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## Book Reviews

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Staff Resources. New ERA has a staff of researchers whose skills have been developed and tested through practical experience in Nepal. These researchers possess skills in survey research design, questionnaire development, field data collection techniques, training and supervision of field staff, report writing, and general project administration. Currently, the research staff includes specialists in the fields of agriculture, economics, health education, and general education. Other specialized staff members are recruited as needed or retained on a consulting basis for project work.

Physical Resources. New ERA currently occupies two office buildings in Gyaneshwar, Kathmandu. In addition to standard office equipment, the facilities house a small but carefully selected research library. A full-time clerical and administrative staff supports the work of project researchers.

Other Corporate Activities and Services. In addition to its research work, New ERA offers training services to interested agencies. Present training activities relate primarily to the provision of language training and cultural orientation to foreign technical assistance personnel as they begin their terms of service in Nepal. New ERA also provides consulting services in research, evaluation, and training to individuals and agencies involved in a wide variety of development activities in Nepal. Finally, New ERA publishes a newsletter for high schools throughout Nepal, relating the latest research in education, with suggestions for more effective teaching methods.

Note: Within its training arm, New ERA recently (June-July 1980) contracted with the University of Washington and Washington State University to coordinate and conduct an elaborate Summer Fieldschool in Kathmandu Valley on the topic of "The Culture and Ecology of Kathmandu," directed by Prof. Donald A. Messerschmidt. This program involved 24 university students from the United States (including several foreign nationals attending universities in the USA). New ERA sub-contracted specialists in Kathmandu to lecture to the group on culture, history, economics, ecology, agriculture, and political science. New ERA staff also conducted field trips to important sites within the valley. /DM.



#### BOOK REVIEW

Edward W. Cronin, Jr.

1979 The Arun: A Natural History of the World's Deepest Valley.  
Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 236pp. Illus, Biblio, Index, Map.  
Appendix of Scientific Names (Species List).

Reviewed by D. Messerschmidt  
Washington State University

From rare salamanders to honey guides, lush cloud forests to ecological disaster and desertification, Ted Cronin's Arun is both a delight to read and an alarm sounding over the deterioration of the Himalayan ecosystem. The book is an account of the Arun Valley Wildlife Expedition of 1972 and 1973. The expedition naturalists included ornithologists, mammalogists, botanists, herpetologists, parasitologists and others. Their goal was a basic ecological survey of the Arun Valley, one of East Nepal's main watersheds. What the expedition scientists learned there enhances our understanding of the ecology of all the Himalayas, and of mountain ecosystems generally. The book is clearly written and very readable, well researched, and richly illustrated with fascinating new data and insights. The Arun is recommended as a basic and essential book on Nepal.

The book is divided into ten chapters. Three of them describe the lower, middle, and high altitude zones of the Arun watershed respectively. Another addresses the inevitable in Himalayan literature: The Abominable Snowman. The first three chapters introduce the expedition itself, the natural and historic setting of Nepal and the Arun region, and the first experiences of the (initially) naive naturalists trying to trek and survive on Himalayan trails. Cronin gave me a good laugh when he described his very first day on the trail -- over-prepared, trekking "by the book," and out of shape. Thinking that Sahibs somehow belong out in front of an expedition, and that Sahibs should show no pain, Cronin treats the reader to the collapse of his myths and self-image as the disillusionment and re-enlightenment of that first experience with the trail caught up to him:

...there came a point in our growing exhaustion when the porters reached a rest stop at the same time that we did but instead of resting they kept walking on. Since we had already shown our hands by taking off our packs, we quickly brought out our cameras and made showy motions with lenses and tripods as if we were taking vital photographs. Photography is a magical process that has given Sahibs all over the world the change to rest under the guise of business.

With the pressure of their presence behind us gone, we adopted a new, more deceitful strategy. We completely abandoned the idea of photography, observation, everything but survival, and put all our loose gear inside our backpacks so that it would be easier to carry. With grim expressions we marched on at the fastest possible pace, calculating that the pain would be easier to bear the shorter its duration, and made increasingly lengthy stops between our efforts. A sick kind of game developed: a race between rest stops, then, winded and sore, a long break while the embarrassment of showing up late in camp slowly re-entered our collective consciousness and sparked a new race to the next stop. It seemed to go on forever. The innate drive for survival common to all creatures has strange ways of expressing itself in man. (pp.37-38)

The book is not, however, about people on the expedition -- rather, it is about the findings of the expedition. These findings include a variety of discoveries in all phases of the natural sciences. One of the major finds -- and a highlight of the book -- comes in Chapter 7, "The Legacy of Chang Hua." Chang Hua is a bird known to the Chinese as the spiritual sparrow (because of its illusive behavior) and otherwise as the Honey Guide, so-named because its better known African cousin has developed an intriguing behavioral adaptation of literally "guiding" animals like bears, badgers, and people to honey combs which, when broken open by the mammals seeking honey, are readily available to the birds seeking the wax itself for sustenance. Cronin's account of spending months (in the rain) tracking the Honey Guide in a valiant attempt to determine its natural history will delight every reader.

Perhaps the most important statement of this expedition is about Man's relationship to the Himalayan environment -- a relationship of pending disaster:

The symptoms of the problem must already be familiar to the reader: massive deforestation throughout the lower hills; widespread erosion on denuded slopes and frequent landslides in heavily abused areas; a large

human population dependent on agriculture and still practicing primitive techniques of planting and harvesting; an excessive number of domestic animals that are overgrazing pastures and competing with a dwindling number of wild herbivores; unpredictable and radical changes in the natural composition of the fauna and flora; and so on through a hundred minor examples... This illness has its roots in the most basic relationship between man and his environment. The diagnosis is most frightening because it is the land itself that is afflicted. Like a hidden cancer that grows unseen for years finally to erupt and devastate the patient overnight, this cancer of the land has grown imperceptibly through the centuries. (p.199)

Despite an interest in natural history which this book excites in the reader, and despite the author's captivating style and critical message, there are several disappointments. For one, the sense of natural history which excels in the book is, unfortunately, marred by inaccuracies in Nepal's social history. The Buddha was not born "just west of the Arun Valley" (p.27) but, more accurately, 250 miles (400 m.) southwest at Lumbini in Nepal's western Terai at the northern edge of the Gangetic Plain. The Thakurs of medieval Nepal were more correctly Hindu rulers than "Indian rulers" (p.27). And, in the space of four consecutive sentences on p.29, the author mixes Thakuris, Mallas, "the Rajput family", and Prithvi Narayan Shah in an interesting soup of history which left me startled by the speedy simplicity of the Nepalese past -- none of which has very much to do with the remote Arun Valley. Beyond history, Cronin's sense of ethnic group and caste organization and their variation demonstrates a poorly informed understanding of Nepalese social organization. That Nepal's social systems are confusingly diverse, with many "sub-species" to account for (even in the confines of so isolated and small a region as the Arun) is evident that an expedition of this nature needs at least one more sort of specialist -- a social scientist.

All holistic (social and natural) scientists who read this book will doubtlessly be disappointed by the lack of precise detail concerning the critical interface between Man and Nature in Nepal. Cronin is absolutely correct when he admits that of all the animals and plants in the complex ecosystem the most important for study is Man (p. 172), but nowhere in the book does he follow up with the sort of detailed studies of the Man/Land equation that characterizes his attention to the flora and fauna. His one chapter on Man (Ch. 9, "And Every Shepherd Tells His Tale") is more about one man's family affairs than about Man and Nature entwined in a disasterous Tantric-like embrace. The shepherd's tale is interesting, intriguing even, but hardly the sort of indepth look we need to fully understand what is going on between that shepherd and the resources on which he, his family, his neighbors, and all their herds, depend. Throughout the book we are told that the basic problem is "Too many people, using primitive agricultural techniques... forced to depend on the land itself for their survival" (11). Overpopulation is, obviously a basic problem in Nepal (as A.D.J. Macfarlane has so well documented in his Resources and Population: A Study of the Gurungs of Nepal, 1976, Cambridge University Press). But, as for the primitive techniques, what are the alternatives ofr these rural agro-pastoralists? More sophisticated techniques would certainly have more serious impacts -- for as long as the fossil fuel which propels many of them holds out, that is. I happen to believe that we should seek appropriate solutions to local problems by a strategy which requires, first, a thorough examination of existing and historical local techniques, including the vast array of adaptive social systems (e.g., communal enterprises and cooperative societies) which have been devised by the Nepalese to aid the farmer and the shepherd in their struggle for survival. Speaking doom may raise our consciousness about the problems, that is important, as a first step; but without offering a critical analysis of the problems to which Man is a partner, and without suggesting alternative solutions, we cannot change very much at all. We are still gathering, and in some instances beginning to apply, the requisite knowledge about the Man/Land relationship in Nepal. Perhaps soon we can begin to pull it altogether in a truly multidisciplinary and holistic natural science in which Man's roles are more fully considered, appreciated, and taken into account.

A. W. Macdonald and Anne Vergati Stahl

1979 Newar Art: Nepalese Art during the Malla Period. Warminster, Wiltshire;

England: Arts & Phillips Ltd. 153pp. U.S.\$ 32.50.

USBN No. 0 85668 056 7

Distributed in North America by International Scholarly Book Services,  
P.O.Box 555, Forest Grove, Oregon 97116 USA.

Reviewed by Bardwell L. Smith  
Carleton College

This important publication is co-authored by two well-known scholars in Nepal studies. The book is divided into three sections: (1) The Newar People, which examines the stage and its setting, the history of the Kathmandu Valley, cultural exchange with Tibet, and the Newar pantheon; (2) Newar Architecture, with attention given to the ordering of time and space, Buddhist architecture, Saivite temples in Bhaktapur, palaces, and the Newar house; and (3) Newar Painting, dealing with illuminated manuscripts, paṭa (paintings on cloth), and a concluding statement on this approach to Newar art.

As the Foreword says, "This book is an attempt to place Newar art in its social and cultural context rather than to describe and analyze individual Newar works of art. It is a cultural essay and does not intend to be comprehensive." The book includes a glossary of terms, a select bibliography, 111 black and white illustrations, and 7 color plates. This is a careful, interesting, and significant book. It deals with materials which have not heretofore received adequate attention. It is a volume which should be in every library with strong collections in South Asian art and social and cultural history.

Höfer, Andrés

1979 The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854. Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner (Khumbu Himal: Ergebnisse des Forschungsunternehmens Nepal Himalaya, Band 13/2, pp. 25-240, 215pp.) Appendices, Bibliography, Indices. (n.p.)

Reviewed by Donald A. Messerschmidt  
Washington State University

The Caste Hierarchy is a very welcome book in Nepalese studies, and brings the study of Nepalese caste to a new height of appreciation and understanding. The Muluki Ain (hereafter MA) of 1854 is the basis for caste/social interaction in Nepal today (although there have been important revisions since that date). The 640 page MA covers a host of topics. In Höfer's treatise of it, only those aspects which deal expressly with the caste hierarchy are discussed. Höfer's approach is that the law is not a "theory of caste", but "one of the ethnotheories that a particular caste society has of itself." It is a form of "common law applicable within a state territory," a "representation of an entire traditional society." Similar legal codes in India do not deal with caste to the extent and depth that the Nepalese MA does, and this is one of its distinguishing characteristics. Legal codes like the MA were designed for a variety of purposes, not the least of which, he tells us, was to solidify and define an emerging state system. Höfer calls this process the "etatisation" of society, custom and religion.

Höfer treats us to an interpretation of the MA's approach to purity/impurity, commensality, sexual relations, status, the varna model and division of labor, slavery and asceticism, ethnic group and caste, the place of natives and foreigners under the law, tolerance, the sanctioning of custom, change of caste and mobility, public authority, the role of the state, and the effects of recent (1951)

Tamangs within the hierarchy, and with the law dealing with cow killing. The bibliography lists both Nepalese and European sources. There is no general index (it needs one), but two specific indices give us indigenous terms and ethnic and caste names.

This is an important contribution to the literature on Nepalese social structure. It should be in the hands of all scholars of Hindu caste, all students of Nepalese history and society, and in every major library and specialist library.



#### INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN SOCIETY

The International Mountain Society was formally incorporated as a non-profit organization in September, 1980. Its aim is to help achieve a better balance between mountain environment, human welfare, and the development of natural resources. This task will be handled through encouragement of basic and applied interdisciplinary research throughout the mountain world, through the dissemination of knowledge and its application to the solution of mountain land-use problems and through the development of a mountain ethic amongst all sectors of society who use and appreciate mountain lands. The broad objectives will be pursued in the following ways:

- publication of a new quarterly scientific journal: MOUNTAIN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.
- periodic meetings and workshops to focus on specific mountain issues.
- the Society as a vehicle for association and exchange of ideas and experience.
- making the Society's expertise and access to information available to international, national, and regional governments and agencies, industry, conservationist institutions, and other organizations.
- contributing to the training and education of the world community at large.

#### Definition of "Mountain" for the purpose of fulfilling the Society's aims

In thinking of "mountains," it is traditional to focus on the great mountains and mountain ranges of the world: Alps, Himalaya, and Andes. For the less dramatic but more urgent interests of the Society, however, the term "mountain" should be read as synonymous with "upland." And uplands should include steeply inclined hillsides at lower elevations, even though these may not fall within the classical geographical term "mountain." Thus in many areas of the developing world our concern will often lie as much with the problems facing upland people as with the physical habitat in which they live. Consequently, our definition of mountain lands embraces northern Thailand, Philippines, Cameroun, Costa Rica and Hispaniola, for example.

It is also important to stress that a large percentage of people inhabiting the world's mountains and uplands are ethnic minorities who are under-represented and relatively powerless within their own national political structures. Even where there are no ethnic, religious or linguistic differences, hill people tend to be disadvantaged as a result of their comparative isolation and their limited access to national services, especially access to educational opportunities and markets. In a very real sense, therefore, our development of a "mountain ethic" must express a concern for ethnicity, human rights, and minority groups. This is especially necessary since a key to the future of mountain and upland people is land. And in the uplands, too often, minority people are discriminated against in terms of land, land-use, titles, and lowland law. No environmental, or resource development, policy is likely to succeed unless the upland people themselves are considered and are brought into the planning and decision-making processes at an early stage.