


Spring 2017

The Business of Brandy: The Changing Roles of Women in Apple Brandy Production in Lower Mustang, Nepal

Madeline Sachs

SIT Study Abroad, madeline.sachs@yale.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection

 Part of the [Asian Studies Commons](#), [Business Law, Public Responsibility, and Ethics Commons](#), [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#), [Organization Development Commons](#), [Women's Studies Commons](#), and the [Work, Economy and Organizations Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sachs, Madeline, "The Business of Brandy: The Changing Roles of Women in Apple Brandy Production in Lower Mustang, Nepal" (2017). *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*. 2566.
http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/2566

This Unpublished Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Study Abroad at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact digitalcollections@sit.edu.

The Business of Brandy: The Changing Roles of Women in
Apple Brandy Production in Lower Mustang, Nepal

Madeline Sachs
Academic Director: Daniel Putnam

Yale University
Ethnicity, Race, and Migration

South Asia, Nepal, Mustang, Larjung, Tukche, Marpha, Syang
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Nepal: Development and
Social Change, SIT Study Abroad

Spring 2017

Abstract

Lower Mustang, Nepal is famous across the country for its well-known trekking circuit and an agricultural climate especially suitable to apple cultivation. Home to the indigenous Thakali ethnic group, the region was made accessible by motor vehicle via the Jomsom-Beni road just ten years ago. While before the road transportation of fresh apples was nearly impossible, necessitating the production of dried apples and apple brandy, now farmers make a lucrative profit off of high demand throughout the country. Additionally, the production of apple brandy has boomed, and the region has four to six distilleries in production at any one time. The recent taxing of these distilleries has caused the government to initiate licensing rules, requiring those who wish to sell apple brandy to register with a license. Though Thakali women are well-known for their roles in local alcohol production and are understood to be the initiators of apple brandy production in the region, these licensing rules effectively prohibit them from tapping into a traditional income source. The emergence and enforcement of licensing rules is an externality of regional development that disproportionately affects women. While commercialization and infrastructure developments in the region are largely beneficial, the consequences must be examined for all parties involved.

Keywords: Gender studies, Development studies, Commerce-Business

Dedication

I dedicate this research to the many women in Nepal who have helped me on my way, from my research participants to my aamaa, didi, and bahini. Thank you for extending such warmth and support to make my short time in this country so wonderful.

Acknowledgements

There are many people without whom this project would not have been possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank all of my research participants for their willingness, excitement, and smiling faces around every corner.

Next, I want to thank the SIT staff, especially the language *gurus*: Mina, Chandra, Sadhana, and Sanjib. Thank you for all of the extra language hours and for being there through every new Nepali *sanskriti* experience. You made me excited to come to school every day.

Finally, I want to thank my Nepali host family for welcoming me into their home with such open arms. You made my time in Nepal not only more meaningful, but also, of course, more delicious.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Literature Review	4
Methodology	8
Research Findings	13
<i>Commercialization in Lower Mustang</i>	13
<i>Jomsom-Beni Road</i>	14
<i>Tourism</i>	15
<i>Commercial Distilleries</i>	17
<i>Distilleries: Local Practice</i>	19
<i>Labor</i>	19
<i>Sourcing</i>	21
<i>Product Distribution</i>	22
<i>Apple Farming</i>	23
<i>Thakali Women and Alcohol</i>	24
<i>Licensing and Government Intervention</i>	25
<i>Local Perspectives</i>	28
Discussion/Analysis	29
Conclusion	36
Bibliography	39
List of Interviews	41

Introduction

Mustang district, located in Nepal's Western Development Region, is known throughout the country and across the world. Home to the world's seventh and ninth tallest mountains, the lower part of the district makes up the Annapurna Circuit, lauded for pristine mountain views and untouched Himalayan villages. Throughout Nepal, however, Lower Mustang calls to mind another product of the region – apples. A vast majority of Nepal's apples are grown in the area spanning from the small town of Larjung to Jomsom, the district headquarters, comprising the Thak Khola valley. Apples grown in the valley are sold in Pokhara and Kathmandu, the country's two largest cities. The region is especially suitable to apple cultivation due to high altitude and low humidity, and many varieties of apples are grown in the valley by both government agents and private farmers (Manandhar 2014).

While apples are not the only income source in the region, they provide local farmers with a steady livelihood. However, the transportation of fresh apples is a relatively recent phenomenon facilitated by the Jomsom-Beni Road. This road, built just ten years ago, is changing the commercial and cultural landscape of the region by expanding economic infrastructure and accessibility. Before the road was in place, there was no easy way for farms to get fresh apples down to the capital, so they turned to other methods of production, including the manufacture of dried apples, apple leather, and apple brandy (Holmelin 2013). While the manufacture of apple leather has decreased, the production of apple brandy has boomed, with four to six commercial distilleries up and running in the region at any one time. Now,

possibly even more than apples, Lower Mustang has become known for its apple brandy.

Lower Mustang is inhabited by indigenous people from the Thakali ethnic group, who are traditionally known as traders and businessmen. During the first half of the 20th century, Thakali traders acted as middlemen and tax collectors in Nepal's salt trade with Tibet, therefore gaining some judiciary power as well. In 1961, when Tibet was taken over by China, the salt trade stopped, and government-promoted apple cultivation took its place, continuing the legacy of the Thakali as one of Nepal's more prosperous indigenous groups (Fischer 2001). Now, with the popularity of the Annapurna Circuit to trekkers of all nationalities, local businesses have begun to center around tourism in the form of guest houses, an industry dominated by women (Vinding 1998). The Thakali are known for more liberal gender practices, and, as owners of these guest houses, women will often be involved in cooking and serving the food as well as selling the region's local liquor – in this case, apple brandy or oat *raksi*, traditionally brewed at home (Parker 1993). While Thakali women are known within their communities for their skill at liquor production, the presence of commercial distilleries has limited what women in the region can and cannot produce and sell legally under recent government licensing stipulations.

In addition to, and, in some ways because of the road and commercial distilleries, there are many factors at play in the changing roles of women in the brandy industry. As is true of many remote agricultural regions of Nepal, the youth of Lower Mustang are seeking education and employment elsewhere – from nearby Pokhara and Kathmandu, to the United States, Australia, and

the Middle East. This out-migration leaves a population of mostly aging villagers and young children, thus lacking a working class for hard, agricultural labor. In a somewhat cyclical fashion, there is a further need in-migration during harvest and peak distillation. Additionally, changing weather patterns and warming temperatures in the region are limiting the viability of apple production at lower altitudes where they previously thrived (Manandhar 2014). This is reflected in distilleries having to buy apples from private farmers to supplement their own dwindling orchards. Finally, as is true throughout Nepal and is generally spurred by commercialization and increased accessibility to remote areas, Hindu influences are continuing to touch Lower Mustang, leading to changing understandings of class, religion, and gender (Turin 1997).

The commercialization of the apple brandy market and the external factors that accompany it, the relatively fluid gender hierarchy within Thakali culture, and Thakali women's well-known role in home-brewing local liquor, make the apple brandy production landscape a unique case study on the ways women might be disproportionately affected by commercialization and the externalities associated with local development. With that in mind, this research aims to answer the following questions: First, to what extent are women still involved in apple brandy production and sale, whether commercially or at home? Further, how is this involvement affected by commercialization of the brandy market and the region as a whole? Finally, how does women's changing role affect their social status, whether material or otherwise, within the community?

Literature Review

Across Nepal, indigenous and Hindu caste groups alike conform to patriarchal social structures (Rankin 2004). While gender-based discrimination varies by both region and group, with the Thakali falling on the more liberal end of the scale, there are evident gendered divisions of labor not only in business, but also in the home and religious landscapes within Thakali culture (Parker 1993). Describing the annual Torongla festival, Parker notes that while Thakali women are rarely confined to the domestic sphere, there are tensions in how Thakali men and women view each other, revealed in ritual representations of sexuality. The festival's playful mockery and traditional songs point to the flexible and ambiguous nature of Thakali division of labor as well as the competition engendered by dual income households (Parker).

Additionally, in local politics and development, Thakali women are not engaged in decision-making to the same extent as men. They wield low negotiating power, and are rarely, if ever, employed as heads of the local justice system or social committees. While there are women's groups in the region, the women's decision making avenues are largely confined to the home (Thapa 2009). Contrary to common opinion, Thapa finds that patriarchal ideals continue to reign supreme in Lower Mustang, and these values are largely internalized by Thakali women, many of whom believe their position is rightfully in the home, and, more specifically, the kitchen (Thapa).

There is wide discussion amongst scholars as to the origins of social strata within Thakali culture, whether related to gender, class, or religion. Many point to the effects of 'Hinduization' or 'Sanskritization,' which increasingly affect rural areas of Nepal. In the words of Srinivas,

“Sanskritization is ‘the process by which a ‘low’ Hindu caste or tribal group changes its customs, rituals, and ideology and way of life in the direction of a high... caste” (Turin 1997, 187). Turin’s finding that the Thakali are, in fact, emulating high caste Hindus is supported by many other prominent scholars of the Thakali, including Messerschmidt and Monzardo. Messerschmidt (1982) cites this Hinduization as beginning during the late 19th century as a way to raise their status as an ethnic group and accelerating as trade and interaction with Tibet and Tibetan people was cut off in the 20th century. Manzardo (1978) takes a slightly more drastic position on the changing culture of the Thakali, going so far as to suggest that the Hinduization spurred on by trade might mean an end to traditional Thakali culture. This, however, Fischer (2001) points out, would discredit the malleability and self-determined origin stories perpetuated by the Thakali in the first place. Rather than an explicit negative, Fischer notes that the changing cultural landscape of the Thakali shows the fluidity of ethnic boundaries, which makes the indigenous group both unique and popular for anthropological study.

As to the reason for the Thakali’s unique encounter with and susceptibility to Hindu influences, Iijima (1963) cites the prominence of the Thakali in local and national trade. Situated in the Thak Khola Valley, the Thakali played a historic role in Nepal’s salt trade with Tibet. However, with the closure of the Nepal-Tibet border in the mid-20th century, trade has largely moved south, with the Thakali trading many of their own agricultural goods for products, both material and immaterial, from villages and cities such as Beni, Pokhara, and Kathmandu (Iijima).

With little trade but more accessibility, the Thak Khola river basin has become a hotbed for tourism, especially those tourists trekking the Annapurna Circuit. According to the National Trust for Nature Conservation (2017), the Annapurna Conservation Area receives approximately 60% of all trekkers to Nepal. Because of this, the tourism industry has blossomed in Lower Mustang. Parker describes Thakali women's role in the burgeoning tourism industry in the region, in which they are known for their hospitality, management, service, and cooking, including but not limited to providing local liquor to guests. The service of liquor is highly correlated with hospitality in the region, and Thakali women have always been involved in local alcohol production. According to Kunwor (1984), "Thakali women are experts in ale-selling business. Their technique of selling is by laughing, talking and serving to the guests" (25).

Additionally, in the high hills region of Nepal, women do more agricultural labor than men across the board (FAO 2010). In a study of Kobang VDC, a coalition of villages including Larjung, Thapa (2009) notes that almost half of all women were involved in agriculture, whereas male participation was half of that figure. However, concerning the cultivation of apples specifically, a crop which requires more technical know-how, women may be less involved. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2010), women tend to be less involved in the maintenance and harvest of orchard crops, one agricultural sector that has always been dominated by men.

Presently, a host of factors are contributing to changes in apple cultivation and manufacture in Lower Mustang, including migration, changing

weather patterns, and regional development. First, in the past fifty years, six commercial distilleries involved in the production of apple brandy have sprung up in the valley. In addition, the road from Beni to Jomsom, connecting the region with Pokhara, Nepal's second largest city, has opened new avenues for more efficient apple sale, making the preservation of apples in different forms such as leather, brandy, and dried fruit less necessary (Holmelin 2013).

However, the increasing commercialization of these apples for wholesale as well as brandy production in commercial distilleries has led to increased seasonal labor in-migration along this very same road, some permanent and some temporary. Finally, changing weather patterns are influencing irrigation and planting strategies, forcing apple fields to be moved to higher altitudes and villages further north (Manandhar 2014).

While there is some limited literature on these factors, there is no information as to how they may be affecting the role of women in the brandy industry specifically or in the region's economic sphere as a whole. In fact, there is no academic literature whatsoever pertaining to the relatively recent presence of commercial distilleries in the region. With the original reason for brandy production (an excess of apples that could not be sold fast enough without a road) now null and void, the production landscape is changing in ways other than simply upscaling. Additionally, all of these changing factors have different effects on women than they do on men. Each of these subjects is lacking in current literature and requires further research to gain a full understanding of regional production and the changing roles of women in the brandy industry.

Methodology

The research presented in this paper was collected during three weeks spent in Lower Mustang, Nepal. The time was divided such that one week was spent in each of three villages in the region: Larjung, Tukche, and Marpha, with one day-trip to Syang. All interviews were semi-structured with basic questions prepared in advance based on the type of establishment being visited (i.e. guest house, restaurant, distillery, or government office). The majority of interviews were requested and conducted on the spot at the interviewee's place of work. All interviewees were first and foremost presented with an informed consent statement in Nepali. If the interviewee was unable to read the statement, it was read aloud to him or her. For all interviewees, verbal consent was received before beginning the conversation. Additionally, each interviewee was asked whether their name could be used in the research and whether the interview could be recorded.

Questions asked varied based on both village and employment of the interviewee, with some questions remaining the same for all people interviewed. In Larjung, where there is no private distillery, interviews were taken at two of the three guest houses in the village. In Tukuche, the first interviews were also conducted at guest houses. From there, directions were given to other members of the community who might be useful for this research, including the owner of the currently closed Tukuche Distillery and a former distillery worker. Finally, in Marpha and neighboring Syang, where the majority of private and government distilleries are located, I first sought out interviews at the distilleries themselves. While I was able to interview people at two private distilleries and the government horticulture

experimentation and research station, I was turned down for interviews at the two other distilleries either due to lack of free time or the distillery being closed.

At guest houses, questions largely pertained to where brandy being sold came from, at what cost, and, if the owners used to make brandy of their own, when and why they stopped. These questions were asked with a goal of understanding the way brandy has functioned as an income source for Thakali women over time. After asking factual questions, I asked each interviewee about what they perceived to be advantages or disadvantages of this aspect of their life now in comparison with ten years ago.

At distilleries, questions were mostly based around operations during each stage of the fermentation, distillation, and marketing process. To this end, I asked each distillery to describe their distillation process, especially in comparison to home-brew methods. I then followed up with questions about who primarily takes care of each job, especially in relation to gender. I asked each distillery owner whether there were perceived effects of the distilleries being open on the homebrew industry, and, if so, what the advantages and disadvantages of this change might be.

All interviewees were asked basic factual questions about the details of regional development (i.e. the Jomsom-Beni road and the commercial distilleries). After gathering basic data, I asked questions more specifically related to perceived advantages and disadvantages of both the road and the distilleries in addition to if and how these elements of development have changed village and personal life.

In the field, I encountered two major obstacles, the first of which was that I was only able to interview at one of the private distilleries in Marpha. While this distillery provided valuable information, it cannot be taken to represent the distilleries in the region as a whole since the brandy produced there is only sold in Pokhara and Kathmandu and not locally in hotels or stores. Due to the time of year during which this research was conducted, apples were not being harvested and the past year's fermentation was largely complete. Because of this, most distillery were not operating at full capacity, and, even when I was able to find someone who worked at these distilleries, I was often directed elsewhere. In order to balance this relative lack of key interviews, I made a day-trip to Syang (approximately one hour's walk north of Marpha) during my last week of field research and was able to conduct an additional interview at the distillery there. Furthermore, when being rejected for interviews or waiting outside distilleries, I was able to observe daily operations, noticing who was working at the distilleries and who was not. I extended this observation to include the names of the people to whom I was directed to speak, regardless of whether I ended up being able to meet them. For example, I took note of when I was directed, on two separate occasions, to speak with a man rather than a woman at distilleries where both were present.

The second obstacle to my research was the language barrier presented by having to conduct all but two interviews completely in Nepali. While I was able to understand the main points of every interview, I recognize the likelihood that some details were lost in translation. I do not anticipate misinterpretation, however, due to the fact that most questions were objective, and, if subjective, required clear yes or no answers. Additionally, I recorded

as many interviews as allowed by the interviewees and listened to them at a slower speed after the fact in order to increase comprehension and transcribe as many as possible. I also asked for clarification of individual words during interviews and took note of new vocabulary as I came across it. While this obstacle certainly presented itself, its effect was marginal, and, feeling thus confident, I did not have reason to employ the help of a translator. It must be noted that mistranslations herein are not impossible, and I, as the author and interviewer, take full responsibility for any misrepresentation caused by errors to that end.

While questions were largely free of bias due to their factual nature, I took extra measures to be sure that, during the interviews, I did everything possible to control for external factors, including avoiding leading questions or questions that might be perceived as incriminating. For example, I only twice asked why women did not work at a distillery, and this was only after information was volunteered to that end. I also placed my recording device under a sheet of paper during all interviews so as to attempt to eliminate distraction. That said, many answers received did often seem rehearsed, and, when I encountered this problem, I took steps to delve into these answers further. For example, when asked what the road has brought to the villages, the majority of interviewees answered with the statement that the road has brought both advantages and disadvantages. The answer was similar when the same question was asked about the private distilleries. Possible reasons for the rehearsed nature of these answers as well as the vagueness of such blanket statements are the fact that the government does strictly enforce licensing rules related to the distilleries, and any answer otherwise could have consequences.

This bias might have been even more pronounced in Marpha, which is, of the three villages, the only one that is home to a related government office and the closest to the district headquarters, Jomsom, where licenses are registered and tracked.

In addition, in conducting this research, it is important to recognize my status as a white, American woman perceived as wealthy by most if not all Nepalis due to my ability to travel so far from home. My status as such leads to a largely unavoidable power dynamic during interviews, especially when those interviews were conducted at guest houses or restaurants where I was paying for tea or a room. As stated above, my status may have influenced answers about the government or government-enforced regulations and infrastructure. Additionally, information about the status of women within the brandy industry or the village as a whole may have been shaped to fit what interviewees expected I wanted to hear – that women are treated as equal or have more power. In trying to combat this bias, I conducted almost all interviews in the primary language of the interviewee and gave each interviewee time to ask me questions at the end of the interview. After asking their own questions, some interviewees volunteered further information pertaining to my subject.

Most of the resources that were of the most help to me in conducting this research were local people on site. After the first couple of interviews I conducted, I began to ask interviewees who else I should talk to and where those people could be found. For example, if an interviewee told me that some people in his village still do make their own brandy, I could ask who those people were and where they lived. Additionally, in Tukche, I was aided

by one of the SIT seminar lecturers – Krishna Bhattachan. Earlier in the semester I had spoken to him about my research, and he had called his cousin, the son of the owner of the Tukche distillery.

In using the above stated methods, my goal was to connect what I perceived to be commercialization of the region with the changing roles of women in brandy production, without asking that question exactly. Instead, basic questions pertaining to who worked at distilleries, who used to produce at home, and why the system is changing were sufficient to extrapolate an answer. This approach was especially beneficial because, in many instances, words like “commercialization” were not understood, and thus, questions such as “How does commercialization affect the home brandy industry?” were not viable and did not yield appropriate or clarifying answers. That said, occasionally interviewees drew the connections themselves – for example, numerous guest house owners mentioned the affect of the Jomsom-Beni road on tourism before I asked my own pre-prepared question to that end.

Research Findings

Commercialization in Lower Mustang

During the past thirty years, Lower Mustang has experienced rapid and broad commercialization and development, from the completion of the Jomsom-Beni road ten years ago to the rising success and sustainability of apple farming and apple brandy production. These factors, in conjunction with ever-rising numbers of tourists aiming to trek the Annapurna Circuit, have led to sweeping changes in lifestyle and livelihood for villagers in the area.

Jomsom-Beni Road

The Jomsom-Beni road is perhaps the most visible manifestation of commercialization and development in Lower Mustang, for locals and visitors alike. The road was completed ten years ago and was built and financed by the Nepali government, which, according to Rupa Thakali (2017), owner of Larjung Lodge, installed the road because the people of Mustang needed one. Since 2015, this road has been opened to vehicles from other areas of Nepal as well, leaving it more crowded and the villages alongside it covered in dust (P. Thakali, L. Thakali, 2017). Despite this, most locals believe the road is a good thing, holding more advantages than disadvantages.

According to most villagers, the first advantage of the road is that goods coming from other parts of Nepal have gotten a lot cheaper with the facilitation of ground transportation. Before the road, goods had to come in on helicopters, mules, or the backs of travelling salesmen (B. Sherchan, M. Jwarchan, 2017). Now, most goods are carried in on jeeps, where they are less likely to be jostled or to expire (in the case of fresh foods). According to Rupa, while sugar used to cost twelve Rs. per kilogram, she now only has to pay five Rs. Similar satisfaction was expressed by Rabina Tulachan (2017) and Nirjhar Man Sherchan (2017) from Tukche and Buddi Man Lalchan (2017) from Marpha. The benefits of cheaper transportation costs apply to people as well. While Purna Thakali (2017), owner of High Plains Inn complained that people are becoming lazy now that they do not have to travel on foot from one village to another, many others described the benefits of being able to take a bus or jeep to Pokhara rather than the arduous two-day trip on foot. According to Bal Adhikari (2017) who works at the government

horticulture experimentation center, it is now possible for villagers to take a two or three day holiday and travel to Pokhara or Beni. Lakhpa Tamang (2017), a labor migrant in Tukche who used to work in the Tukche distillery, also noted that there is now a direct bus from Jomsom to Kathmandu.

Among the greatest advantages to the road is the boom in profitability of apple farming. While local descriptions of price varied, villagers noted a spike in the amount of money farmers could get for apples across the board. Rupa Thakali, for example, cited a jump from 25 Rs. per kilogram of apples to 100 Rs. per kilogram. The business has become so profitable, in fact, that, according to Purna Thakali, sometimes farmers in Tukche make even more money than hotel owners.

While villagers cited many important advantages to the road, guest house owners were quick to note that these advantages also come with significant disadvantages in their own lives. According to Laxmi Thakali (2017), the owner of Laxmi Lodge, people are no longer coming through Tukche on foot, and, as a result, fewer people are staying in her guest house. This point was echoed by Rupa Thakali, Bal Sherchan, and Rabina Tulachan, all of whom said that the road has not been good for the hotel business and has made their lives harder. Both Laxmi and Rabina noted that, while, according to the government the road was built to bring better facilities and better business to Mustang, they are not experiencing these benefits.

Tourism

Each guest house owner who participated in this research had a different story to tell about the effect of the road on his or her hotel business. Rupa Thakali, who opened Larjung Lodge twelve years ago, described the

number of tourists going by on bus and not stopping. Unlike in Tukche, and, to some extent Marpha, the main road completely skirts the village of Larjung, and tourists on buses are unlikely to know local hotels exist unless they are walking through. Bal Sherchan (2017), who opened Mount Ice View Lodge in Larjung nineteen years ago, also noted the recent absence of tourists due to not only local buses, but also the tourist buses licensed to enter the region in 2015. Bal asserted that most tourists who came to her hotel in the past were Nepali tourists, and even they are now coming to the region in personal vehicles.

The dearth of tourists extends up the western side of the Annapurna Circuit, from Ghasa to Muktinath (R. Thakali). Laxmi Thakali, who opened Laxmi Lodge in Tukche 35 years ago, said that while, in the beginning, hotel business was good, since the road was built it has significantly decreased. Now, she said, people stay in their cars as they go through the villages. According to Purna Thakali, Tukuche used to be the perfect stopping point for mountain bikes, but, due to the crowding of the road in recent years, fewer people are using this mode of transportation.

Living in Lower Mustang for a total of four weeks, I saw the decision to take a jeep or bus to finish the circuit play out numerous times. Walking down from Jomsom, trekkers would comment on the dustiness of the walk upon arriving in Marpha. After staying the night, they would wake up early the following morning to take a jeep or bus down to Pokhara, effectively cutting their route short and skirting Tukche and Larjung. While Marpha received vastly more tourists than Tukche or Larjung, Buddi Man Lalchan, who, along with his wife opened Rita Guest House fourteen years ago, still

complained of a decrease in business, suggesting that many tourists now are even taking the bus or a plane directly from Jomsom.

Commercial Distilleries

Another element of commercialization happening alongside of, though not unaffected by the building of the road, is the creation and increase in scale of private and government distilleries. The government distillery, manned by Bal Adhikari, primarily serves as a horticultural experimentation center. According to Bal (2017), the center opened fifty years ago and serves the local community through its grafted seedling project, teaching farmers technical advice and orchard management, lessons on nutrition, intercrop demonstrations, and biodiversity conservation. The distillation plant at the government office is a relatively small part of the process and, as Bal stressed, is not a profit-making enterprise. The distillation arm came about because, before the road was completed, farmers had trouble selling their apples, leading to an excess and subsequent loss. Seeing this, the government plant began to process brandy as a way to add to the income of farmers, but it was, and remains, very small scale.

The regional private distilleries from Tukche to Syang operate on a larger, albeit varying scale. The Tukche distillery, owned and operated by Kalpana Sherchan, and, more recently her son Nirjhar Man Sherchan, was opened 35 years ago and closed for renovations three years ago. According to Nirjhar (2017), the distillation process used in the Tukche distillery is the same process as is used at home, but, in the distillery, due to the distillation plates used, there is a higher alcohol content as well as a purer and more refined taste in the final product. Similar to the government plant in Marpha,

the Tukche distillery came to be because there was originally no market for the apples. Now, in contrast, the distillery must bargain for apples because selling rates have gone up elsewhere. At the Tukche distillery, operations run for approximately nine months, with the factory closing from November to January. During the first eight years the distillery was open, the Nepali government levied the excise tax on brandy in order to spur on growth. However, once the distillery had a foothold in the market, they began to pay a tax. Since his father died in the first two years of operation, Nirjhar's mother has largely taken over operations, and, as she has aged, he has returned to take care of her and look after the family business (N.M. Sherchan).

Mahabir Jwarchan (2017), the owner of the Marpha Distillery, described a similar distillation process to that of the Tukche Distillery. The Marpha Distillery was opened eighteen years ago for similar reasons to other local distilleries – namely, the excess of apples. According to Mahabir, since opening the distillery he has had to pay more attention to taste and quality because his brandy being sold across the country requires a standardization of his product. Similar to that which was reported at the Tukche Distillery, the government began taxing the Marpha Distillery five to six years ago (M. Jwarchan).

Along a similar timeline, the large commercial distillery in Syang (just north of Marpha) was opened seventeen years ago by Chandra Thakali (2017). Chandra described the distillation process more in depth and on a larger scale. Producing 70-80 liters of brandy in any single batch, the Syang distillery combines apples, molasses, water, and yeast, ferments for one month, then distills over a fire made using local wood – the same system used at home,

only on a larger scale and of better quality. Satisfied with the trend of business in recent years, Chandra notes that he also had to start paying the government excise tax after his first eight years of operation.

Distilleries: Local Practice

Depending on differences in production scale at each distillery, owners use differing hiring methods to sustain business. All distillery owners took note of the way their production was benefitting the community at at least one stage down the line, from the people they employ, to the sourcing of their ingredients, both raw materials and tools, to where they sell the final product.

Labor

Managing the largest scale operation, even if not merely confined to distillation of brandy, the government horticultural experimentation center employs forty staff, only one of whom is a woman. According to Bal Adhikari (2017), during harvest season the plant employs daily wage laborers in addition to the permanent staff. When asked about who is involved at each stage of processing, Bal reported that all fermentation and distillation is done by men, and many have been working at the plant for the last twenty years, thereby gaining this untraditional experience. Bal cited the nature of government organizations in Nepal in response to questions about why so few women work at the organization. Most of the people working at the facility in Marpha were posted there by the government.

According to Nirjhar Man Sherchan, when the Tukuhe distillery was open there were five people from two separate families working in the distillery. The work was split evenly between men and women, and, due to the small scale of production, everyone did every job. For example, everyone

would distill one day, bottle the next, or participate in monitoring fermentation in the mornings. The family working at the distillery was paid a monthly wage year round – even when the distillery was not in operation, the families would be paid to take care of the house. Lakhpa Tamang (2017), one of Tukche distillery’s former employees still lives in Tukuche and operates a small restaurant along the main road now that the distillery is closed. As a permanent migrant to the region from Solokhumbu district, Lakhpa does not have a farm like almost all other villagers. Currently, the money he makes is enough to feed his wife and himself, but his earnings do not extend beyond that. When he worked at the distillery, his whole family was employed there, including two daughters who have since moved away. Even, then, he did not make an extremely large sum of money – again, just enough to feed his family. Lakhpa admitted that, as a man, it is unusual that he knows how to make brandy but that he learned from working at the distillery.

Mahabir Jwarchan (2017) also employs five people at the Marpha Distillery. As he and his wife get older and are unable to maintain rigorous work habits, the Marpha Distillery has begun to employ permanent labor migrants from Tanahun district (B.M. Lalchan). According to Mahabir, the entire local population of Marpha is getting older because many young people have left to study in the United States or Australia. As a result, it is necessary to hire help from outside the village for hard labor, and these migrants often bring their families and settle permanently. On a similar scale as the Tukche Distillery, all of the people who work at the Marpha Distillery do all of the jobs and are paid a salary.

Operating on a far larger scale than the other distilleries at which interviews were conducted, Chandra Thakali's approach to labor at the distillery in Syang varied from the rest. Having only two permanent staff, he hires men from Syang to work in the distillery during peak season. Chandra was very adamant that only men could work in his distillery because "if women work here, they will disturb, chat, joke, and distract. They will flirt with the men, so they cannot work here" (C. Thakali). Thus, rather than mixing the sexes, Chandra employs only men in the distillery and only women in his fields.

Sourcing

Nearly every villager in Lower Mustang has his or her own farm, including distillery owners. When they do have to buy from other local farmers, each distillery owner insisted there was no visible difference in which member of the family they deal with most of the time – whether husband or wife. The smaller scale distilleries usually have enough apples in their own fields, but, if these are not enough for any reason, they turn to local farmers. In contrast, at the Syang distillery's high level of production, Chandra Thakali plans to buy two thirds of his apples from local farmers every year. Of the 30 tons required to sustain his business, he is only able grow ten tons of apples himself. At the government plant, in addition to the apples grown on-site, Bal Adhikari buys non-marketable apples off of farmers specifically for making brandy, providing local farmers with additional income. Outside of apples, firewood is procured locally by each distillery. However, other raw materials such as yeast and molasses must be acquired from Pokhara, Kathmandu, and the Terai. Citing the effects of changing weather patterns, Chandra Thakali

noted that it is becoming more and more difficult to obtain the necessary materials locally – apples do not grow as efficiently, and firewood is harder to find.

In terms of tools and appliances, most distilleries get bottles and distillation parts from Nepal's major cities. In the case of the Tukche distillery, which has been closed for three years for renovations as well as to repair a broken part, one of the materials needed is bronze. Closing just shortly before the 2015 earthquake, Kalpana Sherchan sent to India for the bronze. However, after the 2015 trade embargo, progress on the part has slowed, and the date of reopening the distillery has been continuously pushed back.

Product Distribution

Aside from the government distillation project, each of the private distilleries is a commercial for-profit enterprise, sending the bulk of its product south and east to Pokhara and Kathmandu. According to Nirjhar Man Sherchan, before the Jomsom-Beni road, brandy was sold to travelling salesmen who, after bring necessities up from the cities on their backs, would take apples or apple brandy downstream for bulk sale. For the Tukche Distillery, Jomsom is also a big outlet for brandy because tourists will buy on their way out as gifts for family members in the major cities. Within Tukche, when the distillery was open, hotel owners would buy brandy from the distillery and sell this to tourists in their storefronts. Chandra and Mahabir, on the other hand, solely send their brandy to Pokhara and Kathmandu, a process highly facilitated by the motor road. The government distillery, not being commercial, only sells brandy produced there to individuals who come to the

distillery to purchase it. These individuals are often affiliated with the government in some way, whether they actually work at the plant in Marpha or fill other government posts in the region. Bal Adhikarhi noted that the brandy produced is often sold to nearby army stations, armed police forces, or the district police office.

Apple Farming

Lower Mustang has been, and remains, a vibrant agricultural community. The majority of villagers in Larjung, Tukche, and Marpha work in the fields, harvesting everything from barley, to potatoes, to apples. According to Rupa Thakali and Bal Sherchan, while the majority of villagers in Larjung do still work in the fields, fewer and fewer of these fields are being dedicated to apple cultivation, largely due to inhospitable climate. At present, the remaining apples grown in Larjung are just for eating, and, the few sold do not go upstream to distilleries but rather a few villages down to Ghasa and Tatopani.

In Tukche, many people still work in apple fields, and, coming up the road from Larjung, one of the first visible parts of Tukche is the sprawling community apple farm. Many of the people who are working in the farms in Tukche are older men and women whose children have migrated for employment or education. However, of the remaining middle generation in the village, men are largely working outside of the home as businessmen and women are working in the fields with their parents and parents-in-law (Laxmi Thakali). According to Nirjhar Man Sherchan, in addition to local labor in Tukche, there are a significant number of permanent migrants from Rolpa district working in the apple fields, especially during harvest season. In terms

of division of labor, Purna Thakali noted that, in Tukche, while both men and women work in orchards, it is usually men who organize the apple trees because the women do not know how many trees they have or what chemical to use for diseases.

Similar to Tukche, the majority of villagers in Marpha and neighboring Syang work in the fields. According to Chandra Thakali, 85-90% of the people living in Syang are farmers, and every farmer grows apples. As is true in his own fields, in which he hires out labor, women do most of the work in Syang's fields. Rather than seasonal or permanent labor migration, during peak harvest season, farmers rotate fields to help each other pick apples. In Marpha, according to Buddi Man Lalchan, the majority of people working the fields are women, but it is really a shared task within each family. In his own field, for example, he and his wife share the work equally.

Thakali Women and Alcohol

Despite the fact that all apple brandy in Lower Mustang is currently produced in the commercial distilleries, the work of alcohol production within Thakali culture has always fallen within the domestic sphere of women. According to Rupa Thakali, when villagers were making their own apple brandy, it was always the trade of local women, as is true of any local alcohol and many indigenous ethnic groups within Nepal. When asked why this was, Rupa stated that women make alcohol because men are involved in business outside the home. This point was echoed by Bal Sherchan who classified the brewing of local *raksi* alongside preparing food in terms of women's daily routine. Laxmi Thakali further added that men do not know how to make *raksi*, and this was confirmed by Nirjhar Man Sherchan, who asserted that

distillation has always been done by the wife of the house, and “it’s in the blood for indigenous women.” Although his mother does not drink any alcohol, Kalpana Sherchan can apparently assess the flavor just by smelling the brandy at the Tukche Distillery.

According to Nirjhar, alcohol production is a secret technique passed from mother to daughter. In Lower Mustang, where the government initiated apple cultivation without a supporting market, it was women who recognized the leftover apples were fermentable and could be used to produce brandy (N.M. Sherchan). Purna Thakali, confirming that she can determine the taste of brandy just by smelling it, noted again that she does not believe men are capable of making brandy at all unless formally trained in a distillery. According to Purna, men only know how to drink the alcohol made by their wives.

Licensing and Government Intervention

Even with the widespread acclaim accorded Thakali women for their ability to make good brandy, women are no longer allowed to produce their own apple brandy in large quantities or for sale. This change has taken place following relatively recent license requirements put into place by the Nepali government. Both Rupa Thakali and Bal Sherchan used to make their own apple brandy for sale at their hotels but now sell brandy made in the distilleries in Marpha. According to Rupa, the new rules on licensing emerged five to six years ago, and, until then, she was making her own brandy. While she struggles to make a profit at her hotel now that the road has diverted tourists, she used to earn a lot of money from her home-brewed brandy as a back-up income source. Bal noted that the reason she can no longer make her own

brandy for sale is that she would not be allowed to package or seal the brandy as she once did. This type of manufacture is highly regulated by the government. In Tukche, the perspective is much the same. Laxmi Thakali used to make her own brandy as well, but, as to the reason she stopped, she cites a lack of free time and the fact that buying from elsewhere is easier.

Nirjhar Man Sherchan clarified the licensing rule and the reason for its instatement from the perspective of a distillery owner. Nirjhar asserted that home production is for consumption, so there is no decrease in people making brandy at home – this is not impacted by the distilleries' existence. However, local restaurants in Tukche and elsewhere in the region used to produce their own brandy for sale, and each had a unique taste and quality. This type of production, also exclusively dominated by women, is no longer legal under the new licensing rule. After the distilleries began to be taxed, the government ruled that other producers cannot free ride and make a larger profit. Since the tax was enacted, the government has become very strict, conducting home raids and confiscating large quantities of home-brewed brandy. While they will not dump a mere 100 liters of brandy, if they find 400-500 liters, they will pour it out. The reason for this relative flexibility lies in the government's recognition of Thakali cultural heritage, in which alcohol is important for honoring their forefathers. Thus, the licensing rule extends such that it is possible to produce small quantities for own consumption but not for sale (N.M. Sherchan).

While it appears most villagers do conform to the rules, or at least those willing to be interviewed, Purna Thakali admitted that she does illegally sell small quantities of home-brewed apple brandy. She stressed that making

brandy at home is not illegal but rather the line is crossed when it is sold in a bottle with a label and seal. Her sales extend only to her guests and are relatively few, so she did not express fear that the government would find out. While she has permission to sell one or two glasses of her own brandy to customers because she pays the hotel and alcohol tax, the packaging itself is illegal. Purna noted that last year she did significant illegal packaging but “coincidentally wasn’t home” when the government came to check her house and hotel. During this raid, government officers threw out all of the brandy at many other hotels and private homes, including hundreds of liters in Marpha just up the road. Since then, Purna has not seen any local women making and selling their own brandy, and she herself will buy from the distillery if a customer wants a bottle.

Chandra Thakali and Mahabir Jwarchan, similar to Nirjhar Man Sherchan, both noted that they do not think the distilleries have had any impact on the home industry. However, both men recognized that people in their respective villages don’t make their own brandy anymore. Mahabir explained this by saying that it is simply easier for villagers to buy from distilleries, and Chandra noted that it was a matter of simple registration of production.

Licensing rules extend from Larjung up to Jomsom, and Buddi Man Lalchan confirmed that, before the distilleries sprung up in Marpha, he wife also used to make and sell her own brandy. She also stopped because the government has gotten stricter with licensing requirements. However, Buddi noted that he knows some people in Marpha still make their own brandy but not who they are, suggesting that perhaps their activities are under wraps.

Only one of the women working at a guest house does not and has never made her own apple brandy, though she does sell brandy from the Marpha distilleries at her guest house. At the beginning of her participation in this research, she noted that she only just married into the hotel business at which she now works and is still relatively young (R. Tulachan).

Local Perspectives

Though women are largely disadvantaged in the strict enforcement of the government instated licensing requirements, very few expressed hurt or disappointment at the fact that they were unable to make their own brandy. Almost everyone asked, except for Bal Sherchan and Rupa Thakali, said that the distilleries are good for brandy production. Laxmi Thakali, for example, noted that the distilleries are good because they can produce much more than could have been produced at home. Now, more can be sold downstream from Mustang, in cities like Pokhara and Kathmandu, which is important because many fewer people are actually making the journey up to Mustang (L. Thakali). Purna Thakali, first recognizing the lack of choice in the matter, noted that distilleries are better than homebrewed brandy for quality reasons as well. As an example, she cited Kalpana Sherchan, the owner of the Tukuche Distillery. According to Purna, Kalpana refuses to let others (outside of her family) run the distillery due to the quality associated with her family name. Finally, Buddi Man Lalchan said that the distilleries are better because now people know and recognize the name Marpha.

Buddi's point was confirmed by all other interviewees – since the road was built, more people have come to know the district of Mustang, its apples, and, above all, its apple brandy. Even in Larjung, which has been largely

untouched by the material manifestations of commercialization as defined above, Bal Sherchan noted that those who do stay know more about the apple brandy now and are more likely to buy it.

For distillery owners, the interplay between the road and the brandy industry has more tangible monetary consequences. Chandra Thakali noted that the road has been great for the Syang distillery because before, all transport was done by mule, and he could only send 20-30 cartons to the big cities at a time. Now, he is able to send 200-300 cartons, and, at that, the cost of transportation has gone down. Additionally, villagers not associated with the distilleries recognize the ways these commercial enterprises are benefitting. According to Rupa Thakali, the road is a huge advantage for the distilleries, but, unfortunately, these benefits do not accrue in Larjung, which has no distillery and, now, no brandy at all.

Discussion/Analysis

While definitions of “development” and “commercialization” vary across the board, it is clear that both are taking place in Lower Mustang. The completion of the Jomsom-Beni road just ten years ago has made food, medicine, and travel more accessible to inhabitants of the region. This infrastructure has also led to further incorporation into the national economy, where both apples and apple brandy from the region are sold across Nepal. These consequences of development have, in many ways, improved village life and allowed those villagers involved in agriculture to prosper. While it is rare to find anyone in the region who expresses outright discontent with the road, it has nonetheless had some negative consequences for individuals. The dustiness combined with accessibility to cheap modes of transportation has led

to a decrease in trekkers walking through the villages on the west side of the Annapurna Circuit, leaving guest houses empty more often than not.

However, overall, people are happy with the road, and the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Villagers are thinking past the direct effects of commercialization on their own lives to assess the scope and larger consequences of the changes taking place around them.

Within the agricultural realm, the benefits of development and commercialization accrue to anyone who has an apple tree. However, not all benefits of increased infrastructure are evenly distributed. Within distilleries, most of which employ very few, if any, people from the village, those outside of the family of the owner make a relatively small wage in the context of the large scale of production. Lakhpa Tamang, for example, made a wage that he described as only enough to feed his family and nothing more. While this may be standard for the region, it is out of line with the relative affluence of the distillery. Additionally, most distilleries do not hire men and women from their own villages. The Marpha distilleries employ migrant families or government employees, so alcohol production, which used to be concentrated in the home, is increasingly being done outside the village, ideologically if not physically. As a result, the wealth gleaned from this industry centers in a few small families at the edge of town.

This shift in wealth was only expressed as a concern by female guest house owners, while those men who worked in distilleries had relatively idealistic views of their own practices. Guest house owners in Larjung, Tukuche, and Marpha all noted a decrease in business, and, anticipating this, both Nirjhar Man Sherchan and Bal Adhikahri shared their perception of the

situation. To them, wealth is now being spread more evenly throughout the village because farmers can sell apples at higher prices both down to the big cities and, in surplus, to the local distilleries. Guest houses are no longer the centers of wealth, and both Nirjhar and Bal noted that complaints of this type by guest house owners were misguided and selfish. It is not clear whether there is a better or worse way to distribute wealth in the area, though it seems that more people are benefitting than were before. However, when viewed from a gendered perspective, wealth distribution has become more skewed. This is manifested in the fact that, a majority of the time, men are the ones in control of family fields and distilleries as well as providing most of the temporary and permanent wage labor. Women, on the other hand, in the course of development, have lost two major sources of income – hospitality in the form of guest houses and local liquor production.

Conceivably, women can still make apple brandy in their homes. However, this is largely undesirable because of the illegality of selling the final product, which used to supplement the guest house business. Additionally, in order to sell, they would need to register with the government under a license, which is beyond the means of anyone producing on a small-scale. Guest houses in the area already have to pay a hotel and alcohol tax simply to serve the distilleries' products, and the licensing procedure, while accomplishing the job of eliminating free riders in the form of home brewers who otherwise would not pay any tax, disadvantages guest house owners more than they already are in the wake of the road.

Despite the disadvantage at which women are placed, most villagers believed that the distilleries are a good thing. The presence of the distilleries

is not understood to be the cause of poor business, nor should it be. Rather, the more pressing issue is the licensing rule created and strictly enforced by local and national government. While women may be disproportionately affected by this side-effect of commercialization, it is important to note that they are not being directly targeted as a population. Rather, it is a lack of foresight that leads to unfortunate corollary effects. Nepal is a largely patriarchal society, and, with a government dominated by men, it is possible that the ways women are differently affected by development were overlooked or not considered. As noted by Rupa Thakali, the building of the road was spurred on by the government because they determined the people of Mustang needed it. While this may be true, the creation of a motor road to an area previously accessible only by foot or plane, may also be a way for the Nepali government to further extend its reach in a distant area. Mustang, or the “last forbidden kingdom” as it is commonly called in tourist brochures, is a lucrative area for the nation’s tourism industry, and, as a result, it is unsurprising that the government wishes to control this source of income; taxing distilleries and requiring licenses to control brandy production is one way it can accomplish just that.

As mentioned by Nirjhar Man Sherchan in discussing licensing practices, the government does not completely ignore the maintenance of the balance between cultural heritage and development, an equilibrium argued over across Nepal and in many countries across the world. Nirjhar noted that the government still allows home production for consumption without a license because, for Thakali people, alcohol is a requirement of rituals meant to honor their forefathers. In this definition, however, brandy is not

recognized for its traditional status as an extra income source sustained by women. Local liquor production and the hospitality associated with it are elements of cultural tradition, and, in fact, Thakali women are cited as the initiators of apple brandy production in the region. An element of cultural heritage that is common across many indigenous groups in Nepal, this designation does not extend to Hindu caste groups. In a government mainly controlled by Nepal's Hindu population and Brahmins and Chettris at that, these elements of indigenous cultural heritage outside of religion may have been overlooked.

This cultural oversight falls in line with increasing trends of Hinduization in Nepal outside of its big cities and centers of Hindu population. Across Nepal, with resources such as the internet and accessible infrastructure for travel, the dominant cultural influence (Hinduism) is spreading to regions until relatively recently untouched. While within Thakali communities gender practices and division of labor may be relatively liberal, the orthodox Hinduism prevalent in Nepal is characterized by women's lower status and confinement within the home. Vestiges of this influence may be seen in the explanations given by many interviewees as to why women have always been responsible for liquor production – that is to say that men are responsible for business outside of the home, and women must stay back to cook and produce alcohol. This is in direct contrast to Parker's research on Thakali women from the early 1990s and more in line with Thapa's 2009 research, suggesting that such influence may be a recent phenomenon, perhaps even augmented by the road.

Despite the disproportionate disadvantages presented to women by recent license requirements, this research does not aim to represent Thakali women as oppressed, whether by members of their own communities or the Nepali government. Following Tamang's (2005) broader discussion of the Nepali women, describing Thakali women as subjugated would be a way to further suppress and control them. In the case where Thakali women become oppressed objects of misguided development efforts, their futures become mere side effects of the inevitable. In highlighting these disproportionate consequences of development accorded to Thakali women, it is rather the goal of this research to call attention to the fact that, when working toward broader development goals such as improved infrastructure and national economic growth, all segments of the community, from the village to city, must be understood as potential beneficiaries to this development, not the incidental recipients of negative externalities.

These problematic power dynamics do not extend only to women. In the case of Lower Mustang, long known for its pristine mountains and Himalayan villages, the government must find good reason to build something as abrupt as a major motor road. In addition to cheaper food, medicine, and transportation, the road has also brought more government oversight. In this case, development in Lower Mustang has been one way to exert control over the region – one which is lucrative for the country as a whole. As Foucault (2012) describes, there is no singular origin of power. Rather, exertions of control can come from all segments of communities or groups. In the case of Lower Mustang and in the face of a commercializing brandy industry, the government's power comes not only from distinct and explicit oversight

procedures such as licensing requirements, but also from developments initiated by the government that are, for the most part, leading to a better quality of life in the village. For example, the Jomsom-Beni road raises the income and buying power of most local people while also redirecting tourists out of their villages and adding additional sources of revenue for the government, such as taxing vehicles.

The population most affected by these changes is principally old women, and some elements of their traditional way of life are not being passed down to their daughters, including learning to make the local liquor. While many women in Lower Mustang continue to make other forms of local liquor, some have stopped all together, and others have not begun to learn. The combination of both in- and out-migration of young people in these communities and the licensing restrictions put into place by the government, have led to fewer young women as recipients of the “secret” of *raksi* production passed down from mother to daughter (Nirjhar Man Sherchan). Rabina Tulachan, who has only been married for five years, said that she has never made *raksi* and does not believe she ever will, since she can sell the packaged brandy from distilleries. Additionally, Purna Thakali, whose mother brews the brandy she sells illegally at her guest house, has never learned to make brandy herself. Purna, married to a Dutch man, spends half of her time in the Netherlands with her husband and his family. While the nature of her out-migration may be different from what is traditional in the region and rural areas across Nepal, the consequences are the same. In communities where elements of cultural heritage are concentrated in the land on which these

populations reside, a moving away from this land threatens to undermine tradition.

These conclusions suggest that the change happening in the Thak Khola valley is one of a larger scale, and, as is often true, the larger development becomes, the more difficult it is to see its consequences. To this end, it will be important to pay even closer attention to who is and is not affected by broader regional development. While women may be at the receiving end now, the pattern could just as easily shift to affect other low-status groups, such as low caste Hindus or Tibetan refugees.

Conclusion

In Lower Mustang, where recent licensing requirements prohibit individuals from making apple brandy for sale, women are disproportionately on the receiving end of the negative externalities of commercialization. In addition, due to a decrease in trekkers coming through the villages on foot as a result of the Jomsom-Beni Road, women are also unfairly disadvantaged by developmental infrastructure. Despite the unfortunate nature of these consequences for local women, the net effect of local development is seen as positive for both locals and the Nepali state and will likely continue along its current trajectory. In addition, the positivity of many local women in reference to this change would suggest that such commercialization is not problematic but rather a reality in the area.

Looking forward, it will be important to monitor further effects of current commercialization patterns in the region. Local production of apple brandy in commercial distilleries may expand, which would demand additional labor either in the form of migrants or villagers. On the other hand,

many young people in the valley are leaving for school and work. If the brandy industry becomes more successful, it might begin to pull these out-migrants back to their native villages, once again changing the demographic landscape of the region. Finally, with higher and higher demand for apples but fewer apples actually growing on-site, the commercial distilleries may need to either move location or engage in large scale transportation of produce, creating more jobs.

Additionally, in order to address the effects of this commercialization on women more thoroughly, more extensive research must be conducted on women's perceptions of their own roles within society. There may be a difference in the proportion of young men versus women leaving the villages for education and work, and, if so, this may be affecting the status of women remaining in the villages. However, if these women are migrating as well, leaving a complete generational gap in the region, this brings to light the question of how, if at all, Thakali tradition is being passed down. While it is possible that a larger demographic shift is in the works, this requires extensive further research, and the research presented herein cannot claim to predict such sweeping changes.

One danger of many development discourses is to automatically classify development as good or bad. Yet, the reality is often not black and white. Across the world, the name Nepal calls to mind images of pristine mountains but rarely the people living under them. Further, among these people, the Nepali women is often categorized as subjugated and without agency, thus an object of development rather than its subject or beneficiary. As a result, the specific effects of local and regional development on women is

often either misconstrued or overlooked entirely. As one of the most popular areas to trek in Nepal, commercialization in Lower Mustang is unlikely to go unnoticed or undiscussed. However, the lives of the people in the area, and further, the changing roles of women might.

Bibliography

- Fisher, William F. 2001. *Fluid Boundaries: Forming and Transforming Identity in Nepal*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2010. "Integration of Gender in Agriculture: An Analysis of Situation." UN Complex, Pulchowk, Nepal. Accessed February 9, 2017.
ftp://ftp.fao.org/TC/CPF/Country%20NMTPF/Nepal/thematic%20studies/Gender%20Final%20Report%20_TC_.pdf.
- Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Random House, Inc.
- Homelin, Nina, and tor Halfdan Aase. 2013. "Flexibility of Scope, Type and Temporality in Mustang, Nepal. Opportunities for adaptation in a Farming System Facing Climatic and Market Uncertainty." *Sustainability* 5:1387-1405. Accessed February 22, 2017. doi: 10.3390/su5041387.
- Iijima, Shigeru. 1963. "Hinduization of a Himalayan Tribe in Nepal." *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 29: 43-52. Accessed April 28, 2017. <http://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/anthpubs/ucb/text/kas029-005.pdf>.
- Kunwor, Ramesh Raj. 1984. "Nepalese Society: Liquor and Culture." *Ancient Nepal* 81:1-31. Accessed February 23, 2017.
http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ancientnepal/pdf/ancient_nepal_81_01.pdf.
- Manandhar, Sujata, Vishnu Prasad Pandey, and Futaba Kazama. 2014. "Assessing suitability of apple cultivation under climate change in mountainous regions of western Nepal." *Regional Environmental Change* 114:743-56. Accessed February 8, 2017. doi: 10.1007/s10113-013-0531-6.
- Messerschmidt, Donald A. 1982. "The Thakali of Nepal: Historical Continuity and Socio-Cultural Change." *Ethnohistory* 29:265-280. Accessed April 28, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/481101>.
- National Trust for Nature Conservation. 2017. "Annapurna Conservation Area Project." Accessed May 1, 2017.
<http://www.ntnc.org.np/project/annapurna-conservation-area-project>.
- Parker, Barbara, and David W. Patterson. 1993. "He's No Good: Sexual Division of Labor and Habitus among Nepal's Marpha Thakali." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 13:81-9. Accessed February 22, 2017. doi: 10.1215/07323867-13-1.

- Rankin, Katharine Neilson. 2004. "Caste and Gender Economics." *The Cultural Politics of Markets: Economic Liberalization and Social Change in Nepal*. 129-63. London: Pluto Press.
- Tamang, Seira. 2005. The politics of 'developing Nepali women'. In *State of Nepal*, eds. K.M. Dixit and S. Ramachandaran, 161-175. Kathmandu: Himal Books.
- Thapa, Gitta Shrestha. 2009. "How Gender Affects Decision Making – A Cast Study of Tibeto-Burmese Women in Kobang VDC, Mustang, Nepal." Master's thesis, University of Bergen, 2009.
- Turin, Mark. 1997. "Too Many Stars and Not Enough Sky: Language and Ethnicity Among the Thakali of Nepal." *Nepalese Studies* 24:187-199. Accessed April 28, 2017.
http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/contributions/pdf/CNAS_24_02_03.pdf.
- Vinding, Michael. 1998. *The Thakali: A Himalayan Ethnography*. London: Serinda Publications.

List of interviews

Adhikari, Bal Krishna. 2017. Interview with author. Marpha. April 19, 2017.

Jwarchan, Mahabir. 2017. Interview with author. Marpha. April 21, 2017.

Lalchan, Buddi Man. 2017. Interview with author. Marpha. April 22, 2017.

Sherchan, Bal Kumari. 2017. Interview with author. Larjung. April 9, 2017.

Sherchan, Nirjhar Man. 2017. Interview with author. Tukche, April 7, 2017.

Tamang, Lakhpa. 2017. Interview with author. Tukche. April 16, 2017.

Thakali, Chandra. 2017. Interview with author. Syang. April 23, 2017.

Thakali, Laxmi. 2017. Interview with author. Tukche, April 13, 2017.

Thakali, Purna. 2017. Interview with author. Tukche. April 14, 2017.

Thakali, Rupa. 2017. Interview with author. Larjung, April 7, 2017.

Tulachan, Rabina. 2017. Interview with author. Tukche, April 13, 2017.

Access, Use, and Publication of ISP/FSP

Student Name: Madeline Sachs

Email Address: madeline.sachs@yale.edu

Title of ISP/FSP: The Business of Brandy: The Changing Roles of Women in Apple Brandy Production in Lower Mustang, Nepal

Program and Term: Nepal: Development and Social Change, Spring 2017

Student research (Independent Study Project, Field Study Project) is a product of field work and as such students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical field work, as stipulated in the SIT Policy on Ethics, results in products that are shared with local and academic communities; therefore copies of ISP/FSPs are returned to the sponsoring institutions and the host communities, at the discretion of the institution(s) and/or community involved.

By signing this form, I certify my understanding that:

1. I retain ALL ownership rights of my ISP/FSP project and that I retain the right to use all, or part, of my project in future works.
2. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad may publish the ISP/FSP in the SIT Digital Collections, housed on World Learning's public website.
3. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad may archive, copy, or convert the ISP/FSP for non-commercial use, for preservation purposes, and to ensure future accessibility.
 - World Learning/SIT Study Abroad archives my ISP/FSP in the permanent collection at the SIT Study Abroad local country program office and/or at any World Learning office.
 - In some cases, partner institutions, organizations, or libraries in the host country house a copy of the ISP/FSP in their own national, regional, or local collections for enrichment and use of host country nationals.
4. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad has a non-exclusive, perpetual right to store and make available, including electronic online open access, to the ISP/FSP.
5. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad websites and SIT Digital Collections are publicly available via the Internet.
6. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad is not responsible for any unauthorized use of the ISP/FSP by any third party who might access it on the Internet or otherwise.
7. I have sought copyright permission for previously copyrighted content that is included in this ISP/FSP allowing distribution as specified above.

Student Signature

Date

Withdrawal of Access, Use, and Publication of ISP/FSP

Given your agreement to abide by the SIT Policy on Ethics, withdrawing permission for publication may constitute an infringement; the Academic Director will review to ensure ethical compliance.

I hereby withdraw permission for World Learning/SIT Study Abroad to include my ISP/FSP in the Program's office permanent collection. Reason:

I hereby withdraw permission for World Learning/SIT Study Abroad to release my ISP/FSP in any format to individuals, organizations, or libraries in the host country for educational purposes as determined by World Learning/SIT Study Abroad. Reason:

I hereby withdraw permission for World Learning/SIT Study Abroad to publish my ISP/FSP on its websites and in any of its digital/electronic collections, or to reproduce and transmit my ISP/FSP electronically. Reason:

Student Signature

Date

Academic Director has reviewed student reason(s) for withdrawing permission to use and agrees it does not violate the SIT Study Abroad Policy on Ethics.

Academic Director Signature

Date

Note: This form is to be included with the electronic version of the paper and in the file of any World Learning/SIT Study Abroad archive.