

## Gateway-Hinter Relations in Changing Nepal

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### Introduction

Social and economic development in Nepal involves a complex web of technological and social change, particularly in the areas of transport and communications. New ideas, technology, goods and services have traditionally flowed outward to the rural hinterlands from such central places as Kathmandu and Pokhara in the hills and northward from such lowland Terai entrepôts as Biratnagar, Narayanghat, Bhairahawa and Nepalgunj. With the recent opening of motorable roads in rural west-central Nepal, significant changes have occurred in the process of communication, in the dispersion of ideas and new technology, and in the transport routes by which these aspects of modernization penetrate the rural hinterlands. One result of these changes has been the growth of new towns and the decline or change of others. Some impacts from these changes have been reported in recent socio-economic studies of new roads in Nepal, such as Blaikie et al. (1976a), Sharma (1976), Goil (1971), Schroeder and Sisler (1971), and S.B. Gurung (1977).

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\* Donald A. Messerschmidt teaches Anthropology at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington. This study was based on data gathered from two research trips along the Marsyangdi River trade route in 1971-1972 and 1980, from intimate knowledge of this region dating to 1963-1965 (when the author was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Lamjung District), and from an exhaustive search of the literature which deals with this region. The relationship between gateway communities and their hinterlands exemplified here is not unlike that found elsewhere in rural Nepal. The author is indebted to Ludwig Stiller, N.S. Peabody, J. Bodley, and T. Kohler for their critical reading of earlier versions and for their welcome advice for improvement of the paper. Clive Wing and his staff at the APROSC research library in Kathmandu are also thanked for their considerable assistance. Finally, the major research for this study, in 1980, was supported or assisted in various ways by the National Geographic Society (Grant No. 2139-90), the Washington State University and the University of Washington in the United States, and the Veit Burger Wohnung in Nepal.

In this paper, I continue the current interest in the study of roads, new towns and socio-economic changes in a discussion of a conceptual type of entrepot community called a "gateway" and its relationship to a rural hinterland. The hinterland on which I focus attention is the Marsyangdi River Valley, which channels trade through the hill districts of Lamjung and Manang and parts of Gorkha and Tanahu (see Map 1). The primary gateway community for this hinterland has changed several times in recent years, and is presently located at Dumre bazaar on the Kathmandu-Pokhara highway (Prithvi Rajmarg). Historic and contemporary factors and the probable future of gateways to the Marsyangdi hinterland are the primary subjects of this paper; other adjacent regions and gateways are not included.

The history and impact of change in the Marsyangdi hinterland is discussed in terms of the gateway concept. This paper thus serves as a 'think piece' and introduction to the topic of gateway-hinterland relations, a concept which is useful in elucidating certain types of change in Nepal. The paper shows only the potential utility of approaching change and modernization through the use of a gateway model. No attempt is made here to document or identify the detailed socio-economics of the gateway-hinterland exchange.<sup>1</sup>

The paper begins with a definition and general discussion of the gateway concept. Following that, I review the history of trade relations and the growth, change and decline of gateways and nodes (key towns beyond the gateway) in the Marsyangdi hinterland. That history necessarily reviews the significance of the Newar business community of Bandipur in Tanahu district at the southern end of the hinterland region. I dwell particularly on the development of Bandipur in the 19th and 20th centuries, its local and regional importance, and its decline (with the rise of Dumre) during the construction of the Prithvi Rajmarg in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The paper concludes with a discussion and observations about the utility of the gateway model for studying change in rural Nepal, and with predictions about probable future changes in the gateway-hinterland relations of the Marsyangdi River region.

### Gateway Communities

The term "gateway" denotes a positional characteristic and conjures up the image of an entrance to some area or region and, contrastingly, an exit to some other. To paraphrase Burghardt (1971: 269-270), such an entrance is typically limiting or narrow. It is used by those who wish to enter the hinterland beyond the "gate" or leave the "tributary area" behind it. The gateway community is, therefore, strategically situated to command the connections between the two regions it serves, both the inside (hinterland) and the outside (national core), two distinct worlds whose boundary it straddles. Such communities often develop as transport

centres "in the contact zones between areas of differing intensities or types of production, along or near economic shear lines" (Burghardt 1971:270). Or, as Hirth has succinctly put it (1978: 37):

Gateway communities develop either as a response to increased trade or to the settling of sparsely populated frontier areas. They generally are located along natural corridors of craft productivity; dense population; high demand or supply for scarce resources; and, at the interface of different technologies or levels of socio-political complexity. They often occur along economic shear lines where cost factors change and where there are economic discontinuities in the free movement of merchandise. The function of these settlements is to satisfy demand for commodities through trade and the location of these communities reduces transportation costs involved in their movement.

Gateways or entrepot communities contrast markedly with more centrally located service and transport communities known in the literature as "central places" (Losch 1954, Christaller 1966, Skinner 1967). Whereas the gateway exists at the edge of a region, the central place is located somewhere near its middle. Central places tend to exist within a relatively homogeneous productive region and are characterized principally by local trade connections (Burghardt 1971: 270; Charistaller 1966). Gateways, in contrast, are linked to more heterogeneous populations and productive regions by more long distance trade routes.<sup>2</sup> Pokhara and Kathmandu are typical central places.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, economic and social relations with a gateway community exist as a fan or funnel shaped set of interactions. Those of a central place are more nearly circular in shape. "The central place possesses a compact (circular, hexagonal, or square) service area, whereas the gateway has an elongated, fan-shaped service area which usually extends outward in a direction away from the national core area..." in the shape of "a funnel or a spout" (Burghardt 1971:270). Thus gateways exist at one side of their hinterland and transport links radiate outward, usually in one direction, linking individual communities along the standard line(s) of communication in a series of linear or dendritic market networks. According to Hirth, dendritic networks are

characteristic of many primitive economic systems... frequently found in areas where the population is dispersed, transportation is difficult or underdeveloped, and where there is a strong external economic orientation. In these systems, individual centers are linked directly to a gateway by exchange relationships. Dendritic networks may transcend political boundaries;

the centers within them may be completely autonomous and may interact very little with other centers in the hinterland. [1978:37]

Sometimes multiple gateways occur as one progresses into the hinterland, a common situation in the hinterlands of Nepal. And, as transportation links expand -- for example, when roads are built into a hinterland beyond its already established primary gateway -- secondary (interior) gateways may expand into new primary gateway communities in a progressive evolution of the type. Examples of multiple and evolving gateways are discussed below. See Figure 1 for a schematic representation of the dendritic relationship, and see Figure 2 for a comparison of gateway and central place communities.

The fundamental feature of gateway communities is their strategic location at the entrance to extended hinterlands. Thus, gateways tend to be located at sites of considerable transportational significance. In Nepal, they are typically found at the conjunction of major foot trails and motor roads, and commonly occur where bridges funnel traffic to a single common point. Roadhead communities such as Dumre bazaar and neighbouring Bimalnagar, both in Tanahu district, and similar towns such as Damauli and Mugling on the Prithvi Rajmarg west and east of Dumre, respectively, are examples of gateway towns (see Map 1).

It is in such gateway communities that one observes the breaking of bulk shipments which arrive by truck from India and the Terai via Pokhara (on the Siddhartha Rajmarg), and from Kathmandu. It is such gateway communities which serve as the primary nodes in an intricate network of interior transport routes serviced by human porters and/or, in a few instances, by pack animals.<sup>4</sup>

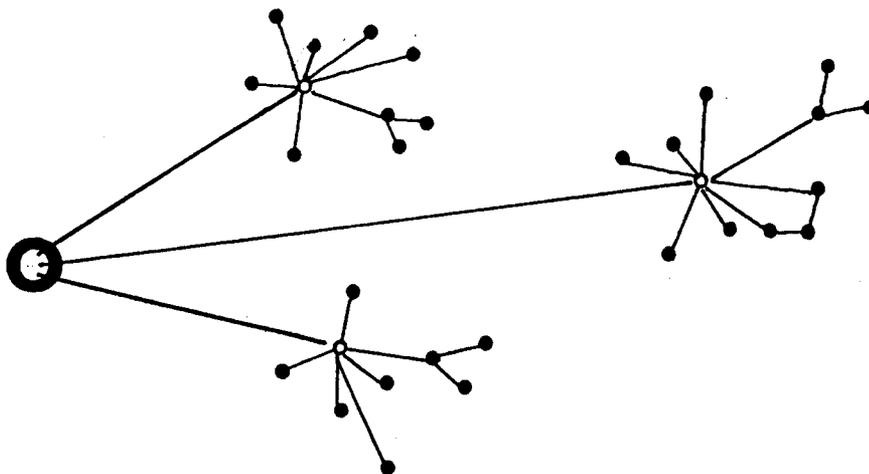


Fig. 1: The Dendritic Market Network (Hirsch 1978:38)

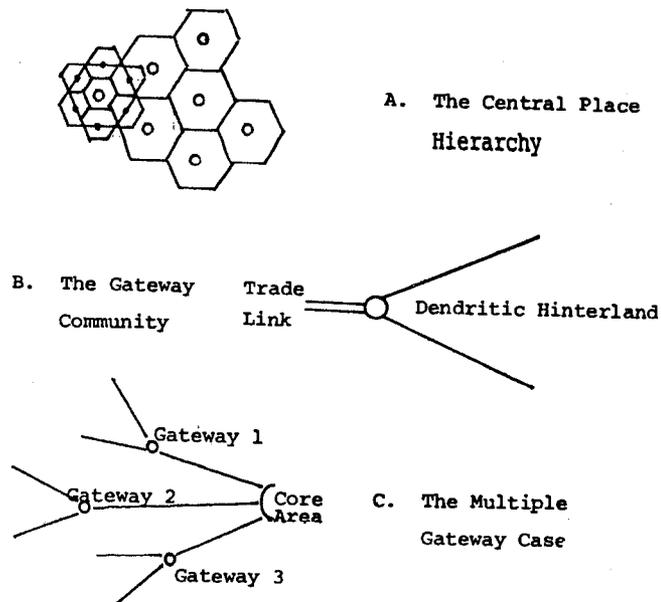
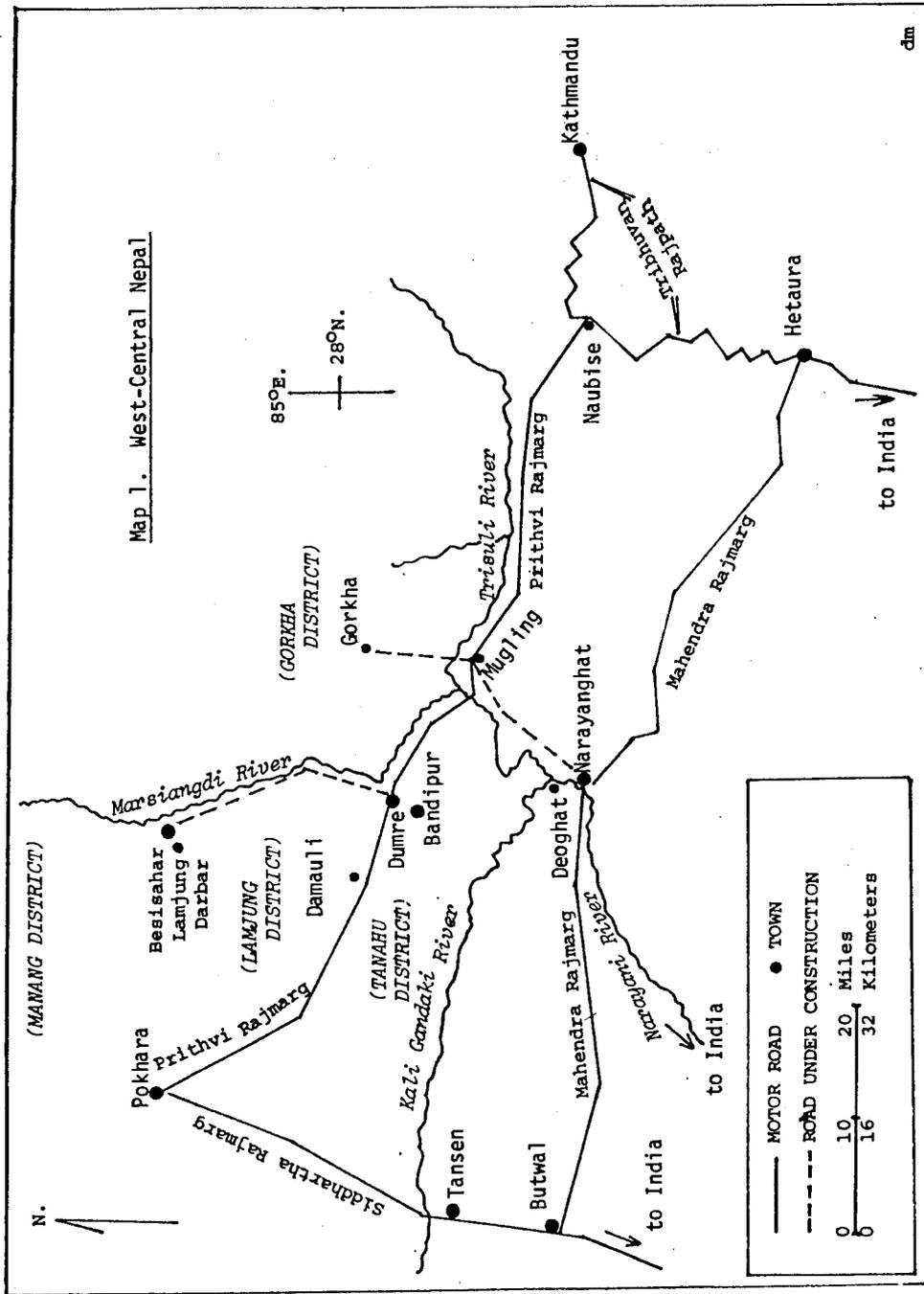


Fig. 2: A Comparison of Central Place and Gateway Community Hierarchies (Hirth 1978:39)

The Evolution of Trade in the Marsyangdi Hinterland

Earliest developments: 18th century. The history of trade through the Marsyangdi River Valley during the mid-18th century was first described by Hamilton (1819). The region was dominated by several of the Chaubisi Raj (twenty-four kingdoms) and the north-south Lamjung trade route had particular economic and strategic military importance in the rise of two of those kingdoms at Lamjung and Gorkha (Stiller 1973). This trade route led north across the Terai and inner Terai region from India to the gateway settlement of Deoghat at the confluence of the Trisuli and Kali-Gandaki rivers. The porter route from Dheghat is then described as ascending northward up through the foothills to Simjung, past Lamjung along the Marsyangdi River, and on to the Tibetan border by way of Larke Pass. The principal goods of this early exchange were salt from highland Tibet, grain from the lowlands and probably cotton from India (see Stiller 1976:120).



During this premodern period, the trade route had no important bazaars or centers of trade as we know them today. Rather, the nodes or centers of trade at the time are best characterized as loosely confederated, isolated principalities. These tiny princely states were linked together and ultimately linked to the Gangetic Plain at the south and to Tibet at the north by thin lines of transport and communication in the form of simple foot paths. The Lamjung trade route along the Marsyangdi River was dominated during the 18th century by one particularly strong kingdom, at Lamjung Darbar, whose fortress may still be seen on a ridge one mile west of the contemporary district headquarters town of Besisahar (see Map 1).

This trade route also passed by several strategic military outposts of the rival kingdom of Gorkha and at various times in the formative stage of development of the House of Gorkha, seige and counterseige were staged for control over it and the region it served. Full Gorkhali control of Lamjung was gained only in the 1780s, almost two decades after the House of Gorkha had established its central power in the Valley of Kathmandu and had launched a conquest encompassing the greater Himalayan region (Stiller 1973).

The importance of trade routes like that through Lamjung rose as the Gorkha Conquest progressed into the 19th century. Military garrisons were established to keep the expanding Nepalese (Gorkha) kingdom together, and support facilities in the form of far-flung trade centers, or bazaars, were developed (Stiller 1973, 1976). However, these did not reflect any indigenous urbanizing tendencies on the part of the rural peasantry whatsoever (Caplan 1975:3; Blaikie et al. 1976a:7.1). Rather, they were the direct spinoff of the need among the Gorkha rulers to man and support their isolated garrison towns.

The establishment of trade centers in support of military and administrative developments in the hinterlands marked the first of several historically well documented steps in the growth of central towns in rural Nepal. Internal trade and the development of rural bazaars grew parallel to the central government's tightening grip on the countryside. The establishment of bazaars was dominated throughout Nepal by Newar merchants from Kathmandu Valley.

Blaikie et al. (1976a:7.1ff.) describe the expansion of Newar trading and small manufacturing centers in west-central Nepal following solidification of Gorkha power, particularly in the latter half of the 18th century and the early 19th century. Based on accounts of an English traveller (Oldfield 1880), they point to the formal development of the hulak postal system, a "system of locally organized portage and the establishment of a series of staging posts manned by locals and operating under the supervision of administrative offices situated at strategic points along the trails"

(Blaikie et al. 1976a:7.1; see also Stiller 1976:34-38, and Regmi 1971:104-105 for fuller descriptions of the hulak system). Hulak offices were established at such west-central communities as Nayakot, Gorkha, Tanahu, Lamjung and Pokhara. "Many of the 'urban' centres now developing were thus not only administrative centres and strategic garrisons but also staging posts along the trails and crucial nodes in the transport network whose major function was to move arms and munitions efficiently and as swiftly as possible in the difficult hill country to where they were needed" (Blaikie et al. 1976a:7.2).

Meanwhile, trade with India was increasing and gateway communities in the Terai expanded and developed to serve the needs of the middle hills at their north. Growth was spurred in the interior by the continued expansion of the administrative infrastructure by which Nepal's rural hinterlands were governed. Small-scale industry was also being developed in some outlying towns, as well. Among the new towns in west-central Nepal were Tansen, Pokhara, and Bandipur. It is Bandipur, in Tanahu district, and its intimate relationship with the Marsyangdi Valley hinterland north of it which especially interests us here.

Bandipur: Bandipur's recent history is closely correlated with the rise of the contemporary gateway town of Dumre, and before that with the former gateway communities of Narayanghat and Deoghat. The most detailed descriptions of the socio-economic history of Bandipur appear in Sharma (1976) and Blaikie et al. (1976a).

Bandipur town is strategically situated on top of a ridge at approximately 1200 meters elevation (c. 4000 feet) on the old north-south Lamjung trade route. To its south the steep Mahabharat Range drops away to the low inner Terai (Rapti Valley) and to its north lies the low valley of the Marsyangdi River (at 500 meters, or less than 2000 feet elevation). Bandipur was originally founded in 1830 as a small-scale textile manufacturing town by Newars from Bhaktapur in the eastern Kathmandu Valley. The Newars established and promoted the local production of cotton as the raw material for their industry for many years.

Because of Bandipur's opportune trading location the Newars also pursued local and long distance commercial interests and after 1870, with the merchants "operating as middlemen on the north-south trade route ... the 'town' grew in size and importance" (Blaikie et al. 1976a:7.2). By the end of the 19th century it became one of three major trade centers of the larger west-central trade region. During this time the gateway to Bandipur and to the Marsyangdi hinterland remained at Deoghat at the northern edge of the Rapti Valley.

Despite its strategic gateway position, however, Deoghat did not prosper to the degree that Bandipur did. Rather, Deoghat (and other Terai and inner Terai communities like it) suffered from slow growth and seasonal decline. During the heat of the Monsoon (June-September), when the malarial scourge of the Terai was most severe, the higher and cooler hill towns such as Bandipur were far more attractive places to live and work. In a sense, Deoghat was only a true and actively functioning gateway during the dry, cool winter season (October-May) when the bulk of trade by human portage was conducted into the northern hinterland. During the monsoon, this gateway shrunk in importance and its supporting population (both merchant middlemen and porters) retreated to the more hospitable hills, principally to Bandipur.

Deoghat as a gateway, and Bandipur as its summer counterpart and the hinterland's largest and most prosperous settlement, remained relatively secure in their complementary positions as seasonally-conditioned points of commerce until the mid-20th century. By that time, the economic foundations of both towns were beginning to be undercut by changing conditions beyond their control. Several factors led to their eventual decline.

For one, the Bandipur textile industry suffered gradual collapse due to local labour disputes and rising prices for Indian raw materials which, by 1940, had completely replaced dependence on locally grown cotton. At about the same time, Indian railway links into southern Nepal were developed and motor roads were being cut through to the inner Terai. This latter factor, combined with an active programme of malaria eradication begun in the mid-1950s, soon opened the fertile Rapti Valley to large scale settlement by landless peasants migrating out from the middle hills (Sharma 1976).

Blake et al. (1976a:7.4) report that at this time "a number of Newars from Bandipur moved down to establish businesses in Narayanghat" in the Rapti Valley near the old gateway community of Deoghat. Narayanghat was, for them, an attractive new opportunity as an obvious center of growth for the region. It was linked to India by a new road, malaria was in decline, and the local population was rapidly growing. Narayanghat's rise led directly to Deoghat's decline, and Narayanghat quickly became the primary gateway to the Marsyangdi region.

The importance of the entrepreneurial Newars of Bandipur throughout the process of gateway evolution and change cannot be overestimated. In addition to their dominant role in the development of Narayanghat (and later of Dumre), Bandipur's Newar merchants were also closely involved in the gradual and less dramatic development of the various major and minor nodes of trade (bazaars) throughout the hinterland region at the north. In a very real way, the history

of gateway-hinterland relations in this region has long been dominated and controlled by the Newars of Bandipur.

During the 18th and early 19th centuries, hinterland bazaars were beginning to be settled and developed all along the Marsyangdi River. Through their aggressive establishment of a network of social and economic ties, Newars from Bandipur captured the growing interior trade here by placing their own kinsmen and affinal relatives in the incipient trading towns, such as Tarkughat, Besisahar, Kunchha and Khudi. They also established relations with non-Newari traders of the region through the institution of mit, a well known form of ritual or fictive brotherhood in Nepal (Okada 1957). Hence, at least as far north as Khudi and Bahundada (the northernmost Newar and Brahmin outposts, respectively) in Lamjung district, the Bandipur Newars and their kinsmen, agents and trade friends controlled the bulk of the trade and the distribution of imported goods. Beyond Bahundada and in some of the other remote villages and valleys of the region, Gurungs and Bhotias dominated local trade, but many of them actively sought and used mit-brotherhood ties and other sorts of economic and trade relations with the Newars to enhance their own commercial enterprises.

Meanwhile, Bandipur prospered. In 1963, after inauguration of the Panchayat system of government by His Majesty King Mahendra, Bandipur was designated the Tanahu District Headquarters. This created a new kind of growth. Civil and administrative officers and their families were posted there and as the district bureaucracy grew, a hospital and a high school were built in Bandipur to support it. Within the decade, however, road construction dealt Bandipur a severe economic blow from which it has not recovered.

The Prithvi Rajmarg: As early as 1957 and 1958 plans were being made in Nepal to construct several major roads through the country's midlands. Among them was the Prithvi Rajmarg, a highway designed to link Kathmandu and Pokhara. By the mid-1960s, the People's Republic of China had agreed to construct the 174 kilometer road, and it was completed in 1972 (Stiller and Yadav 1979:228 ff.).

Part of the new road passed through central Tanahu district at the bottom (north side) of the steep Bandipur ridge, neatly by-passing the town altogether and quickly destroying Bandipur's well being. The change came in two steps. First, while the road was under construction in 1969, the Tanahu District Headquarters offices were moved downhill to Damauli, 16 kilometers west of Bandipur on the new road. With that, the prominence of Bandipur in district affairs was lost.<sup>7</sup> Second, within three years, the bulk of Bandipur's trade had also shifted to the new road. The southernmost part of the old north-south Lamjung trade route had been completely circumvented by the new road, leaving Bandipur isolated and cut off:

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... Bandipur bazaar, previously the main supplier of traded goods to the northern hills is now reduced to a local trading centre. Commercial activities were physically relocated on the roadside after the introduction of the highway. Now the distribution of imported goods to the northern hills is being done by Dumre and Bimalnagar bazaars. These markets are also supplying goods to fulfill the remaining demand of Bandipur and surrounding areas. Sharma 1976: Appendix C, n.p.<sup>7</sup>

As a result, both Bandipur and Narayanghat suffered instant decline (although Narayanghat had other commercial reserves to fall back on, and was cushioned from the disaster that overtook Bandipur). In their stead, Dumre bazaar (4 kilometers north of Bandipur) and neighbouring Bimalnagar and Bhansar (1 and 2 kilometers from Dumre, respectively) rose quickly to prominence in local and regional trade. Dumre became overnight the principal gateway community to the Mar-syangdi hinterland, as the new southern terminus in the on-going north-south trade.

Bandipur today remains greatly reduced in size, serving as a small local center of commerce for the hill villages in its immediate vicinity. Between 1954 (at the peak of Bandipur's prosperity on the eve of the rise of Narayanghat) and 1975 (following the opening of the new road), Bandipur's population dropped by two thirds, from 14,796 to 4,795 persons (Sharma 1976: Appendix A, Table 2.4). It continues to maintain the district hospital and high school, and recently acquired a two-year college of Arts and Sciences and a Nurses College. These developments, plus the fairweather road which has been constructed linking Bandipur with the Prithvi Rajmarg, may indicate revival. Meanwhile, however, Dumre has become the major transport center and the primary gateway to the north.

Dumre and its hinterland: Prior to construction of the Prithvi Rajmarg, there was no town of Dumre. When I first visited the area along the footpath to Bandipur from Lamjung in 1964, I passed through Bhansar and descended two kilometers through a dense sal (Shorea robusta) forest to several inns (bhatti) where travellers took refreshment, ate, and/or spent the night at the base of the steep Bandipur hill. The site of those inns is now lost in the present booming sprawl of Dumre, and much of the sal forest has been cut down to provide local building materials.

In 1972 and again in 1980 when I revisited Dumre, it was a bustling trade center. Its two-storey wood and concrete buildings, shops, inns, residences, and offices line both sides of the roadway. Brightly coloured signs in Nepali and English announce to all who pass the variety of goods and services available, e.g., cold drinks,

food, hotels and general merchandise. Busses regularly disembark passengers from Pokhara and Kathmandu and receive others who have just arrived by foot and who are bound for intermediate or more distant destinations. (It is a five-hour express bus ride to Kathmandu and a two-hour ride to Pokhara from Dumre).

Great quantities of bulk merchandise in boxes, bundles, and barrels are off-loaded at Dumre from trucks arriving from India and the Terai via Pokhara (on the Siddhartha Rajmarg) and from Kathmandu. Here the bulk is broken and trans-shipped by human porter or pony train north into the hinterland along the Marsyangdi River. Some of the goods are locally consumed, some are carried up to Bandipur and vicinity, but most of them are bound for the remote towns and villages of Tanahu, Gorkha, Lamjung and Manang district, up to a week or ten days' walk distance. Goods include imports from India and China and merchandise of Nepalese manufacture. They include cooking utensils, lanterns and ready-to-wear garments; dry goods such as grain, flour and spices, crackers and cigarettes; rope, basketry, cement and bolts of cloth; and miscellaneous exotic (and expensive) items such as beer, soft drinks, tinned fruit and candies.

Both the types and the volume of goods typically funnelled through roadside gateway towns such as Dumre, and the reasons for travel on the roads and by-ways which link them to the hinterlands, are the subjects of an exhaustive series of reports prepared by the Overseas Development Group. Those reports should be consulted for greater detail for the period of the mid-1970s (see Blaikie et al. 1976a, 1976b, 1979, and Seddon 1979).

It is interesting to note the types of travel that people engage in both on and off the Prithvi Rajmarg, at and near towns like Dumre. Based partly on a list of "Reasons for Travel" in one report (Blaikie et al. 1976a: Table 7.XIII, p. 7.46) and on my own observations, there seem to be six types of traditional travellers: rural peasants, professional porters, merchants and their agents or representatives, government officials, pilgrims bound for mountain shrines or sacred lakes, and persons involved in the military (including those on leave and pensioners). (There is no particular order to the list). Obviously, these categories are not exclusive, and a pensioned ex-Gurkha soldier, for example, might conceivably turn up at one time or another as a rural peasant, porter, merchant, pilgrim, or government employee.

In recent years, since the Overseas Development Group research was completed, yet another non-traditional type of traveller has arrived with considerable prominence in this region -- the Western tourist or trekker (along with Nepalese support personnel such as guides and porters). Trekking along the Marsyangdi trade route has been very popular among Western travellers since the mid-1970s. It

is a scenic route which ascends directly to the mountainous district of Manang (only recently opened to foreigners). Many trekkers make a complete circuit by passing up the Marsyangdi River trek and trade route through Manang district, over Thorung Pass (5300 meters, or c. 17,500 feet) to the pilgrim shrine of Muktinath, through Thak Khola, and eventually terminating at Pokhara; or in reverse, terminating at Dumre. Even in tourism and trekking, Pokhara and Dumre have maintained their gateway status. It should be noted, however, that the visible impacts of Westerners on this trade route are both very new and very narrow -- significant, but restricted, in the main, to the confines of the trail and its principle towns and villages. Not much economic impact from tourism can be observed in remoter villages even as close as an hour or two off the main route through Lamjung district.

In contrast, the impact of the government bureaucracy, the other major category of travellers on the trails north of Dumre, is quite widespread (cf. Blaikie et al. 1976a: 7.12ff.). Its impact is most clearly seen at Besisahar, the Lamjung District Headquarters town. In 1972, Besisahar was a relatively sleepy little bazaar, perched on a plain overlooking the Marsyangdi River. It was a small center of local trade and had only recently become the district administrative headquarters.<sup>7</sup>

Today, Besisahar resembles many other fast-growing district towns in Nepal: it supports a large and very obvious construction industry which in turn reflects the influx of government employees and the need for housing and office buildings for such departments of government as education, forestry, health, banking, agriculture and local development, as well as schools, hospitals and prisons. New two and three-storey concrete and stone buildings are springing up all along the main street of town and outward on lands that were formerly fertile rice fields. The population of Besisahar is growing rapidly. It includes Newar merchants (of Bandipur origins), civil servants of various caste and ethnic groups (from Kathmandu), and recently "urbanized" rural villagers of Brahmin-Chhetri and untouchable castes as well as the predominant ethnic Gurungs of the region (from surrounding villages).

Unlike the thin or narrow impact of tourism and trekking in the district, the government bureaucracy, representing development and modernization, is constantly observable throughout the district in tangible fact and in conversations heard even in some of the most remote villages. Development ideas and programmes spread outward from the district headquarters town, but ultimately the impetus comes from Kathmandu, funnelled directly through the gateway at Dumre.

## Discussion

The term "gateway" and the use of the gateway model have gained considerable currency in recent geographical and anthropological literature as explanatory and classificatory devices which are used in the investigation and analysis of interregional exchange of goods, services, people and ideas (Burghardt 1971, Hirth 1978, Kohler 1980). In the specific context of modernization and change in the Marsyangdi River hinterland of Nepal, the gateway model helps in the analysis of three sorts of change:

- (1) Change which reflects a shift from a previously intricate but essentially uncomplicated network of footpaths, to a contemporary situation complicated by the recent and rapid development of motor roads which cut directly through the region.
- (2) Change from an isolated and traditional rural society, to one impacted by the extensive bureaucratization of rural Nepal as part of an active unification and modernization effort by the central government in Kathmandu.
- (3) Change from a previously reciprocal exchange-based local economy with many discontinuities vis-a-vis the national core economy, to a more centrally controlled redistributive economy.

The first of these changes has been described in this paper in terms of certain physical and historical changes in the location and importance of gateways and other communities and of the improvement of transport and communications in west-central Nepal. Since the beginning of trade through the Marsyangdi River valley, the location of the primary gateway to the region has changed from Deoghat and Bandipur, to Narayanghat, to Dumre. Dumre bazaar is now only one decade old, and it stands as a dramatic example of change commensurate with rapid modernizing change. Beyond Dumre, throughout the hinterland it serves, equally far-reaching changes can be observed and anticipated. Many of the small interior bazaars north of the road have recently developed into important centers of trade and/or secondary gateways in their own right. Among the most important of these bazaars are Tarkughat, Sundar, Besisahar, Dalal, Khudi, and Bahundada along the Marsyangdi River. Each is a strategically placed commercial center; all but Bahundada and Sundar are located at bridges which funnel trade and communications to them; and each serves as a central place bazaar and as a secondary gateway to distant hill and mountain communities beyond it.

Among these interior trade centers is one, Besisahar, which is rapidly developing as both a commercial and administrative town and which, in the near future, could conceivably eclipse Dumre. A fair-weather road is being built between Dumre and Besisahar, which will

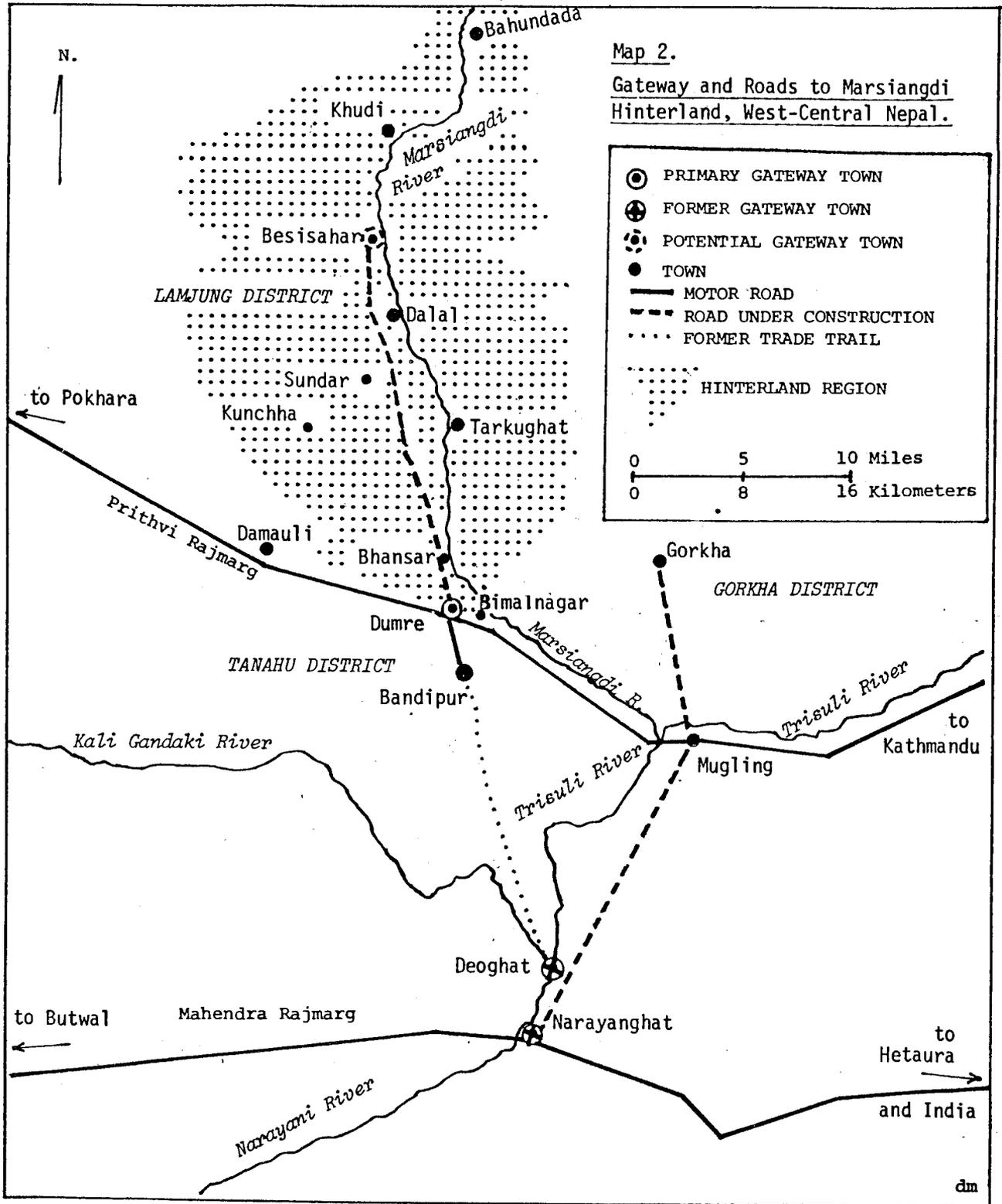
open up the Marsyangdi Valley to its center. The road awaits only a few remaining kilometers of construction and several bridges to be complete and open to dry season motor traffic, and there already is talk of paving it for all season travel. The breaking of bulk at Besisahar -- a primary consideration in the location of any gateway town -- may begin by the mid-1980s. If paving of this road for all weather traffic is accomplished, this former sleepy little district town may replace Dumre altogether as the Marsyangdi's principal gateway. The progressive evolution of gateways directly into the Marsyangdi hinterland is demonstrated on Map 2.<sup>8</sup>

A second major change is the extensive bureaucratization of Nepal by the central government at both the national core and in the rural hinterlands. Since the Gorkha conquest of the 18th and early 19th centuries, and especially in the past quarter century, the central government in Kathmandu has progressively increased its administrative control in an effort to unify Nepal more fully and to improve the social and economic conditions of the rural peasantry. Some aspects of this bureaucratization process have been analyzed and described in the detailed and controversial works of the Overseas Development Group (particularly in Blaikie et al. 1979 and Seddon 1979; cf. Messerschmidt n.d.). The rapid bureaucratization of rural Nepal is one of the causal factors in the changes affecting gateway-hinterland relations, especially in terms of the types and volume of goods, ideas, services, and people which ply the roads and trails.

The third sort of change involves rapid evolution of Nepal's rural economy. Although this has not been addressed specifically in this paper, it should be noted that one of the major results of road building and gateway change and evolution is the potential lessening or removal of the economic discontinuities which in the rural areas have for so long been a major block to economic growth and well-being. This sort of change has both positive and negative results (for commentary on the negative, see Blaikie et al. 1979 and Seddon 1979).

To conclude, the use of the gateway model in our brief discussion has allowed us to focus attention on specific locations -- the entry and exit points for a hinterland -- as reflections of change and modernization on a larger scale. We have also seen that beyond a primary gateway, various incipient nodes of trade may develop over time into important bazaar and administrative towns, eventually becoming central places and/or primary or secondary gateways in their own right. Or, just the opposite may occur as some communities decline in importance and size (as in the case of Bandipur). However this process of evolution and devolution of towns is played out, much of the socio-economic and cultural history of a region, and a better understanding of the contemporary situation, can be beneficially examined by using the gateway concept.

Gateway-Hinterland Relations



Footnotes

1. See the published reports of the Overseas Development Group (East Anglia University) under Blaikie et al. in the Bibliography for detailed discussion and analysis of growth and change in west-central Nepal. See also Seddon (1979), Sharma (1976) and S.B. Gurung et al. (1977).
2. Some of these distinctions may be questionable for Nepal, but will not be pursued here.
3. The central place of Pokhara has recently been described in terms of a "growth center" vis-a-vis the development of greater Gandaki Zone and its hinterland. "The term and concept of 'Growth Centre' denote places of various size in which social economic activities and services can be located for the development of the hinterland areas"; it is a place "which provides services effectively and wholly as a centre for trade and services including government services, education, health, communication, transport, finance and other basic needs for the surrounding hinterland areas" (S.B. Gurung et al. 1977:13). It has also been called a "poly-function" settlement which caters to the diverse needs of its hinterland (S.B. Gurung et al. 1977: 13).
4. Pack trains using small ponies are mostly operated by entrepreneurial Thakali traders in west-central Nepal. Occasional military pack horses and mules are also seen on some of the interior trails of the rural hinterlands. Bush air service should also be noted, although air transport of goods to rural Nepal is severely limited by high costs. For the central and upper Marsyangdi River region only two airfields exist, one in western Gorkha district at Paluntar and one in upper (western) Manang district (primarily for use in mountaineering activities). The bulk of goods transported into the Marsyangdi hinterland is by human porter.
5. True urbanization in Nepal (outside of Kathmandu Valley) involving a migrant peasantry is a very recent and very small development.
6. The business community of Bandipur reportedly did not give up the district offices easily or passively and there were incidents of physical violence and at least one death during attempts by Bandipur residents to stop the move (Iltis 1976: III-2).

7. Kunchha bazaar, 16 kilometers due south of Besisahar (but 8 kilometers west of the river trade route), had been Lamjung's District Headquarters during most of the 1960s.
8. A further complication in this scenario is the soon to be completed all weather road between Mugling and Narayanghat, and a feeder north into the heart of Gorkha district (see Map 2). Although it seems doubtful that the Mugling-Narayanghat road will cause a shift of primary gateway functions back to Narayanghat, the economic futures of both Narayanghat and Mugling (and Gorkha) will be affected and should be carefully watched. Likewise, the effects of reduced truck traffic at Pokhara (from the Terai to Dumre and other points on the Prithvi Rajmarg) will also be noticeable. Some observers predict that traffic on the old Tribhuvan Rajpath route from Hetaura to Naubise and Kathmandu may also decline as truckers re-route through Narayanghat and Mugling.

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