Masculinity and Mimicry: Ranas and Gurkhas
by Sanjeev Uprety.

Reviewed by Matthew William Maycock

Masculinity studies as a discipline within social science has seen a marked proliferation and diversification over recent years. However, there is a very limited literature on masculinities in relation to Nepal, which in turn reflects wider limitations of literature on masculinities in South Asia. Within this context, Sanjeev Uprety’s book represents a significant contribution to what is an emerging area of scholarship in the Nepali academic context. The short 48 page-book reviewed here corresponds to a seminar held at Social Science Baha in 2008.

Uprety’s book sets out to examine and compare British colonial representations of Gurkha soldier masculinity with representations of the contrasting masculinities of the Rana prime ministers Jung Bahadur Rana and Chandra Shumsher Rana. The visits both Rana prime ministers made to England are further considered.

The central argument made in the book is that through considering the masculinities of these two prime ministers, one can better understand masculinities more generally in the first half of 20th century-Nepal. Uprety approaches this by developing and then contrasting the masculine performances of the two prime ministers, particularly in relation to the representation of effeminate Indian rulers, Shah kings and Gurkha soldiers.

Methodologically, Uprety analyses the representations of both Jung Bahadur and Chandra Shumsher in a wide range of sources, including European newspapers of the time. The analysis of these sources successfully illustrates the differences between the masculinities of the two men.

Initially, Uprety provides a political context focusing on the various interactions (including conflict) between Nepal and British India. Second, he considers the ways in which Gurkha valour and fighting skills resulted in these soldiers being recruited into the British army. This was in a context in which the British imagined a homogenised Gurkha identity
of ‘Gentlemen Warriors’ (Caplan, 1995). British representations of Indian men are then outlined, with a focus on the mimesis of femininity within this group (in contrast to the Gurkhas, who were detached from such forms of mimicry). Uprety also teases out some of the different representations of British masculinities in relation to class.

Uprety then moves on to consider the construction of what he calls Jung Bahadur’s ‘oriental, royal masculinity’, through a convincing exploration of John Whelpton’s (1983) *Jung Bahadur in Europe* and a range of Nepali and English sources of the time. Subsequently, Chandra Shumsher is considered, through a focus on various political-cultural considerations. This leads to Uprety presenting Chandra Shumsher’s masculinity as both imperial and ‘rational’ in contrast to Jung Bahadur’s oriental masculinity that was explored previously. Uprety moves on to examine anti-Rana Nepali nationalism that resulted in effeminate representations of Chandra Shumsher.

Uprety discusses the importance of clothing (royal, military, western, etc.) in relation to the constructions of the masculinity of the two prime ministers quite often in the text. Uprety points towards other influences (such as education) on changing constructions of masculinity between the two prime ministers, but other facets influencing masculinity might have been considered (for example, embodiment). Furthermore, while the book is historically orientated, it might have been interesting to explore the legacy of these performances of masculinity and mimicry in contemporary Nepal. How do the constructions of masculinity that Uprety skilfully explores resonate in contemporary Nepal?

Although Connell (2005) reminds us that masculinities are multiple and contested, this book only focuses on Rana and Gurkha masculinities. It would have been illuminating for the author to consider other, less obviously ‘hegemonic’ performances of masculinity at this time in Nepal, and how these were represented. The author outlines this in relation to British masculinities (where class is identified as a key determinant), but not in the Nepali examples. Therefore, a consideration of the importance of caste (caste and masculinity are mentioned on p. 25, but only briefly), sexuality, ethnicity and religion in shaping Nepali masculinities would have been informative.

Given the short length of the book it is perhaps understandable that masculinity theory is not more fully elaborated in it. For example,
the theoretical distinctions between ‘masculine’, and ‘hyper-masculine’ might have been illustrated more clearly. Considering masculinity theory in more detail, and in relation to two very interesting and contrasting performances of masculinity, would have also created a space to explore any potential issue in applying theories of gender that have been developed in locations outside of Nepal and South Asia.

Overall, Uprety’s book excels in examining the masculinities of two important figures in Nepali history, but leaves the reader wanting more on a number of levels, principally due to the brevity of the book and the limitations this places on the text in relation to theory and context. This reader hopes that the book reviewed is a starting place for a longer and more complete account of the masculinities that are explored, which would provide a unique insight into a significant time in Nepal’s history as well as a contribution to masculinity studies in Nepal and South Asia.

References
attention on masculinity and femininity as personality types and behavior embodied by individual men and women. However, unlike the normative/positivist definitions of masculinity and femininity, these theories highlighted how gender expectations and the embodiment of masculinity and femininity are not just deeply cultural; they are also political. These theorists were generally critical of masculinity, arguing that, within a Thomas Bell 7 States and Territories: The Anglo-Gorkha War as a Diagnostic Event Bernardo Michael 33 The First Nepali in England: Motilal Singh and PM Jang Bahadur Rana Krishna Adhikari 58 Masculinity and Mimicry: Ranas and Gurkhas Sanjeev Uperti 77 EBHR Reflecting Political Allegiances Through the Design of the Narayanhiti Royal Palace Bryony Whitmarsh 112 Britain-Nepal Relations through the Prism of Aid Jeevan Sharma and Ian Harper 145 The Limits of Nationalism: Political Identity in Nepal and the British Isles John Whelpton 162 EUROPEAN BULLETIN OBITUARY 199 OF HIMALAYAN RESEARCH BOOK R Rana and Bhim Shashmeer Jang Bahadur Rana because they wore red and black topis, respectively.[1]. Chandra Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana. On 2 August 1920, Adhikari was sentenced to nine years in prison; his sentence would be reduced to six years if he handed over all 1,000 copies of the book to the government.[1] Adhikari tried to return all the copies but one had gone missing and he was unable to locate it.[1][12] All of the 999 copies. "Masculinity and Mimicry: Ranas and Gurkhas" (PDF). Digital Himalaya. pp. 106â€“107. Archived (PDF) from the original on 18 July 2020. The two most used instruments to assess masculinity (M) and femininity (F) are the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) and the Personality Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ). Two hypotheses will be tested: a) multidimensionality versus bidimensionality, and b) to what extent the two instruments, elaborated to measure the same constructs, classify subjects in the same way. Participants were 420 high school students, 198 women and 222 men, aged 12-15 years. Implications of the results are discussed regarding the supposed theory behind instrumentality/expressiveness and masculinity/femininity, as well as for the use of both instruments to classify different subjects into the four distinct types.