

## ABSTRACT

### Culture and Christianity Negotiated in Hindu Society A Case Study of a Church in Central and Western Nepal

This thesis examines in what ways and to what extent Nepali Christians retain or change their way of living after they become Christians. This is achieved through a case study approach focusing on four selected congregations. These cases examine the life of the Christians from conversion through socio-religious negotiations of boundaries to cross-religious relationships and friendships. These cases are also a lens for identifying whether or not Nepali Christians connect in a logical way with the local culture through an inculturation process. The research methodology draws on primary source data from fieldwork and recorded interviews. The qualitative data are analysed using Grounded Theory Analysis which at the same time serves as a constant comparison data validation in examining internal and interrelated consistency of interviews. Secondary source data encompass literature ranging from the disciplines of anthropology and theology to Nepalese history.

The conclusions reveal that, when practising their belief among traditional religious people, Christians demonstrate spiritual insight about traditional religious life. These insights provide opportunities for Christians to play key roles in local Nepalese life. Negotiation of both social and religious boundaries has proved to be challenging to most Christians particularly within their own exclusive domains. Christians have however made attempts to address any potential conflicts across the religious divide. The most significant contributions of this research are: i) to demonstrate how Christians proactively negotiate socio-religious boundaries; ii) in doing so to provide information about Christians' attitude to traditional Nepalis and to other Christians, and iii) to provide evidence for and about Christian individual sovereignty during decision-making processes. These are new insights about Nepalese Christianity and the process of inculturation.