

## **Food practices among the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese in Adelaide**

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### **Abstract**

This article is the result of six-months field research work among the former refugee Bhutanese community in a suburb of Adelaide (South Australia) with the goal of describing and analysing food habits in the context of resettlement. Research data has shown a preference by the elder generations for traditional Nepali food and a refusal of Australian food. For the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese, food practices in the context of immigration represent a sensuous and embodied activity, connected to the memory of the place they once belonged to, but also the essential medium for the creation of new rituals which reinforce their identity as both Nepali and Australian. By underlining the importance of food within Nepali traditional rituals and, on the other hand, the role of food in the process of memory building, we discuss here how food practices represent an essential part of both pre-existing and new rituals, able to reinforce social and cultural identity.

**Keywords:** food practices, identity, migration, memory, Nepali-speaking Bhutanese, resettlement, rituals

### **Introduction**

The social value of food within a society has been approached from both political-economical<sup>1</sup> and symbolic<sup>2</sup> perspectives. Moreover, sociological and anthropological studies have often underlined the importance of food practices in defining social relationships, status and the differentiation between individuals and groups<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, several studies have developed theories showing food as an identity maker<sup>4</sup> able to guarantee both the unification of a group and the distinction of social hierarchy<sup>5</sup>.

In this article, we explore the role of food practices as rituals able to foster social identities among the former refugee Bhutanese ethnic minority in a suburb of

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<sup>1</sup> Mintz 1986

<sup>2</sup> Munn 1986

<sup>3</sup> Bourdieu 1984, Douglas 1972; 1973, Terrio 2000

<sup>4</sup> Köpping, Leistle & Rudolph 2006, Caplan 1997

<sup>5</sup> Bourdieu 1984

Adelaide.<sup>6</sup> More specifically, this essay analyses food choices in the context of refugee resettlement, as well as describing which socio-cultural identities are linked to these choices, with an emphasis on the concept of generation as a sociological phenomenon<sup>7</sup>, showing how the younger generations are adopting the socio-cultural identity of the hosting place. Differently, we will discuss how the older generations are linking their socio-cultural identities to the memory of their time in Bhutan.

During the fieldwork research, while taking part in several community activities and ceremonies, we have used participant observation and engaged in informal conversations with more than one hundred people from the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community<sup>8</sup>, followed by twenty-two structured interviews, to investigate the role of food and social practices in daily and ritual contexts. Specifically, we have observed both the daily food practices of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese and the use of food within ritual events, with a special focus on their approach towards Australian food. What we wanted to understand was whether traditional food practices are an element used to affirm cultural identity against the Australian food in the new context.

Studies on the new lives of former refugees or immigrants in receiving countries have often addressed the way in which food represents a link between memory and identity<sup>9</sup>. Specifically, several researches have pointed to the role of nostalgia and sensory experiences in the process of cultural resistance and in the construction of cultural heritage in the context of immigration<sup>10</sup>. The anthropologist Jon Holtzman<sup>11</sup> has criticised those studies on food and memory that adopt a Western-centric idea of the body and mind at the base of their analysis and that lack an exploration of the polyvalent concept of memory with its ambivalent contents. In the present research, we move from this critic by Holtzman, to offer a multi-faceted configuration of memory within the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese context.

As observed elsewhere, the sensuous component is fundamental in the process of remembering<sup>12</sup>. In this way, food can be seen as a strong vehicle of the memory, as it engages the taste, touch, texture, sight and the smell senses, passing through the body and creating a strong link with physical and cognitive processes. In the context

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<sup>6</sup> Adelaide is a city with 1,225,235 million inhabitants in the State of South Australia while Salisbury is a suburb of Adelaide with a population of 129,109 million (ABS 2011). In 2011 there were 706 Bhutanese born people living in South Australia, although this number has increased significantly in the following years (GoSA 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Mannheim 2000, Pilcher 1994, Demartini 1985

<sup>8</sup> In the South Australian city of Adelaide, we conducted in-depth interviews among the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community in the suburb of Salisbury for a period of six months, in order to describe and analyse their food habits in the context of Resettlement.

<sup>9</sup> Sutton 2000; 2001, Mankekar 2002, Ray 2004

<sup>10</sup> Sutton 2000; 2001, Warin & Dennis 2005

<sup>11</sup> Holtzman 2006

<sup>12</sup> Bourdieu 1977, Connerton 1989, Stoller 1995.

of our research, the importance of a sensuous component emerged in various aspects of food practices. Beating the spinach leaves on the floor before leaving them under the sun to dry or following a special technique to cut broccoli in a way that they will not smell during the cooking process, or eating with hands and using the thumb to separate spicy tastes, are all actions which involve all of the body in the process of experiencing the food and, with that feeling, to remember their traditional home. Other actions can be added to this list, like the act of mixing the ingredients for roti while sitting on the floor, of smoothing the dough on a chopping board and then cooking it and turning it from side to side in the pan. However, these behavioural aspects are no longer practiced by the younger generations, who often now eat with cutlery while watching television. In this case, a new approach to food can be observed, mediated by the vision of the moving images on the screen and from the absence of a variety of sensual links with the food ingested.

### **Ingredients and daily cooking practices**

The Nepali-speaking Bhutanese people are descendants of Nepalese migrants that settled in Bhutan in 1890. After one-hundred years of pacific coexistence, in 1988 they started being forced to assimilate to the Bhutanese culture, which included language and dress code (Hutt 2003). Those who refused were persecuted and moved to seek refuge in Eastern Nepal, where since 1992, the UNHCR established camps for more than 100,000 refugees (IOM 2008). After more than twenty years spent in the refugee camps with the help of the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Nepali-speaking Bhutanese people started resettling in eight hosting countries starting from 2007. The majority of the refugees have resettled in the United States, Canada and Australia.

In the context of resettlement<sup>13</sup>, Nepali-speaking Bhutanese people have maintained their food traditions, but with some variations. In the studied suburb, they often live near to each other, having restored the friendships and kinships that they had while in the refugee camps in Nepal. The majority of them have a garden at the back of the house, where they cultivate the vegetables that they need to prepare their traditional dishes.<sup>14</sup> These vegetables include spinach, cucumber, broccoli, onions, chilli, tomatoes, beans and citrus fruits such as lemons and mandarins. There is a local Nepali shop where they can find the rest of the products that they need for their traditional recipes. Many people say that now they have to buy many products

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<sup>13</sup>The major ethnic groups are from England (9,114; 7.1%), Vietnam (3,116; 2.4%), Philippines (1,226; 1.3%), India (1,527; 1.2%) and Italy (1,414; 1.1%) (ABS 2011).

<sup>14</sup> The majority of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese are Hindu and vegetarian. However, Buddhist elements are integrated in their religious practices.

because they can no longer produce them like they used to do in Buthan. In particular, they generally buy rice (*chamal*), wheat flour, potatoes, red or yellow lentils (*daal* or *dhal*), dairy products (butter, yogurt, milk), sugar, salt, turmeric, cardamom, chickpeas, puffed rice, carrots, coriander, cooking oil (generally sunflower oil) and olive oil for salad.

Nepalese food is a variation on Asian themes, with Tibetan, Indian and Thai influences. Traditional Nepali dishes constitute the largest part of the diet of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese people in Adelaide. For example, most of them eat the daily meal called *daal-bhat tarkari*, a staple food, traditionally eaten twice per day, consisting of lentils, rice and vegetable curry, served in a set of cups called *thali*<sup>15</sup>. To balance the spicy taste of the curry, the dish is usually accompanied with yogurt (*daihee*), sliced lemon (*nibuwa*) or lime (*kagati*). Differently from the Bhutanese eating tradition, people of Nepali culture mix all the food on the dish: rice, lentils and curry<sup>16</sup> and sometimes also yogurt, before eating it<sup>17</sup>, while Bhutanese people generally keep the ingredients separate. Another important dish, persisting in their daily cooking practices is *roti* or *chapati*, unleavened flat bread prepared with flour, water and oil. The dough is rolled flat after being left for a full night and then cooked in a frying pan. To mix the ingredients for *roti*, some people sit on the floor, where they also prefer to eat. An alternative, *sel roti*, instead has the shape of a donut, which is fried and covered in sugar<sup>18</sup>. They have a special gesture to indicate the latter, which recalls the motions they make when putting the batter in the frying oil.

Cooking practices in the new context include the use of a stovetop<sup>19</sup>, an element that they find much more practical than the ground fire (*chulo*) that they had in Buthan and Nepal<sup>20</sup>. Many people have reported, however, preferring the portable bamboo pantries that they had in Nepal to the fixed cupboards of their new houses. This shows an example of an item that they preferred in their home country. Even if they are happy to be in Australia there are still things that they are not too familiar with. It is especially difficult to break certain embodied habits. Another important cooking practice is the one of drying food to make it last longer. In particular, they do this with spinach, with the skin of banana and with chilli. This dried food can be used at any time with just the addition of water, ginger, oil and garlic in a pan. This special

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<sup>15</sup> The main plate is called *jharke thal* and consists of stainless steel that can vary from 12 to 30 cm.

<sup>16</sup> The curry is made of red or yellow lentils or with a root named *yum* that can be white or red.

<sup>17</sup> The little cups with the sauces are poured in the large plate with the rice.

<sup>18</sup> This dish is common during festivals such as Tihar.

<sup>19</sup> Not many people reported using the oven and the majority do not even have one. Some young people like using the barbecue, typical of Australian cooking practices. When they arrived, some people from the immigration service group gave to Bhutanese families a six-month course to explain how to use the things of the house, such as gas.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion on the topic of traditional houses and practices in Nepal see Gray 1995; 2006.

preparation, called *gundruk*, allows them to save spinach for up to two or three years<sup>21</sup>.

To prepare *gundruk*, the leaves are washed and left to dry under the sun for two days, after having beaten them on a surface. The dry leaves are then put into jars with a hole in the bottom, draining the water by applying a weight and waiting for twenty-one days. After this process, the vegetables have a strong sour smell and they are saved in containers.

Meat (*masu*) dishes are not eaten daily, but they are common during festivals. In particular, goat meat is often used, cooked with curry and accompanied by yogurt. Chicken (*kukhura*) and fish (*machha*) are usually acceptable alternatives.<sup>22</sup> Another important dish is *kheer*, rice pudding cooked with butter and milk. Furthermore, it is common, especially in the morning, to prepare a hot water drink with black pepper and salt that is believed to enhance body energies and vital functions. Alternatively, a special preparation of black tea with sugar, milk, cardamom, cloves, ginger and black pepper may be prepared.

The act of eating by Nepali tradition performed while sitting on the floor. The elders we have interviewed still maintain this practice, while children were generally seen to sit on the sofa and watch television while eating. The traditional eating practices involved people eating with their hands, using the thumb to pick the spicy part (*pickle* or *achaar*) that stays on the side of the dish and using the rest of the hand as a spoon to pick rice and lentils. However, the majority of children now in Australia no longer use their hands to eat.

An important eating practice in Nepali culture uses betel leaf (*paan*)<sup>23</sup>, with some spices such as areca nut, pepper grains and other variable elements such as tobacco. It is chewed and it has a psychoactive effect.<sup>24</sup> This practice is still diffused among Nepali-speaking Bhutanese in Salisbury and it is popular among young boys during traditional ceremonies.

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<sup>21</sup> This preparation is called *gundruk*.

<sup>22</sup> With the exception of the Khas Brahmin (Bahun) caste that are strictly vegetarian. Hindus never eat beef (*gaiko masu*), buffalo or yak meat.

<sup>23</sup> *Paan* is consumed in other Asian countries, under different names. About the origin and diffusion of *paan* there are varied opinions. Zumbroich, 2008 has written a useful article on this topic.

<sup>24</sup> *Paan* leaves are also an addictive substance and they are strongly believed by scientists to have adverse health effects. For a discussion on the topic see Mack, 2001 and Song, Wan and Xu, 2013



Examples of *daal-bhat tarkari* dishes served in sets of *thali* or in plastic dishes

### **Westernisation and fast food**

The Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community in the studied suburb of Adelaide is a compact and culturally active community. Despite the fact that adults and children are studying English, at school or in private courses, Bhutanese people still maintain their original Nepali traditions and their Nepali language, the importance of which is affirmed by all of the interviewees members of community. Despite having been deprived of their legal citizenship, they still consider themselves Bhutanese alongside with their newly established Australian identities. They show a great appreciation for the newly received citizenship certificates by the Australian Government and many say that they are “proud to be citizens of this great country” and “happy to be graced with a peaceful environment and fully content with our life”. However, they still do not want to renounce to their cultural heritage.



Front and back of a Nepali house in Salisbury

One aspect that has emerged among Nepali-speaking Bhutanese in the Australian context is the tendency to maintain food practices and their approach towards Western food. According to members of the community, food constitutes an extremely important aspect of their identity, considered «an unwritten story, persisting for generations» (Chuda, 45 years old). For 60 years old Sabitra, «a Nepali person must at least be able to make *roti*, curry and *kheer*». On this issue our study found differences between seniors and juniors. Seniors are, in fact, more reluctant to try fast food or even Nepali food at a restaurant, while children are more likely to eat fast food during the week. For our study of the eating behaviours of children and teenagers at home, we have taken a sample of 50 participants aged between 8 and 16 years old.<sup>25</sup> This enquiry has revealed a diversified approach amongst the youth, even if many of them eat fast food at least once per week. Furthermore, the majority still eat traditional food at home if their parents have prepared it, while some others refuse to eat it at all, reporting a dislike of spicy food. Moreover, if they have to cook for themselves, many reported a preference for easy cooking food, such as typical Australian noodles with eggs or toasted sandwiches.

There are a very large number of fast food chains that can be found locally. These chains sell a variety of different foods including pizza, pasta, ice cream, hot dogs, hamburgers, fish and chips, kebabs, Chinese, Mexican, Japanese, Thai, Malaysian, Vietnamese, Indian and others. When interviewed about fast food, almost all the Nepali children have reported to like it, and more than half of them have reported to prefer it to traditional food. A common theme for preferring fast food is

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<sup>25</sup> This data is the result of a lesson we organised at the Bhutanese Ethnic School on the topic of fast food.

because it saves time and it is convenient. Alternatively, amongst the minority that prefer traditional food, they observe that fast food is unhealthy because it can give you diabetes and other illnesses. If, instead, you cook at home, you can grow your own vegetables and prepare them as you like them. Kaghendra, a 60 years old man, says that when they were in Bhutan, they grew their own food, consisting mainly of rice and the vegetables that they cultivated themselves on the farm. He says laughing:

«Here in Australia we are a bit more Aussie, so we have little breakfast, little lunch, little dinner, while in Bhutan we ate more. In particular, in Bhutan at 9-10 am we had rice and dal, as a breakfast-lunch. If we had to work hard in the field, we brought with us sweet potatoes, popcorn, tapioca fruit or fried rice».

If children and grandchildren do consume large amounts of fast food, most of the people from the older generation never eat at restaurants. One of the most interesting conversations about traditional food and fast food was with a middle age couple and their 23 years old son. When asked about the reasons for which they do not go to fast food restaurants, the husband answered that is «because we do not know how to order», and the wife said: «because we do not like fast-food!». However, she added, «sometimes we buy biscuits». «And just occasionally» the husband admitted underlining “occasionally”, «we also buy dumplings (*momò* in Nepali), a Chinese food that we already knew in Nepal and Bhutan». Interestingly, during several interviews, people affirmed to prefer Nepali food because it is healthy and balanced. Similarly, according to Kaghendra, Nepali food is «fresh, hygienic, nutritious and it has all the properties of different vegetables, balancing all of the nutrients, carbohydrates, fats and proteins». One day they tried to eat at a traditional Nepali restaurant:

«We were coming back from a journey in Mount Crawford and we wanted to try traditional food, but it was really expensive, and we were not satisfied with it. We do not like to eat outside because we cannot know when the food has been cooked. At home we can have the food from our garden. It is important to eat freshly cooked food immediately and restaurants or fast food are not good for this».

He adds «my sons like traditional food. The newer generation, however, like my grandson, do not even speak Nepali. Many children are forgetting about our culture, they do not follow it». His son, Sunil, during this conversation is cooking for his parents and he is constantly running away in the kitchen when he hears noises from the boiling food. He likes Nepali food; however, he says he could eat fast food every day. The son explains that eating at home is better for social reasons:



«We are so busy every day, I go to work at 6 am, my mother studies in a course, and my father goes out at 9 am and then we meet again at 8 pm and we have dinner together – we have dinner really late by Australian standards - and we can stay together and talk and it is an important moment, comfortable, to stay together».

Everyone in the family agrees that you cannot know if the food you buy at the restaurant is fresh and this is an aspect on which many people have insisted. The father explains: «it is not that I do not like fast food, but I do not feel satisfied with it. If you give hamburgers and sandwiches to Nepali people of my generation, they do not feel satisfied, because they have not eaten it before». According to his son, this is because there are too many ingredients that they do not eat, such as various kinds of meat. Differently from Sunil, his nephew, the son of his elder brother, a 5 years old child, does not appreciate traditional food at all. He only eats fast food. According to Sunil, this is because in fast food there are addictive substances, like sugar and fat. His grandfather says:

«Children become addicted to this food because they do not have occasions to eat traditional food and this is because their parents are lazy. My son and my daughter in law do not cook for the child. Every time that this child is in our house, he is blaming us because there is nothing for him in the fridge and he wants to be brought to the shopping centre to go to McDonalds. He does not like Nepali food, and it is a real problem to feed him. He does not like anything! And also, the problem is that when we go to the fast food I do not know how to order, so he gives me a paper with what to order for him».

Pabitra, a woman 60 years old, cultivates several types of vegetables in tissue bags, plastic bags and old metal boxes in the garden in front of her house. She shares these products with her neighbours. They are not Nepali, they are elderly and, as she says, she gets along really well with them. They bring her seeds, dirt and boxes. She plants them and if they need the fruits or vegetables they can help themselves from her garden. She keeps this vegetable garden at the front of the house, while out the back there are some fruit trees. Moreover, some of her neighbours are Buddhists, so, as she says, it is easier to exchange cooked food because they are vegetarians. With the neighbours she also maintains friendly relations by exchanging a few words like “hello, how are you? What are you doing?” She laughs that these are the most basic things, but she is happy with this arrangement. Sometimes she eats fried chips or fish and chips. She does not mind them, she says, but she definitely prefers the Nepalese food.

Beside the acknowledgement of the interviewees on the importance of preserving their traditional culture and on passing it on to their children, they all (both the older and younger generations) believe that home-cooked Nepali traditional food is

healthier than any fast food that they could find in Australia or in Nepal. The features of this healthy food are that is hygienic, fresh, nutritious and balanced. This was also reported from younger people who like fast food but still agree that Nepali food is healthier. Interviewees reported they are not against eating Australian style food, however, they do not know how to cook it themselves and are wary of restaurants in which they do not know how the food is prepared and whether or not it is fresh.

### **The new ritual of resettlement**

One of the most interesting revelations from the research was the creation of a new ritual occasion, the ‘Settlement Day’. This is the date on which the first Nepali-speaking Bhutanese person was resettled in Australia and is celebrated each year by the community on May 21<sup>st</sup>. It is interesting to notice that in 2016 this celebration occurred on the day of the Buddha Jayanti<sup>26</sup> and the two celebrations were joined. Buddha Jayanti occurs on the full moon day during the moon month of April-May (*vaisakha*). It celebrates the three moments of the life of Buddha: birth, enlightenment and death. Even if Nepali-speaking Bhutanese people are mainly Hindu, Buddha is welcomed in all their *puja* rooms. A ‘*puja* room’ or ‘prayer room’ is a sacred space found in Hindu houses. This is because in Bhutan they had started integrating Buddhist elements to their Hindu pantheon.

Many interviewees have noticed that the Settlement Day is important because they want their children to remember the day in which their community started living in Australia. Settlement Day that we attended was celebrated in large hall that was hired out for the event and transport was organised by the Bhutanese Australian Association of South Australia<sup>27</sup> so that all members of the community were able to attend. There was a stage at the back of the room, and beside this, in the corner, there was a *puja* area, in which there were flags and images of the life of Buddha. Beside these, there was an Australian flag. All the members of the community lined up in front of the sacred area, to light candles made of pieces of cotton within cups filled with oil.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> This event occurs on the full moon day during the moon month of April-May (*vaisakha*). It celebrates the three moments of the life of Buddha: birth, enlightenment and death. Even if Nepali-speaking Bhutanese people are mainly Hindu, Buddha is welcomed in all their *puja*. This is because in Bhutan they had started integrating Buddhist elements to their Hindu pantheon.

<sup>27</sup>The Bhutanese Australian Association of South Australia (BAASA) is an NGO’s formed in 2010 by the members of Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community supported by the Australian government.

<sup>28</sup> Traditionally they are filled with fondant butter (*ghee*). The cotton threads that they turn on are called *bhati*. The process of production of *bhati* is very long and laborious. The *bhati* are pulled out from the cotton balls (bought from a local chemist), with the right hand by women from the community. Once they have been pulled to the right length, they wind the thread three times and then

After lighting the candles, people brought offerings to the gods in the *puja* area, circumambulating around the room twice in the auspicious clockwise direction. They offered flowers and fruits, although one woman brought a bottle of Coca-Cola, to be offered to the gods decorated with a white scarf. Following this, members of the community, such as priests, NGO representatives and politicians spoke to the public from the stage, underlining the importance of this day as the beginning of a union between the Bhutanese and Australia. This was followed by artistic exhibitions, with music, dance and songs. Finally, pizza was offered to the western public sitting in the chairs, while in the back of the room (hall), a kitchen opened to sell traditional Nepali food, including the pan leaves. It is interesting to note that on the menu, Coca-Cola was sold alongside the traditional dishes.

The ritual of the Settlement Day represents a social moment in which pre-settlement Nepali and post-settlement Western cultural worlds are unified. Nepali-speaking Bhutanese can affirm, through this ritual in which food as a major part, their new identity as Australian Nepali-speaking Bhutanese people.

The welcoming of Western food items within the Hindu-Buddhist *puja*, in fact, represents the desire of the first Australian generations to integrate the new culture within their own, without losing their roots and guaranteeing the social integration of their children. This new identity is reinforced by the unification of the two ceremonies, Buddha Jayanti and Settlement Day. As we have seen, Buddha constituted an element of cohesion between Bhutanese and Nepali culture and he is pacifically welcomed in their *puja*. Now this deity functions as a reason for cultural unification with a new identity, able to unify diversity in a ritual process and at the same time to reinforce social and cultural identity. Furthermore, the ritual of offering to God is fundamental in Hindu culture, as the life of the universe is sustained by the practice of offerings and sacrifices.

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they break them in six pieces. Then they colour the head of these pieces with the red paint used for the *tika*. It is important to distinguish the head from the bottom, as the *bathi* have to be oriented toward East, because they are the symbol of God.



Ritual offerings including a bottle of Coca-Cola on the right, with a white decoration.

The ritual also has a performative power that acts as a constructor of identity<sup>29</sup>. This passage was marked by the acceptance of Coca-Cola as a Western food within the offerings to the gods, and also listed on the menu with traditional food. Additionally, pizza was offered to the Australian guests, as a form of respect for their traditions, while traditional food was sold on the other side of the room. Elements of Nepali traditional rituals were, in this way, maintained with the addition of Western symbols.

### **Analysis and conclusion**

For our analysis, starting from the acquired data, we take from Sutton the concept of «prospective memory»<sup>30</sup>, that he uses in his study in the Greek island of Kalymnos, to explain the way in which the thoughts of food items or food related events that are yet to come can turn on the motor of the memory of past events. This concept is here re-adapted to explain how the memory of exile and cultural repression in Bhutan is counter-balanced by a more positive form of memory, constructed on the desire for

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<sup>29</sup> Köpping, Leistle & Rudolph 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Sutton 2011.

their children to be able to remember their roots and to know their true selves, thus constructing their present identities.

Among the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese, food practices that are similar to those carried out in Bhutan and in the Nepal are thought by both the old and the new generation to foster the maintenance of a collective memory, so that the community can be reinforced, Nepali culture celebrated and ethnic and social identity perpetrated, in a way that «maintain[s] a historically validated ethnic identity»<sup>31</sup>. However, the younger generations do not have the same historical, cultural or social memory to guide their behaviour. Their adhesion is rather to Western culture, in a way that they can resemble their peers. In fact, even if many of the younger interviewees were able to cook traditional dishes and have expressed their desire to teach to their future children the traditional practices that they know, they put being Australian first. They have adopted the language, dress code and eating practices. The theory of generation by Karl Mannheim<sup>32</sup> can be taken here to explain this phenomenon. According to him, it is a generational belonging that prevails as the driving force of people identity. In the case of the second generation of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese, while they still acknowledge the importance of not losing their original cultural roots, they are assimilating themselves and adopting the Australian socio-cultural practices typical of the generation to which they now belong.

The attitudes towards Western and traditional food practices has distinguished the group of the elders from the youth. Children of Nepali-speaking Bhutanese immigrants interviewed, in fact, are most likely to adopt elements of a standard Australian diet than their seniors. The Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community is still maintaining their cultural traditions and their original language, the importance of which is underlined and defended by most the members of the community, even though young people have integrated local junk food in their daily diets. While they all claim the importance and pride of being Australian citizens, through food and rituals, Nepali-speaking Bhutanese also affirm their cultural specificity, even if they are at the same time involved in a dialectic process of adoption and resistance to the new elements offered by Western society, as demonstrated by the ethnographic material. For example, while families do commonly adopt local food into their diets, they are also worried that their traditional recipes will be lost and consciously try to teach Nepali cooking practices to their children. Another common concern involves consuming Western food as it is considered unhealthy, not fresh, and full of sugar. However, this is largely due to the fact that they always refer to Western food as food from outside the house, as they do generally not cook it themselves. Beside the importance of identity and memory in the choice for Nepali homemade food, we have

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<sup>31</sup> Holtzman 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Mannheim 2000. For a more recent discussion on his theory, see Pilcher 1994 and Rosow 1978.

repeatedly observed the topic of healthy eating. Food practices in the new contexts of resettlement act as a link between past and future, between the memory of Nepal and the perspective of a return to it, in order to keep the new generations connected with their original culture and land.

Finally, we found that food was used to construct new rituals. If traditional rituals are still performed by the elders, who hope for their cultural heritage to be preserved by the younger generations, new rituals have emerged, working for the creation of a new Nepali-Australian identity.

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