State intervention in Chitwan: on the historical development of a region in Southern Nepal

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STATE INTERVENTIONS IN CHITWAN: ON THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF A REGION IN SOUTHERN NEPAL

Ulrike Müller-Böker

Introduction

Up until the middle of the 20th century Chitwan\textsuperscript{2} was, for the Tharus—the autochthonous inhabitants of the region—an area of refuge, where they could survive because of their acquired immunity to malaria. Their extensive form of agriculture harmonized more or less with the strategic interest of the territorial rulers (and later the central government) to maintain the region as an undeveloped buffer zone towards the South. But following the dissolution of the Rana regime and Nepal’s opening to the outside world, Chitwan was promoted into a colonization area. The once thinly settled and malaria-infested region became, within less than half a century, wide-open for immigrants and, at the same time, one of the most famous wildlife resorts of Asia. This development, affecting the life of its inhabitants in many ways, can be seen as the result of direct interventions of the state at different points in time and with different political aims, interventions which were supported by various development agencies.

The rather synoptic and patchy view on the historical development of a region in southern Nepal goes in two main thrusts:

The first thrust of the article is to provide an historical account of state interventions in Chitwan under Shah and Rana rule. The buffer zone policy, the implementation of the jinindārī system, and last but not least the claim to the entire region as a private and exclusive big game hunting reserve are identified as milestones in the exertion of the strategic and

\begin{itemize}
  \item P. Pierce (Nepal Research Centre, Kathmandu) translated this article from German. Some of the words appearing in italics are from the Tharu language.
  \item The area studied in the article now belongs administratively to the Chitwan district of Narayani zone. The true heart of the district is the Rapti Valley, the largest of the synclinal valleys of the Churiya Range. The Rapti river flows through the valley from east to west, and not far from Meghauli (149 m) issues into the Narayani, which then breaches the Churiya chain through a transverse valley running south. The eastern part of the Rapti valley lies in the present-day Makwanpur district.
\end{itemize}

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of forests, as they look upon the malarious jungle at the foot of their hills as the safest and surest barrier against the advance of any army of invasion from the plains of Hindustan (Oldfield 1974:1880:47).

And concerning Chitwan in particular, he notes:

The district about Chitwan is open, and covered with long grass jungle rather than forest, and is very much infested with rhinoceros. It is the best shooting ground for the rhinoceros in the whole of the Nepalese duars (Oldfield 1974:1880:49).

One should not jump to the conclusion from Oldfield’s reports that Chitwan before 1816 was full of cultivated land or even thickly settled, and that afterwards, as a result of the expulsion policy, it became completely deserted (cf. Burkill 1910:70; Hatley and Thompson 1985:371). If one recalls that the population density of 19th century Nepal was very low, then it must have been extremely so in Chitwan. For it is hardly conceivable that a malarious, highly impassable area should have been particularly appealing to settlers.

Economic Interests of the Government

At the same time, after the unification of Nepal, the state’s economic interests in opening up virgin land was great (M.C. Regmi 1978a:143ff.), since the expansion policy of the kingdom had first to be financed, and then the sphere of influence made secure. “Land was life” (Stiller 1973:277), and thus the key to implementing all political aims. Soldiers could be remunerated with and motivated to fight by the distribution of land; the loyalty of influential local lords and vassals, as well as court favorites and members of the royal family, could be bought with assurances of land and land grants. Moreover, public revenue was based largely on the taxes paid by farmers. Particularly in the districts of the eastern Tarai, therefore, the government undertook measures to settle immigrants from India (Yadav 1984:20) and also to prevent Nepali farmers from leaving.  

Chitwan, however, remained in these days largely unaffected by the central government’s interventions, possibly because the region was known for a particularly high degree of malarial contagion, and because it was less accessible than the Tarai. In fact, while one document dating from 1803 A.D. demonstrates that taxes were levied on Chitwan, these were only on yokes of oxen. M.C. Regmi (1978a:81) conjectures that the harvest tax so customary in other districts of the Tarai was not introduced in Chitwan because a land survey was not worthwhile in such a thinly settled region.

It seems that the local administration and tax-collection system of the pre-Rana period was decentralized. The village authorities and those with middleman status vis-à-vis the central government came overwhelmingly from among the Tharus. A caudhuri was appointed from among the villagers to be the local embodiment of authority and head of a parganā, which encompassed ten to fifteen villages (Kumar 1967:109; M.C. Regmi 1976:105). The mahato, responsible for five to seven villages of a parganā, supported the caudhuri in his activities. The mahato in turn delegated the organization of certain matters to the cauntariyal, the village head.

A document from the year 1811 A.D. bears witness to the efforts made by the government to export wood from Chitwan’s forests with as high returns as possible (see M.C. Regmi 1978a: Appendix F - “Timber Export Regulations, 1811”):

The timber was transported through forced and unpaid labor from Chitwan to the Tribeni river and then moved by boat to Calcutta where a
there as freemen (Landon 1993:192;ii:165). However, hardly any farmer from the hills wanted to go to the hot, disease-laden lowlands. At the same time these plans may not have fit with the interest of the Ranas to take delight in hunting. Chitwan in its entirety had become their exclusive hunting ground once they had seized power.

**Big Game Hunting in Chitwan**

From 1846 to 1951 A.D. Chitwan became the site of huge big game hunts, to which the maharajas invited various of the world's nobility (Oldfield 1974:185); Kinloch 1885; Landon 1993:192;ii:150ff.). A visit of King George V of England in 1911 entered into the annals. No fewer than 600 elephants were assembled from different parts of Nepal. New roads were built and a special camp for the King at Kasara (now headquarters of the national park) was constructed. The record bag of 39 tigers, 18 rhinos, two bears and several leopards was shot in the space of eleven days. All previous records were broken in another major hunt, in which Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India, took part. The bag comprised 120 tigers, 38 rhinos, 27 leopards and 15 bears (K.K. Gurung 1983:2ff.).

Filchner's report on the big game hunts of Maharaja Juddha S.J. Bahadur Rana provides a vivid portrait of the huge extravagance during the sport:

Once a year the maharaja sets out on a big game hunt, with all the pomp and all luxury. An army of porters, beaters, attendants with bloodhounds and falcons, loaders and other helpful souls move into action. Musicians and dancers are on hand, for the generals and courtiers who let themselves be carried on chairs and hammocks to the hunting grounds want their distractions even in the wild, even as the ladies of the harem do not wish to forego the yolk of pheasant eggs in the jungle, using it to rub into their wondrous black, glossy hair. Hundreds of baskets of pineapples, sacks of rice, cages of birds and herds of lambs ready for the slaughter are carried along in the baggage train. And a city of tents is raised in no time wherever the maharaja pitches his camp, which fills with the hustle of an annual fair (Filchner 1951:20, my translation).

The population of Chitwan was obligated to help organize and conduct these big game hunts. The local authorities were informed of the coming event and had to make arrangements for the people of their region to perform labor service (begārī). Food for men and elephants had to be kept stored, and paths cleaned and put into shape. The villagers also had to see to the quartering and feeding of the soldiers and servants. And then, during the hunting their participation was not free of danger. For not only elephants were required for "Nepal's famous ring method of shooting," but also "beaters" (bhākṣya).

Many stories about these big game hunts, which were a huge attraction for the people, still make the rounds in Chitwan today. It is said that risk was rewarded with the highly prized flesh or even the skin of a rhinoceros. Besides these "alms," the local population profited indirectly from the good bags, in that after the large-scale carnage the loss of crops and domestic animals to beasts of prey diminished markedly. Even though the number of animals in Chitwan was reduced in the wake of big game hunts, their populations are said to have always recovered within several years. The hunts did not occur regularly, and the biotopes remained unharmed (Caughley 1969; K.K. Gurung 1983). Furthermore, the poaching of "royal game" was met with draconian punishment: "a man could lose his life for having killed one" (Stracey 1957:766). Hence the wildlife was protected under royal hunting.

In assessing the situation of the inhabitants of Chitwan—in the majority Tharus—up to the mid-20th century, it is evident that they did experience state interventions like the introduction of the jiminādāri system with the burden of begārī or even eviction from their land. But on the other hand, the buffering policy, pursued for an extended period, harmonized with their economic strategy—a shifting cultivation system—for which sufficient arable land and forest remained available.

**The Opening of Chitwan: The Post-Rana Era**

After the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1951 A.D., the country's political and economic opening to the outside world, in tandem with various parliamentary measures (e.g., land reforms, the scrapping of the caste-based civil code), brought about decisive changes in Chitwan. Under Nepal's new political orientation, Chitwan's function as a buffer was rendered useless. Chitwan proceeded, like the whole of the Tarai, to become a development region meant to relieve the burden on the densely settled middle hills by offering new productive farmland for the growing population. It was only a few years later that the region would become a hot spot of nature conservation.

**Government's Resettlement Policy**

Not only the traders and merchants, cleverly speculating with land, but also the established jimindārs—were able to improve their economic situation by acquiring land. Many of the colonists with smallholdings, on the other hand, were fighting for survival. Not only debts and lack of capital, but also living and farming in an alien environment proved to be a source of problems. Unfamiliar with ecological conditions in the Rapti Valley, the colonists in some cases established settlements in areas susceptible to flooding (Haffner 1979:66ff.), lost fields to floods and riverine erosion and had to put up with crop losses to wild animals. If one attempts to assess the immigrants’ economic situation today, it would appear that the lives of many colonists, following a doubtless difficult initial phase, have nevertheless improved in comparison with their place of origin.18

But even at present the problem of illegal squatters and land mal-distribution has not still been solved. In 1979/80 full-fledged sukumbāsī (landless) movements developed. According to estimates, between 14,000 and 32,000 families were involved in the illegal occupation of land (Ojha 1983:41; Kapil and Shrestha 1982). In the following years, too, there were again and again lines of sukumbāsī settlements along the East-West Highway.

The question of what consequences the migratory movement had for the autochthonous population has been almost completely ignored in resettlement literature. There is merely the observation by Kansakar that the clearing activities led to scarcities of fodder, firewood and construction timber. Settlers who received no land through projects,

encroached not only on the pasture land of the indigenous settlers but also the fields of the latter as well which enhanced the hostility of the indigenous settlers towards the hill people (Kansakar 1979:138).

Of course, the rapid development and colonization of Chitwan did not leave the Tharus unaffected. It seems that some of the old, established Tharu jimindārs succeeded in keeping their property, but many Tharu families appear to have been deprived of their land during this period. Ill-defined landownership facilitated “immoral” land transactions. The traditional continuous shifting from plot to plot may have been outlawed in Chitwan in 1951, but it was only from 1957 onward that official land documents were issued to the farmers; and the jimindāri system, which encouraged murky land transactions, was officially abolished only in 1964 (M.C. Regmi 1976:121). The legal status and security of land in the initial phase of resettlement projects was thus totally unclarified as far as the local population in Chitwan was concerned. Colonists brought fallow tracts under cultivation, the former tiller being indemnified with a token sum, or else they acquired land far below its value by cleverly exploiting emergency situations and, as is constantly asserted, by bringing alcohol into play. In 1951, for example, 25 bighā of land in Sauraha went for 15 muri (approx. 750 kg) of rice and three bottles of alcohol. In 1960, 35 bighā of land sold for Rs. 3,000, which in 1986 would sell for Rs. 60,000 to Rs. 150,000 per bighā.19

The inexperience of the Tharu population in money matters—in judging what land, of which there was formerly an over-abundance, was worth—ran against the market-wise landlords and bazaar traders. Tempting offers in the newly sprung-up bazaar settlements, combined with generous credit concessions, often led to the mortgage of house and farmland, and to inescapable forced labor. There were no flanking measures on the part of the government to support the local population that had been steamrollered by the “invasion from the hills,” nor were there attempts to stem the “sellout” of Tharu land.

The opening of Chitwan to technically advanced transport has contributed, particularly in recent years, to the region’s attractiveness for traders, businessmen and job seekers. Chitwan is well connected by roads to the wider region. Virtually all traffic from the Kathmandu Valley to India goes through the Narayani Valley, with a large portion heading further east through the Rapti Valley. Narayangadh has thus developed to the point of being a main node of traffic. Traders, businessmen and artisans have settled along the main road. A host of bazaars have arisen that offer a wide range of goods and services. Several larger industrial concerns have more recently been established. The twin cities of Bharatpur and Narayangadh represent a vibrant, constantly growing center of trade, business and administration that is of significance for the wider region. Chitwan is thus, in comparison to other parts of Nepal, extraordinarily well developed in terms of infrastructure. The important establishments, however, are concentrated along the main road, and members of autochthonous population groups are scarcely represented in these centers, either as businessmen or as laborers.

18 The results of a study carried out in 1979 by Conway and Shrestha (1985) on the colonists’ landed property in the hills before their migration and in Chitwan at the time of the study indicate a slight upward trend.

19 Although one needs to take into account the changing value of the rupee, etc., this represents a large increase.
The dynamics of development initiated by the government's resettlement policy and supported by different development agencies, are reflected in the population statistics for Chitwan (Table 1; Fig. 1). In the period from 1920 to 1941 A.D., the average annual growth rate amounted to only 1.2%. In the following years, though, the rate rose significantly, reaching its maximum between 1961 and 1971. The extremely high rate of 10.5% reflects the wave of immigrants that flooded into Chitwan once malaria had been eliminated, and also the higher life expectancy of the population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chitwan</th>
<th>Nepal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>20,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>26,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952/54</td>
<td>2,292</td>
<td>42,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2,510</td>
<td>67,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>2,510</td>
<td>183,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>2,218</td>
<td>259,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2,218</td>
<td>354,488</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Statistics of Population Growth in Chitwan and Nepal

Although the growth rate decreased in the following years, it still lies above the national average. If in 1952/54 there were fewer than 19 inhabitants per km², in 1991 it was 160. The bazaars of Narayangadh and the district seat of Bharatpur have developed into a larger agglomeration of settlements. In 1952/54 Bharatpur boasted only 91 inhabitants (H. Gurung 1989:10), and in 1961 Narayangadh, which in effect came into being out of nothing, had 1,078 residents (Haffner 1979:66). In the 1981 census, Bharatpur, into which Narayangadh was incorporated, is first called a “town.” With 54,670 inhabitants in 1991 (1971: 13,466; 1981: 27,602), the municipality thus was home to 15% of Chitwan's total population.

In Chitwan today, speakers of Nepali constitute the large majority of the population, almost 70%. A minority of barely 13% speaks Tharu as their mother tongue (Fig. 2). Along with Nepali and Tharu, both Sino-Tibetan and other Indo-European tongues are documented as spoken languages in the region. Particularly striking is the near-zero proportion of only 0.1% Tharu-speakers among the urban population. There, Nepali-speakers, at 84.6%, predominate even more clearly. Today the region is not only densely populated but also characterized, due to its multi-ethnic population, as “the melting pot of Nepal” (Müller-Böker 1997).
Gradually created a legislative framework for using and preserving forest lands (Mahat et al. 1986:229).

In 1957 A.D. the Private Forests (Nationalization) Act was passed, and in 1961 the Forest Act (with amendments in 1963, 1977 and 1979). Under them, all forested and fallow tracts of land that were private or communal property, tracts that fell under no title, or tracts that had lain fallow for more than two years (for example, under the system of shifting cultivation) were appropriated by the state. The government could determine the status of forests and the use to which they were put. The new Forest Act of 1993 clearly vests ownership of forests in HMG, but provides for six types of forest utilization.

In the beginning the main activities of forestry officials were aimed, as part of a rather commercial outlook, at the valuable sal forests in the lowlands. In Chitwan, though, there was an additional important factor in the need to preserve the forests and also the tracts of tall grasses: the biotope of the rhinoceroses, tigers and other wild animals required protection.

A lobby campaign on behalf of the rhinoceroses of Chitwan came into existence during the initial phase of migratory movement. The big game hunters saw their last paradise disappearing. But the international organizations promoting animal and nature conservation, too, feared the extinction of the Indian rhinoceros, which already was on the IUCN’s “List of Animals in Danger of Extinction,” hunting and poaching having increased hugely in the politically unstable years after 1950. Bands of poachers from India and from the hills played their part, along with the new settlers, in the decimation of the rhinoceroses herds. Trade in rhino horn developed into a lucrative business (Stacey 1957:766).

After reports on the slaughter of rhinos in Nepal leaked out to the public, E.P. Gee traveled to Chitwan in 1959 on behalf of the IUCN. He estimated the rhino population, whose safety the Rhinoceros Protection Department was supposed to be looking after, to be only around three hundred animals (Gee 1959:60). The Mahendra Deer Park (later Mahendra National Park) had been established to the northeast of Narayangadh shortly before, and a wildlife sanctuary south of the Rapti was being planned. Since the situation worsened in spite of these measures, in 1963 Gee once again traveled to Chitwan, this time on behalf of the Fauna Preservation Society of London. Settlements had in the meantime sprung up inside Mahendra National Park, the intrusion of colonists being unpreventable for lack of legal and administrative clout (Gee 1963:69). After removing the illegal settlers as well as the Tharu residents of long

**Government's Nature Conservation Policy**

With the precipitous growth in population and the opening of the region, the tracts of forestland and tall grasses in Chitwan rapidly decreased. H. Gurung (1989a:273) has calculated that between 1927 and 1977 almost half of the forested area was transformed into arable land. The opening of the region and the wresting of arable land from it thus necessarily occurred at the expense of forests and tracts of tall grasses. This development, wholly favored by the government, nevertheless subsequently collided with other interests. Forests, it came to be realized, were not an endlessly exploitable resource but, as one may read in the preamble to the Private Forests (Nationalization) Act (HMG 1957), an important component of the nation’s wealth; the forest is to be adequately protected, preserved and used for the good of the entire country. If laws and governmental decrees relating to forests during the period of the Rana regime related only to agricultural colonization and military or revenue concerns (for example, the export of timber), subsequent governments...
standing from the King Mahendra National Park and from the projected extension (rhino sanctuary), the region south of the Rapti, with the exception of several old Tharu villages, became free of settlements (Spilliet 1967:567).

The collection of forest products and the practice of pasturing were at first possible within the rhino sanctuary. Also, three hunting reserves (royal hunting blocks) were set aside to allow members of the royal family and their guests to continue hunting rhinoceroses and other wild animals (Spilliet 1967:561). In spite of these limitations, the designated rhino sanctuary was the foundation stone for the protection of a suitable biotope for the animal, given that the Mahendra National Park’s hilly terrain of dense forest would not alone have satisfied the rhinoceroses’ needs.

The area of the rhino sanctuary, by contrast, presented a mosaic of ecotopes—riverine forest, grassy plains and marshes—that offered water and food even in the dry period.

Effective nature conservation planning, combined with numerous scientific studies, began to make itself felt at the beginning of the 1970s. The IUCN and the World Wildlife Fund inaugurated a tiger project. The maintenance of a large biotope was necessary in order to protect the tigers, which had been on the “Red List” since 1969. Tigers are located at the end of the food chain and need a large territory to survive (Mishra 1990:14).

The notion of protection of species, which had previously singled out the rhinoceros, thus gave way to planning for the protection of biotopes.

In 1973 the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act was passed. It created the legal basis for a national park in Nepal. Once the Royal Chitwan National Park Rules (HMG 1974) came into force, an area of 544 km² south of the Rapti, including the peninsula of Itarni (south of Sauraha) and strips along the bank of the Narayani, were placed under strict protection. In 1977 the territory was extended to a total of 932 km². In 1984 UNESCO recognized the national park as a “World Heritage Natural Site,” on the basis of its rich flora and fauna, including some species classified as highly endangered (Jeffries and Mishra 1991:26).

Parsa Wildlife Reserve, 499 km² of land on the eastern border of the park, was established in 1988. Further extensions including a buffer zone (KMTNC 1998) are in progress as well as the resettlement of Padampur.

Resettlement Project of Padampur

From the standpoint of wanting to protect nature, it was thought from the very beginning desirable to assign the villages and fields of Padampur, an isolated enclave of cropland within the park, to the park territory. Once the boundaries of the national park were set (1974), therefore, it was the intent of the government to resettle the approximately 7,000 inhabitants of Padampur. At first a majority of those affected were positively inclined towards the plan. But they made as a condition of giving up their old villages that new land be made available nearby, and that it be possible for them to settle there in their traditional way. The plan fell through because an adequate settlement area was unavailable in Chitwan, and also because the plodding official negotiations increasingly awakened people’s mistrust and frustration.

The island-like location of the settlement area Padampur within the park territory, combined with the annulment of the traditional rights to forest and grasslands under park law, was virtually equivalent to expropriation, and was indeed felt to be such by the inhabitants of Padampur. A policy of conscious neglect—so it would seem—was pursued in order to induce the farmers to give up their traditional settlement area once and for all, and of their own “free will.”

Following the introduction of the multi-party system in 1990, the newly elected chairman of the Padampur village development committee restarted negotiations with the government on the resettlement of its by now more than 10,000 inhabitants. It was primarily the poorer groups within the population that advocated a resettlement, expecting from it an improvement in their economic situation. In 1995, after long discussions, the resettlement was officially decided upon; in 1996 the first villages, namely flood-ravaged Jayamanla and Bankatta, moved to the new settlement area of Sagundol in the northern part of Chitwan. The resettlement campaign was to have been completed by 1999, but considerable delays may be expected, while the financing is not held to be secure either.

Among the many problems in the new settlement region of Sagundol, one may mention:

- The new settlement region is smaller than the old one (Padampur: 1,963 bighā, Sagundol: 1,300 bighā)—that is, there is a shortage of land.

20 The landless receive 3 katha of land in Sagundol; their situation unquestionably has improved. Small farms of up to 1 bighā receive the same area as their original holding. Larger farms of up to 4 bighā, however, receive only 1 bighā plus a third of the remaining area (maximum: 2 bighā). The difference (two-thirds of the remaining land) is paid out in cash at the rate of Rs 300,000 per bighā.
There is a lack of pasture land and fodder resources, the livestock has to be cut back. The supply of firewood is problematic.

Sagundol lies at the foot of the northern chain of the Siwaliks, on deposits of stony alluvial material. The soil types have little water retention capacity; the cultivation of wet-field rice is impossible. In the dry season there is an extreme scarcity of water; ground water is found only at depths of some 50 m or more.

The most important infrastructural features are lacking.

The desire on the part of, above all, the Tharu population to live in the new settlement region under their old form of village community was rejected for "technical administrative" reasons. The Tharus have had to give up their traditional style of settlement.

The history of nature protection in Chitwan shows, that state intervention with the active involvement of international nature conservation groups was and still is powerful, and enforcement has great impact on the livelihood of the rural population.

Livelihood in Chitwan in Conflict with Environmental Protection

Without a doubt, establishing a national park in Chitwan was, from an ecological and conservation point of view, a meaningful and very timely measure. However, the decision to place large areas under protection, because of environmental considerations, is at odds with the economically motivated decision to develop the region infrastructurally and to open it up to migrants from the hills. The Tharus, who have lived in Chitwan for generations, see themselves today as victims of a double repression. On the one hand, imposed upon by the immigrants, and on the other, robbed by the national park of their freedom to use their living space and natural surroundings as they have traditionally done. The subsistent migrant farmers also have to face many problems with the national park, but they could build—in contrast to the Tharu farmers—on their experience of intensive mountain agriculture as well as relatively greater experience of means to deal with officials.

The conflict between the need to protect nature and the needs of the local population have increased and intensified as the population, and so the pressure on natural resources, have risen. Even though massive conflicts of interest were foreseeable during the setting up of a national park in Chitwan, the national and international institutions involved relied solely on strict prohibition regarding the use of land in order to achieve their goals. Mishra, a former employee of the national park, conceded years later:

Indeed, while resources and manpower were lavished on large mammals, the needs of the local inhabitants for fuel, fodder and firewood were ignored (Mishra 1990:15).

A full seven years after the establishment of the park, a report "on resolving resource conflicts between wildlife conservation and agricultural land use in Padumpur Panchayat" was issued. The authors' assessment of the situation among the farmers makes it clear who bore the brunt of these conflicts:

The Park has radically lowered their agricultural productivity and disrupted their lifestyle (Milton and Binney 1980:18).

It was particularly during the initial phase that the bans and limitations on land use brought about by the national park led to great economic loss, the primary cause being that cattle were deprived of their feed base, while at the same time hunting, fishing and the collecting of useful plants were no longer possible. It is chiefly those who live on the edge of the park who continue to depend on being able to regularly fall back on the resources of the park for their subsistence. Illegal human impact on the park's ecosystems has therefore not ceased in spite of the bans. This has led to constant conflicts between the local population, who attempt to satisfy their basic needs, and the park administration, which is duty-bound to protect nature from such incursions.

Not only the growth in population but also the growing numbers of large predatory and hoofed animals in the wake of their protection have contributed to a sharpening of the conflict over land use. Wild animals reduce output in the agricultural sector quite substantially (Milton and Binney 1980; Upreti 1995). Nepal and Weber (1993:60), for example, calculated a 13% loss of crops for 1991. To be sure, fields were grazed and destroyed even before the establishment of the national park, but cultivation was significantly more extensive then in comparison to the present situation. In addition, winter wheat, which is highly favored as fodder among wild animals, hardly counted. Prior to establishment of the national park, farmers were allowed to bring down boars and smaller wild animals that strayed onto fields. Last but not least, one could always fall back on sources of nourishment from the forest or from rivers.

Wild animals not only cause damage to harvests but also decimate farmers' cattle. Particularly in places near the national park, cows, water buffaloes, goats and sheep are constantly being attacked by predators.
population had no lobby. The political situation in Nepal has, however, changed somewhat. Even in Chitwan the population could, in the future, pressure their elected political representatives to work to ease restrictions on land use imposed in the context of the national park.

**Government Interests to Promote Conservation**

The question arises what kind of interests the Nepali government had and still has to promote nature conservation in this area?

Seen from the state’s perspective the national park combined with tourism is a great success. The increasing number of tourists ensures that the national park itself is, without any doubt, a very successful economic enterprise for the state. In the fiscal year 1989/90 only around 20% of park income from admission fees, hotel licenses and elephant ride charges were needed to maintain the park. Strikingly, around 80% of the park expenditure went to pay the soldiers of the Royal Nepal Army, who guard the national park. More than 80% of the total income of the park was channeled to Kathmandu. If we take into account that since 1989/90 not only have the park admission fees been raised but also the number of park visitors has increased heavily, it can be concluded that the balance sheet is very positive. Thanks to tourism, not only nature conservation is financed; also the purse of the state can be filled up. It is only recently that there has been any consideration of investing a part of the park income in regional development projects.

Not only can hard currency be earned from the national park. The state is also searching for credits and development money, and the donors are coupling this more and more with nature protection issues. Last but not least, the state interventions of past and present search for development impetus as well—one may assume—as means of political control over remote or politically sensitive areas.

**Conclusion**

In assessing the situation of the Tharus until the middle of the 20th century, it is possible to state that their lives were not without interference from the central government. Some sources document interventions during the Shah rule (1777-1846 A.D.), which are still in the memory of the Tharu people. In 1816, after the failed war with the East India Company, many families were evicted from the Rapti Valley in

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21 In 1996, 84,000 park entry tickets were sold. Nearly 25% of all tourists visiting Nepal went to Chitwan.
199 Union Street

A draft that is among the most important environmental documents in 1978, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, presented to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. The conference was attended by representatives from over 100 countries and resulted in the Helsinki Declaration, which committed states to protect the environment and promote sustainable development.

The document focuses on the global implications of population growth and its relationship with the environment. It highlights the need for international cooperation and action to address population-related issues.

Data are provided on the relationship between population growth and environmental degradation, including the impacts on resources such as water, land, and biodiversity. The document also discusses the role of technology and innovation in addressing these challenges.

The recommendations include measures to promote sustainable development, such as increased investment in renewable energy, improved agricultural practices, and the establishment of global environmental standards.

The draft concludes with a call to action for governments and international organizations to work together to ensure a sustainable future for all.

References:


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