



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Warrior Gentlemen: 'Gurkhas' in the Western Imagination. by Lionel Caplan
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one hand, these groups are seen as exerting an inordinate influence over the individuals within them; on the other, they limit the degree of civic allegiance to society as a whole. Much of the anthropology of Japan has been empirically directed at Japanese groups of one sort or another and analytically concerned with the principles of group allegiance. A more recent preoccupation has been with how group belonging is realized in practice.

It is this latter area of debate which is most prominent in *Situated meanings*. One of the animating themes of the book is the social implications of 'social deixis' in Japan. In contrast to the 'I' of Indo-European languages, the deictic anchor point for discourse in Japanese tends to be *uchi* meaning 'us' or 'my/our group'. Patricia Wetzel shows in her chapter how Japanese thus challenges the assumption that ego is the universal deictic anchor. The significance of *uchi* is not that it erases the individual in everyday speech but that the individual becomes socio-centrally defined on a routine linguistic basis. Moreover, the precise grouping thus linguistically invoked will vary; *uchi*, while closely associated with the family, can also 'instantiate' other groups such as the company. Jane Bachnik, in her chapters, attempts to explore this channel between groups as sociological entities and groups as linguistic markers. The book, as a whole, is located at the interface of anthropology and linguistics (some parts of it may be demanding for anthropological readers, especially those not very acquainted with Japan). This particular reader found the opening essay by Bachnik a little heavy going, although the issues she raises do become clearer on reading the more empirical chapters (including her own) which might therefore be worth reading first.

Rosenberger discusses and analyses a domestic scene in terms of the actual demeanours of different actors in this archetypal *uchi* realm, showing in particular how gender hierarchy cuts across and complicates it. Sukle approaches the *uchi-soto* boundary by exploring the use of directive speech (requests, commands, hints, etc.) in four different social contexts: a railway ticket window, a post office window, a neighbourhood vegetable market, and a middle-class family. One of his most interesting findings is how in some of these contexts there is significant switching of register among speakers during the interaction, indicating that 'participants in interaction ... are negotiating a social definition of the very social context in which they are interacting' (p. 128), emphasis original).

Part 2 of the book deals with conflicts that arise in the definition of *uchi-soto* boundaries. Kondo's paper gives an example of how the *uchi-soto* boundary is contested and manipulated among different parties within a small confectionery company, showing that while it may be instrumentally invoked by the company boss to promote loyalty and hard work among the

workforce, this same familial idiom may also be used by that workforce to call for better pay and working conditions. Rhetorics of inclusion can be deployed in more ways than one. Matthews Hamabata tells the story of a family business racked by conflict among family members over succession, eventually causing the decline of the business. For Hamabata the key issue raised here has to do with the clash between personal desire and communal good and the failure of family members to undertake self-sacrifice for the good of the house.

The main empirical focus of the book is therefore the family, both as a site of routine interactions and as a form of social organization. Although the *ie* stem family is no longer widespread, both Kondo and Hamabata present examples of transgenerational *ie* in the present.

Some of the contributors (particularly Charles Quinn) even suggest that *uchi-soto* represents a Japanese 'habitus', 'lifeway' or 'metapattern' – as a disposition that shapes a wide range of domains including social interaction and lexicogrammatical structure. There is a strong sense throughout the book that *uchi-soto* represents a primary interpretive key in the study of Japanese society. This immediately raises certain questions for anthropologists of Japan as to the degree to which actual social behaviour in Japan is constrained or shaped by the existence of such a metapattern, and whether indeed its existence is consistent with ethnographic data on social behaviour. It has been used in the past to account for alleged insularity or parochialism among Japanese, but problems have arisen with other data that contradict it. Moreover, after reading this volume I for one am still unclear as to the range of Japanese social behaviour that *uchi-soto* is meant to be able to account for.

On the whole, the book represents a stimulating contribution to the literature on Japanese society and its analysis. It is particularly welcome as a demonstration of the benefits that can accrue from integrating language into social analysis.

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CAPLAN, LIONEL. *Warrior gentlemen: 'Gurkhas' in the Western imagination*. x, 181 pp., bibliogr. Providence, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995. £26.00

Lionel Caplan's title treads on hallowed ground, for the Gurkhas have been the immaculate conception of British imperial legend since the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814–16. Stories of Gurkha bravery in battle and Gurkha loyalty to the British Crown have been told and retold in countless military memoirs and are subject of messroom anecdotes down to this day. Friend and foe and the author alike are agreed on the formidable qualities of the Gurkha, but Caplan's aim is to demystify him and strip away the

imperial myth with which the Gurkha name is associated.

The Gurkha soldiers belong largely to the Limbu, Magar and Gurung clans from the central highlands of Nepal and are of Tibeto-Burman stock in a country of diverse ethnicities, deposits of the ebb and flow of local Himalayan and wide subcontinental history. Before joining the British, Gurkhas were known to have enlisted in the Sikh army of Ranjit Singh, who had carved out a kingdom from the Punjab and the region beyond to the gates of the Khyber. Gurkha chivalry was clearly not on leasehold or freehold to the British alone.

Secondly, as Caplan reminds us, there was initially a strong undercurrent of mistrust in Anglo-Nepalese relations, with the British Resident in Kathmandu confined mostly to his official quarters. Nor were the sympathies of the Nepal Durbar always with the British. Towards the end of the nineteenth century relations between the two countries were regularized by an understanding of strict British non-interference in harshly feudal Nepal in exchange for the Nepalese rulers' willingness to permit unrestricted British recruitment of Gurkhas whose remittances grew in value to a largely impoverished exchequer.

Even so, a perusal of the India Office Records in London would reveal the far from flattering references to the political ambitions of Chandra Shamsher, the Prime Minister and ruler of Nepal, by Lord Curzon, the British Viceroy of India, during the Anglo-Tibetan crisis which culminated in the despatch of the Younghusband Mission to thwart a possible Russian presence in Lhasa in 1903. Indeed, Curzon perceived Nepal as a potential Afghanistan, playing off one great power against its arch-rival.

It was only in 1923 that Britain accepted Nepal as a fully sovereign polity and removed earlier ambiguities about its status. The generous service provided by Gurkha soldiers in the first world war obviously played no mean part in this new diplomatic bonding, but it seeded a fresh bed of myths for an over-subscribed imperial canon.

Gurkha mythology, as Caplan points out, was fashioned out of the masculine, social and racial predilections and values of the high noon of empire. The idealized Gurkha, the author notes, was more revealing of his British creators than it was of their subject. Ever suspicious of Indian nationalist aspirations, the 'loyal' and 'gentleman' Gurkha was a welcome antidote to the 'devious', 'unreliable' and 'effete' of the political and non-martial Indian. Caplan produces an impressive wealth of evidence to sustain this view but finds no place, alas, for what must surely be among the most entertainingly acerbic period pieces written by Sir Lepel Griffin entitled *The place of the Bengali in politics* (Fortnightly Review, 1892, Vol. 51).

The imperial myth-makers were unanimously confident that no Gurkha would consent to serve under a despised Indian dispensation. When, therefore, the majority opted for service in the army of Independent India there were mutterings of trickery. The Gurkha with his instinctive, animal-like devotion to his British master, his lack of higher intelligence, was the ideal imperial servant. Behind the romance lay this unromantic reality, which, for the political Nepali, with his resentment of a perceived national servitude to the British power, was anathema.

In addition to fieldwork in Nepal and elsewhere, Caplan has drawn on a rich vein of printed literature. His elegant and scholarly monograph refracts a light which should illumine similar other explorations into comfortable, well-rehearsed popular perceptions and the less soothing truth.

Finally, on a point of detail. Caplan states on page 103 that the imperialist 'ideological assault was aimed especially (though not exclusively) at the section of the Indian/Bengali population - high caste, increasingly educated and urbanised - which had provided the leadership during the Mutiny'. There appears to be a confusion here. The high-caste, increasingly Western-educated Indian and Bengali of Calcutta and the Bombay and Madras Presidencies, who so aroused the ire of Lepel Griffin and like-minded Raj diehards, came to the fore after and not *during* the Mutiny from which they kept a distance. These were the natural progeny of Britain's Indian empire, yet the Raj affected not to recognize them in the early years of their political existence. Recognition when it came was accorded grudgingly.

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CAPLAN, PAT (ed.). *Understanding disputes: the politics of argument* (Explor. Anthropol.). xx, 248 pp., illus., bibliogr. Oxford, Providence: Berg, 1995. £29.95 (cloth), £12.95 (paper)

Understanding disputes is a collection of eleven essays which fall into that much neglected field known as the anthropology of law. The volume is dedicated to Phillip Gulliver whose work on disputes in East Africa has been highly influential in this field. Indeed, most of the contributors have some connexion with Gulliver either as former students or colleagues, which gives the book a rather reassuring focus and sense of a tradition extended. As the editor informs us, somewhat harking back to the theoretical and methodological preoccupations of the era in which Gulliver carried out his most penetrating fieldwork, the 'study of disputes leads us straight to key issues in anthropology - norms and ideology, power, rhetoric and oratory, personhood and agency, morality, meaning and