

Martin Chautari

invites you to a discussion

on

Roles and Place of Sacrifice in Socio-political Organization in Nepal

by

Marie Lecomte-Tilouine

at

Martin Chautari Seminar Hall, Thapathali, 11 November 2014 (Tuesday), 3:00pm

One of the most obvious aspects of sacrifice is that it acts as the ultimate model of legitimate violence, i.e. the capacity and even the duty of some members of society to publicly deprive a human or animal being of their life, for the common good. It plays this role above all in a context where sacrifice is not unanimously accepted, as I believe is in fact always the case to varying degrees, and in this instance, the legitimacy of sacrificial violence is denaturalized and tends to be perceived as an expression of power. Because of the strong parallel between the social and the ritual order, the ultimate model of legitimate violence, the right to kill without killing, as detained by its custodian elite (the groups respectively controlling spiritual and temporal power) is akin to social domination. It thus takes an antagonistic turn in such a socially transparent context as caste organization and, what is more important, as I will try to show, this is neither accidental, contextual nor derivative but constitutive of this socio-political organisation. Yet, different models of sacrifice co-exist, resulting in various configurations, especially with the weakening of the caste organization. I will explore some of them by basing my observations on ethnographic data.

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