-Canada NGO) used to provide funds each year for the upkeep of the school building and to supplement the meager state salaries paid to teachers. However, some years ago the Himalayan Trust stopped providing funds and since has only provided school supplies (books, chalk, pens, et cetera). When the funds stopped coming school officials asked parents for donations for maintenance and teacher salaries and parents voluntarily gave what they could. The Maoists disapproved of this, as their ideology demands a free education for all. The Maoists ordered the school officials to return all of the collected funds or they would shut down the school—for good. Having no choice, the school officials returned the money to the parents.

Maoist condemnation of the Solukhumbu Hillary Schools, and of Nepali schools in general, is a strategy of the revolution: the Maoists view these institutions as sources of Nepalization and, in the case of the Hillary Schools, of Westernization. State law requires that all schools teach in Nepali and teach a curriculum approved by the state, which reinforces caste Hindu hierarchy. Additionally, teachers working for the government schools are seen as the last government officials in regions often under complete Maoist control. Across Nepal the Maoists have targeted and killed hundreds of teachers as well as closed down hundreds of schools (Pettigrew 2004, Shneiderman and Turin 2004). In many areas of Nepal schools are the battle zone for combat between the RNA and the Maoists, and many students and teachers have been caught in the crossfire and killed (Hemanth 2005).

Even weighing in the Maoist threat in Junbesi, residents believe that tourism is still their best hope, and that there are many economic opportunities linked to tourism

that should be begun or expanded. Examples are expanding community forests programs for increased timber sales (though three residents specifically stated that these programs should be initiated and run by local residents, not by foreign NGOs), starting fruit and nut orchards, raising dairy cattle for the increasing dairy demands of both local and tourist consumption, promoting high-end tourism through the building of “luxury” lodges, and organizing “luxury” regional treks. However, these ideas were qualified by stating, “this can only happen if there is world peace,” acknowledging that both the People’s War and the 11 September 2001 attacks and consequent “War on Terror” have effected tourism.

4.6 Lukla

Lukla warranted the “Gateway to Everest” title in the early 1990s, after the airstrip in the village of Lukla was paved and made safer. The Lukla airstrip was constructed in 1964 by the Himalayan Trust to supply their projects, and later incorporated into Nepal’s network of STOL (“short take-off and landing”) airstrips, and its use has greatly expanded. From Lukla it is a one-day walk to the entrance of Sagarmatha National Park. Flying to Lukla has become the preferred way to reach SNP, easier and quicker than a twelve-hour bus ride from Kathmandu to Jiri followed by a six-to-eight day walk to reach the park entrance. Lukla has become a booming Himalayan town, filled with shops and lodges to accommodate tourists who must sometimes wait days for flights, especially in cloudy monsoon (Stevens 1993).

Lukla is located in Pharak, which is considered an ecological buffer zone for Sagarmatha National Park. Within Sagarmatha National Park restrictions on tree felling and natural resource use are enforced (however, many Sherpas noted these restrictions are easy to get around, especially for the more affluent Sherpa who can afford to pay bribes to the army officers stationed in SNP to guard the forest) yet lodge building within the National Park knows no restraint, hence Pharak has become the main supplier for the increasing timber demand (Nepal 1997). From my informal observations the understory and overstory vegetation appeared degraded in Pharak. Inadequately controlled logging in Pharak is a cause for concern and further study.

Figures 10 and 10a of central Lukla reveal that extensive change has taken place in just seventeen years. Figures 10 and 10a are one of the few pairs of replicated images where development is relatively enormous and ecological degradation evident. However, there is seasonal differences between the two images, consequently vegetation analysis may be inaccurate. Yet ecological degradation is apparent on the hills behind the Lukla airport, as tree cover is noticeably sparser. Lukla is outside of the National Park boundary, and the state forestry regulations that apply here are weak and poorly enforced. Lukla also has many more visitor and pack-animal traffic than other villages outside of the National Park. Visitors include not just tourists but many Nepalis, including include the army, HMG/N government officials, business people, porters, and those working in the tourist industry.

Today Lukla is equipped with electricity. In previous photo-sites, the presence of electricity has been correlated with an increase in surrounding woodland, but this is not the case in Lukla. Presumably the growing need for construction timber, increased

grazing by the pack stock accompanying tourist groups, and wood-fueled cooking have contributed to a decrease in the surrounding woodland. Additionally, there is a clear increase in the numbers of and size of lodges and shops, as well as the airport has expanded. Lodges are now not only more numerous but also much larger than the older ones.

The comparison shows numerous new airport-related outbuildings, barbed-wire fencing, a control tower, and the recently repaved airstrip.³ However, the new barbed-wire fencing did not keep out the Maoists. Just two months after my visit the Maoists attacked the Lukla airport, destroying the control tower, and also raided the nearby Rastriya Banijya Bank in Lukla, thieving nearly US\$30,000 (Himal 2002).

Also within a few days of my re-photographing of Lukla, the Maoists led a much worse attack on the Solukhumbu District Headquarters in the neighboring village of Salleri (Figure 1) in November 2001. The attack on Salleri was orchestrated in retaliation to HMG's rejection to the Maoists' demand for a constituent assembly concluding three months of direct negotiations, and immediately followed Maoist attacks on the District Headquarters of Surkhet, Dang, and Syangja. This was the first

³ Completed in 2000 with funding from the Asian Development Bank.

Figure 10. Lukla 1976

Figure 10a. Lukla 2001

time the Maoist ever directly attacked the Royal Nepal Army (RNA). In the attack on Salleri alone, 27 police were killed, as were a chief district officer and four RNA soldiers (Hutt 2004: 11). It was reported that more than 100 Maoists and civilians were killed with many more wounded (*Himal* 2002, *The Himalayan Times* 2002).

4.6a Photo-site Narrative

After seeing older photographs of Lukla, guides and lodge owners confessed to being astonished, though pleased, at how quickly Lukla has grown. Many residents said they are much better off economically now than compared to twenty years ago and almost every lodge owner said that providing their children with a good education is their top priority. Many lodge owners had a child in a private boarding school somewhere in Kathmandu or India and a few had children in universities in the U.S. and the U.K.

Since the construction of the Lukla airstrip in 1964, ease of access to Lukla has led to an increase in tourists and increasing profits for the Sherpas of Lukla. More significantly the Lukla airstrip has increased the presence of the state, as the road has done in Jiri. Accordingly, Nepalization was one of the primary issues for most residents of Lukla and nearby villages. Nepalization, Hinduization, and Sanscritization were all words used when asked about the obviously large military presence or about government schools in Lukla. Older Sherpas mentioned that the schools do not teach Sherpa language or culture, only Hindu culture and Nepali language. A few men mentioned with disdain that Sherpa have never been represented at any level within the Nepal government, even though, they said—with more pride than accuracy, for Nepal's tourism is dominated by Indians who come to

shop--that it is the Sherpa, and their international mountaineering fame, who through tourism keep all of Nepal financially afloat.

4.7 Namche

Trekking up the Dudh Koshi Valley from Lukla to enter Khumbu, a.k.a. Sagarmatha National Park, a welcoming sign of sorts marks the first suspension bridge upon entering Sagarmatha National Park. Written in both English and Nepali, it proclaims “Long Live the Maoists”—informing everyone that SNP is not under complete control of the government, as it would like tourists to believe.

The village of Namche situated at 3,400 meters is the lowest in elevation among the main villages in Khumbu. Traditionally, Sherpa of this area were traders, farmers, and yak herders. When I asked young people in Namche if they had any desire to be yak herders, usually they looked at me as if I were crazy. When I asked parents in Namche about livelihood possibilities for their children all placed great emphasis on education, because as three different parents answered, “what else will they do, herd yak?” No one in Namche longed for the past, other than when speaking about the Maoist conflict.

A nearby micro-hydropower plant built with Austrian assistance was finished in the late 1990s and has since supplied Namche with the electricity. With electricity came electronic gadgets not found in other electrified villages, but in the affluent village of Namche there are computer cafes with satellite internet and phone service,

television, hot water, espresso, pizza (ovens), and much more, making Namche a popular destination among tourists.

The comparative scenes of Namche, Figures 11 and 11a, overlook Sagarmatha National Park Headquarters, located on the east side of Namche. These images have a southern aspect and show that there are now more and larger National Park structures, primarily military barracks. There is also a helicopter landing pad and an exercise area for RNA soldiers. All of the evident structures—old and new, government and private—now have blue CGI sheets for roofing, as wood roofing is illegal within SNP boundaries. There are many more trees, primarily silver fir, surrounding the National Park headquarters in the 2001 image. With the aid of the Himalayan Trust, park officials planted these trees in the early days of SNP. In the 2001 image it appears that these trees are doing well, as canopy cover has increased and covers a larger area. However, today this scene is much different as in 2003 the RNA cut most of the trees surrounding the headquarters for security reasons.

In further comparison, tourist lodges now creep up the hill towards the park headquarters and located at the bottom right hand corner of the 2001 image there is a lodge covering a portion of a potato field. Lodge owners in Namche said that building lodges on agricultural terraces and did not interfere with food supply or food security because Namche's poor soil and steep landscape, farming, unlike trade and

Figure 11. SNP Headquarters 1984

Figure 11a. SNP Headquarters 2001

pastoralism, had never been vital in Namche. The steep topography combined with high altitude has always made farming problematic, and therefore, the numerous new lodges throughout Namche have not necessarily taken over previous agricultural

fields. Most people did state that all residents of Namche still grew enough potatoes to feed themselves and the demands of hungry tourists.

The second image pair for Namche, Figures 12 and 12a, is the view of central Namche from below. Apparent is a walled in tree plantation is located above the village. The plantation was built in the early 1980s by the National Park staff with financial support from the Himalayan Trust. The plantation was to serve as an example to Sherpa residents of how the woodland hills would regenerate if grazing of livestock were prohibited. During the first ten years of the project the plantation did not do well and saplings frequently died were repeatedly replaced. This complication increased the already present antipathy between Namche residents and the National Park management. To begin with, residents were not informed of this project before it was enacted, yet residents were directly affected by it as the plantation reduced the grazing land area for resident's livestock. Additionally, there were little tangible benefits to be gained for residents from a walled off plantation, especially in light of the problems encountered regarding sapling establishment (Brower 1990). However, in the last ten years the trees have established themselves and tensions surrounding the establishment of this plantation seem to have dissipated, as most residents I spoke with said they are "proud" of the trees.

Also seen in Figures 12 and 12a is a growth in lodge numbers, which has primarily taken place on the east side of Namche as the west side is older and already

Figure 12. Namche 1985

Figure 12a. Namche 2001

built. Unfortunately, the angle of this image does not encompass the numerous new lodges being constructed on the east end. As in previous images, old and new lodges,

shops, and houses now have the CGI roofing. The paths throughout Namche appear the same as in the original image but are now somewhat wider. The freshly painted chorten located near the center of the image remains and a new entrance into Namche has been built, located in the right corner of the 2001 image where a portion of the entrance roof evident.

I asked Namche residents if they thought there were livelihood possibilities besides tourism. Near consensus was that Namche had nothing in the way of alternatives to tourism. Residents could not name even one alternative. As one Sherpa put it, "Namche without tourism is as fish without the ocean."

4.8 Gokyo

Gokyo, located above treeline at 4,790 meters, is situated at the edge of an amazingly aqua glacial lake. Black, jagged peaks capped with white snow surround Gokyo. This place has never been a permanent settlement area but is used by residents of the main village, Khumjung, as a seasonal high altitude grazing area for yak (Brower 1991). Khumjung families have possessed grazing land in Gokyo for generations and have relatively recently built tourist lodges and shops here. The Gokyo photosite was found on the way up to the summit of Gokyo Ri (5,483 meters), located across the glaciated lake from Gokyo. The trail leading to the original photosite is no longer accessible because of the excessive erosion and trail damage caused

by numerous trekkers and pack-stock, and consequently a new trail now leads to the summit.

The original scene of Gokyo (Figure 13) was photographed in the spring of 1984. Figure 13a, photographed in fall of 2001, views the cluster of lodges that now comprise Gokyo. The landscape surrounding this relatively new tourist village is striped with livestock formed terracettes. Pack-stock are used to carry massive amounts of supplies in organized treks and their grazing, added to the impacts of the Sherpa's own yak herds, has had a noticeable effect around Gokyo—evident in the bare ground and hundreds of stock formed terracettes that now stripe the landscape of Gokyo (Brower 1991).

The original image was taken during the early monsoon season, so exact vegetation contrast and evaluation is not possible. Nevertheless, in fall of 2001 there was a complete absence of groundcover surrounding the tourist structures of Gokyo. Gone are the lush, green hay fields dotted with stone herding shelters, seen in the original image only seventeen years earlier. A few of the old stone shelters remain, though in a crumbling state. Porters now use the eroding shelters to cook and sleep in, because though they are employed by tourist groups to carry their backpacks porters are often not “allowed” in lodges, according to many lodge owners.

The “highest altitude solar shower in the world” is advertised at a lodge in Gokyo. The solar energy generated is specifically used for the shower; cooking and heating the dining rooms for tourists staying in the lodges consumes the majority of

Figure 13. Gokyo 1984

Figure 13a. Gokyo 2001

fuel. The high altitude vegetation of Gokyo has a slow recovery time, therefore the effects of tourism in Gokyo are more destructive and longer lasting than in the lower

areas of SNP. Scholars and conservationists alike have voiced concern that SNP officials have not imposed any tourist number restrictions nor developed alternative energy sources for areas above 4,000 meters (Brower 1991, Byers 2002, Ives 1988, Stevens 1993).

4.9 Gorak Shep and Mount Everest Base Camp

To reach Mount Everest Base Camp from Gokyo, I crossed Cho La (a 5,300 meter pass) to reach the nearest village to Mount Everest Base Camp, Gorak Shep. In Gorak Shep (5,150 meters) there are three lodges, two owned and run by one Sherpa family from the village of Khunde. This family has owned grazing land at Gorak Shep for as long as can be remembered to use during the summer monsoon months for yak. Now the oldest brother and a sister are up here most of the year to run the lodges. The brother said that it was too cold and windy to live up at Gorak Shep and said that if he could make an equally good living down in Khunde he would gladly give up running a lodge in Gorak Shep.

Within the Gorak Shep locale there is a large depression, the remains of a glacier-marginal lake. The lodge owners said they remembered the lake and that it used to form during the summer monsoon, but in the past five years the lake no longer forms. They speculated that it is because of the increase in water use, since more water is now used to cook and clean for tourists, and/or because of the increasing number of pack-stock accompanying tourist groups that graze here during the dry fall

season, resulting in less vegetation to hold in soil moisture. Whatever the reason, they said, they and the people who work for them now have to travel further each day to find water.

From Gorak Shep the highest of all the photosites was found, located at Mount Everest Base Camp (5,350 meters) (Figures 14 and 14a). Mount Everest Base Camp is a glaciated stage in an amphitheater of inconceivably gargantuan mountains. The legendary Khumbu icefall, seen on the right side of the images, is an amazing spectacle, as glacial blue, literally house-sized blocks of ice flow down the side of Mount Everest.

The time scale between this pair of images is longer than the other replicate images, as a member of the 1963 American Everest Expedition photographed the original image. Problematic is that the original image was taken in May of 1963, so seasonality disallows an accurate comparison with the November 2001 image.

In the past Mount Everest Base Camp was decried as the “world’s highest garbage dump,” but beginning in the mid-1990s huge garbage clean-up expeditions were launched by groups of environmental and mountaineering organizations, and literally tons of garbage were brought down off the mountain. Other than a few old flattened tin cans the area was litter free. However, residents of Namche mentioned that even though the majority of garbage was flown by helicopter to Kathmandu for disposal, some of the garbage was left in Khumbu for residents to deal with.

Figure 14. Mount Everest Base Camp 1963

14a. Mount Everest Base Camp 2001

Ecologically concerned Khumbu Sherpa have had problems with the Maoists as well, as the Maoists view local environmental activism as a mark of western funding and influence, not because of local initiative. Tourist industry entrepreneurs and “ecologically-minded” Sherpa activists in the Khumbu region are now on the Maoist “hit-list” (*Himalayan Times* 2002). However, most people in Namche and in higher altitude villages said their primary concerns were not about personal safety and Maoist attacks, but about the effect of the Maoist insurgency on the local tourist economy.

4.9.1 Pheriche

Pheriche (4,600 meters) is among the highest permanent settlements in Khumbu. The replicated images are noteworthy because in the early 1980s, Houston (1987) expressed concern about woodland degradation in the hills area above Pheriche based on the contrast with his first visit 40 years before.

The images of Pheriche, Figures 15 and 15a, show no great difference in woodland cover and density. This is significant considering that the original photograph was taken in 1984 during the wetter and usually lush early monsoon season. The small stream located on the right side of the image has dried considerably, but seasonality could be the cause; the Khumbu Khola (the larger river) has meandered slightly. In further comparison, numerous relatively large lodges have been built near the center of

Figure 15. Pheriche 1976

15a. Pheriche 2001

the village and the privately owned fenced-in hay and barley fields now have tourist structures taking up a portion of the previous agricultural land.

Very near to Pheriche is the village of Dingboche, where a Sherpa lodge owner spoke to me about his three prime concerns regarding change in Khumbu.

Nepalization was a primary concern: he believes that Nepalization is creating cultural discontinuity among the Sherpa youth, not, as I had suggested, a result of the influence of ephemeral affluent foreign tourists. He sees the increasing influence of Hinduism and Nepali language, as opposed to Buddhism and Sherpa language, as a consequence of education at local government schools and private boarding schools in Kathmandu (where many Solukhumbu Sherpas send their children), and the influence of the RNA roaming all over Khumbu.

Another concern was the high level of corruption found within the Nepalese government. He stated that the government “collects lots of taxes from the Sherpas and takes all of the SNP entry fees. None of this money ever comes back to the villages of Khumbu, it is all pocketed by the bureaucrats in Kathmandu.”

“Researchers from the West” were another object of criticism. He said that western researchers come to Khumbu to “exploit the Sherpa” and “have a nice vacation in the Himalaya.” He said that most of the outsiders who have come to his homeland have made assumptions regarding ecological degradation or change in Sherpa culture after spending three or four weeks in Khumbu and then “get the rest of their information in Kathmandu or from the Internet.” He is apprehensive that outsiders will dictate the manner in which Sherpas must live within SNP boundaries based on erroneous information. His worries about misrepresentation are great, he

said, because western researchers have a great amount of influence over the Nepalese government, far beyond that of the Sherpa.

4.9.2 Tengboche

Located south of Pheriche, the Tengboche Monastery (3,827 meters) is the largest Buddhist monastery in the region and the last photo-site along the transect of study. Tengboche Monastery is world renowned as a popular tourist trekking destination as well as a learned and acclaimed Buddhist monastery.

The original monastery was completed in 1919, and rebuilt following an earthquake in the 1930s. In 1989 the main building of Tengboche burned to the ground, and in the early 1990s the monastery was redesigned by a German architect and rebuilt with western funds. The new monastery is larger with numerous outbuildings. Thus, in the comparative images of Tengboche Monastery, Figures 16 and 16a, the most significant change is the monastery itself. The original image and the replicate taken twenty-five years later reveal that the rhododendron, seen in the foreground, remain and have grown in the past twenty-five years, and that the surrounding sacred forest, composed primarily of Juniper, appears unchanged. The mound of *mani* (prayer) stones seen in the center of the images remains and the chorten seen in the background, near the center of the images, also remains. A large lodge has since been built, seen on the left side of the 2001 image, and outside of the

Figure 16. Tengboche 1976

Figure 16a. Tengboche 2001

photographic frame there are now numerous large lodges both to the north and east.

Located on the main trail in SNP on the way to Mount Everest Base Camp many tourists frequent Tengboche. I spoke with a few tourists who thought the new monastery is “too western.” One of the new out buildings near the monastery is titled “Eco-Center,” which provides regional ecological and local conservation information, as well as tourist souvenirs. The money generated from sales contributes to the Tengboche Development Project, organized by a German NGO.

These funds go towards securing safe drinking water, improving medical services for the local population, creating economic options other than tourism, and help to provide jobs for young people in the region, instead of leaving for Kathmandu to look for work (Tengboche Development Project 2001).

Tengboche’s location is economically beneficial for Tengboche, but the Tengboche Development Project information website (2001) states that, “For almost 40 years the Tengboche monastery has had the bad luck to be situated at the popular main route to the Everest base camp.” The “bad luck” is the associated garbage, increased need for fuel, and noise that comes with tourists and tourism. At Tengboche, the mixed role of western influence stands monumental in this Himalayan landscape.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

In this thesis I use scenes of place to evoke a larger narrative through conversations and subsequent investigation into the local, national, and international issues reshaping the local context. This study is grounded upon a research strategy that investigates change at specific geographic points at comparative moments in time while incorporating the voices of today's trail resident of the Dolakha and Solukhumbu regions.

Twenty-five years ago most residents living within the study area were agropastoralist traders, with a few Sherpa men working as mountaineering guides or porters and some families renting their land to serve as a campground to tourist groups. Today almost every resident in the entire Solukhumbu area is somehow dependant upon tourism, either directly or secondarily (Stevens 1997, 2002). From speaking with residents in 2001, I learned that no one wants to go back to those earlier days of tending to fields and yak, but strongly desire better education, economic and personal security, and greater and safer livelihood options. Conversations with residents and those working in the region brought out larger issues unseen in the physical landscape but shaping and reshaping the socio-cultural one.

The images taken at different moments in time and the narratives shared by Nepalis working or living in proximity of the photo-sites help explain visible and unseen change. Twenty-five years ago Sagarmatha National Park had just been established, fewer than 4,000 tourists per year were visiting, and the lives and livelihoods of most resident Sherpa had not yet been greatly influenced by tourism. In

2001 nearly 30,000 tourists visited SNP and the majority of Sherpa living in Solukhumbu are now dependent upon tourism for livelihood in some manner. However, tourism is steadily declining as the Maoist war continues (Shenon 2003).

In 1976, the reach of HMG/N was barely touching the mountainous region of Solukhumbu; today the dominance of Kathmandu Valley culture is inescapable and resented. Twenty-five years ago providing an education to one's children, both sons and daughters, was not of great importance or even possible; now it is seen by most Sherpas as the only way of surviving in today's world, as yak herding and trading are seen as ways of the past not the future.

Twenty-five years ago the Maoist insurgency did not exist; today the Maoist civil war critically influences the lives of nearly every citizen of Nepal, especially the residents of Dolakha but also the residents of Solukhumbu.

Rural villagers of Nepal, roughly 80 percent of the population, now face serious threat to life and livelihood on a day-to-day basis from both the Maoists and the state security forces. Even with millions of dollars of military aid that the Nepal government has received from India, the United States, and Britain (U.S. Department of State 2003), the RNA and the monarchy can only maintain control and a semblance of normal life in the capital city of Kathmandu. In the not so distant past, villagers from rural Nepal referred to Kathmandu as "Nepal." As Kathmandu is the only area remaining where government control or even presence is found, Kathmandu is once again Nepal.

5.1 Recommendations for Further Research

The issues discussed in this thesis have taken a larger role than strict analysis of conspicuous land use change. The visual and ethnographic evidence recorded along the Lamosangu-to-Mount Everest Base Camp transect provides information for those interested in the scholarly study of Himalayan landscapes, tourism, and development, in large scale landscape change and ethnographic data from the Dolakha and Solukhumbu Districts, the use of rephotography as a tool to analyze land use change, natural resource management, and the history of the Maoist conflict in Nepal. However, this thesis only scratches the surface and further research is necessary.

Research including vegetation ground truthing at the photosites is needed to provide precise small-scale vegetation analysis in correlation with the large-scale visual change to correctly understand land use/land cover alteration. Additionally, long-term ethnographic research is needed to fully understand the local social and cultural modifications concerning increasing dependence on the service industry, particularly given the fact of the rapidly changing social dynamics incited by the People's War.

One purpose of this text and its images is to provide greater understanding of the cultural-historical, which is a necessity for shaping future social and environmental programs within Sagarmatha National Park and its buffer zone. I hope the comparative 2001 images serve as benchmarks for future research, monitoring, and evaluation as well for further exploration into the ways people and place have been represented.

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Appendix A

Photosite	Figure	Page	Date	Time	Elevation	Latitude	Longitude	Bearing	Photographer
Lamasangu	6	37	fall/1976						D. Brower
Lamasangu	6a	37	11/18/2001	3:10pm	929 m	27° 45' 01N	086° 50' 56E	283° W	J. Anderson
Jiri	7	40	fall/1976						D. Brower
Jiri	7a	40	11/18/2001	12:00pm	1812 m	27° 42' 50N	086° 52' 32E	278° W	J. Anderson
Bhandar	8	44	spring/1990						B. Brower
Bhandar	8a	44	10/12/2001	12:55pm	1962 m	27° 38' 13N	086° 13' 59E	265° W	J. Anderson
Junbesi	9	48	spring/1985						B. Brower
Junbesi	9a	49	10/16/2001	11:30am	2454 m	27° 34' 48N	086° 20' 12E	138° SE	J. Anderson
Lukla	10	54	fall/1976						D. Brower
Lukla	10a	54	10/9/2001	10:30am	2824 m	27° 34' 35N	086° 32' 38E	24° N	J. Anderson
SNP Headquarters	11	59	spring/1990						B. Brower
SNP Headquarters	11a	59	10/20/2001	10:30am	2824 m	27° 34' 35N	086° 32' 38E	24° N	J. Anderson
Namche	12	60	spring/1984						B. Brower
Namche	12a	60	11/14/2001	10:00am	3394 m	27° 41' 10N	086° 43' 50E	325° NW	J. Anderson
Gokyo	13	63	summer/1984						B. Brower
Gokyo	13a	63	10/31/2001	7:55am	4884 m	27° 57' 21N	086° 41' 26E	086° 41' 26E	J. Anderson
Mt. Everest Base Camp	14	67	spring/1963						Everest Expedition
Mt. Everest Base Camp	14a	68	11/5/2001	12:20pm	5350 m	28° 00' 16N	086° 51' 20E	100° E	J. Anderson
Pheriche	15	70	spring/1984						B. Brower
Pheriche	15a	71	11/12/2001	1:45pm	3744 m	27° 48' 39N	086° 42' 44E	165° S	J. Anderson
Tengboche	16	74	fall/1985						B. Brower
Tengboche	16a	74	11/12/2001	3:15pm	3398 m	27° 48' 11N	086° 42' 35E	359° N	J. Anderson

Appendix B

Tourist Numbers Sagarmatha National Park
1964-2001

Adapted from Stevens 1993, Nepal 1997, Byers 2002, Lachapell and Freimund 2003