



# HIMALAYA, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies

Volume 2  
Number 3 *Himalayan Research Bulletin, Fall*  
1982

Article 8

Fall 1982

## Book Reviews

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### Recommended Citation

. 1982. Book Reviews. *HIMALAYA* 2(3).

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## VII. BOOK REVIEWS

\*Aris, Michael  
1982

Views of Medieval Bhutan. The Diary and Drawings of Samuel Davis 1783. London and Washington: Serindia Publications/Smithsonian Institution Press. pp. 124, illus. (62 B&W, 13 color, maps), appendix, bibliography, index. ISBN 0-906026-10-5 (Serindia); ISBN 0-87474-210-2 (Smithsonian). Price \$35.00.

Review by: Ronald M. Bernier  
University of Colorado

History is illustrated in this remarkable volume by the beautiful, highly-skilled and accurate drawings and watercolor paintings of surveyor-draftsman-soldier Samuel Davis (1760-1819). The artist was assigned by Warren Hastings to take part in a mission to Tibet and Bhutan with the Bengal Army in 1783 under the leadership of Samuel Turner. He was a young lieutenant and the first foreigner to paint the Himalayas. The records that he left for future scholars has been assembled with detective work on three continents by Michael Aris, research fellow at Wolfson College, Oxford, England and author of Bhutan: The Early History of a Himalayan Kingdom (Warminster, 1979). Visuals are illuminated by the author's concise and evocative introduction that is distilled from thorough scholarship as well as five year's experience in the employ of the government and Wangchuk royal family of Bhutan. Maps both modern and antique detail the paths of exploration and the location of monuments, while selected paintings and sculptures including the work of George Stubbs and John Flaxman underline the British origins of style and method in Davis' work, but this study is much more than mere relic or remnant of nostalgia. It is a fresh consideration of historical, political and religious developments in the Himalayan region with art as its provocative focus. It is relevant for present-day Bhutan.

The author's commentary is brief but accurate. There is special emphasis upon the pivotal role of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594-(?)1651) in the theocracy of Bhutanese government. And there is the horrific impact of the 16th Deb Raja as civil authority, Zhidar (regn. 1768-73), who forced his subjects to almost instantly rebuild the gigantic fortress capital of Tashicho Dzong in Thimpu Valley after its destruction by fire in 1772. Even rebuilding in the 1960s preserved its elaborate design. Mountains were stripped for the project, and Zhidar conquered both Sikkim and Vijayapur in violent times that followed the tumult of Gurkha expansion beyond Nepal. Tibetan aggression of c. 1620-1730 is marked by Aris as of constant concern to Bhutan, while internal strife among those who supported rival claimants to the position of Shabdrung periodically strained Bhutan as Drukya ("Land of the Thunder Dragon"). It is not surprising that most of the watercolors and engravings by Davis, plus some anonymous works along with secondary renderings by William Daniell (1769-1837), record fortresses, watchtowers and fortified bridge-houses of a type that no longer exists as barriers against invasion. There are five views of cantilevered bridges made of massive timbers on a huge scale. Like suspension bridges of chain or rope, these could be dismantled in order to bring all transport and travel to a complete halt in times of trouble. Even more impressive are batter

wall structures of great height and supposedly impregnable defense such as "The Dwelling of the Teshoo Lama, with religious Edifice, stiled Kugopea," 1800, "The Mausoleum of Teshoo Lama," 1800, "Kapta (Chapch) Castle," 1783, "The Fortress of Wangdu Phodrang Dzong," 1783. These do not duplicate Tibetan structural types. They are shown in full landscape context.

The artworks are important not only for their meticulous detail but for their occasional freedom of line ("Figures crossing a bridge over a ravine," 1783) and for the luminosity of transparent washes in the English watercolor tradition ("The village of Buxadaur," 1783). The works are drawn primarily from the Yale Center for British Art/Paul Mellon Collection, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, Her Majesty the Queen, the Asiatic Society of Bengal and private collectors including the artist's descendants and the author himself. Important engravings by James Basire from Samuel Turner, An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet (London, 1800) are used for comparison, as are quotations from Turner himself: "The castle of Chupka, or Kepta, is built about halfway up the mountain, in a bleak, but beautifully romantic situation; the mountains in its neighborhood, I judged to be the highest we had seen in Bootan" (p.76). Of the infant 4th Panchen Lama (1781-1854) he writes: "Though he was unable to speak a word, he made the most expressive signs and conducted himself with astonishing dignity and decorum" (p.24).

Captions for the finely-printed illustrations skillfully integrate the explanation of Michael Aris with quotations from Turner, William Daniell, George Bogle and others. The pictures are carefully analyzed for accuracy as well as content, with intriguing speculation on "romantic" errors in an oil painting by Tilly Kettle of c. 1775 in the Royal Collection that has been recently identified by Mildred Archer, herself a major figure in bringing the importance of British exploration art and the art of the Raj to world attention (Early Views of India: The Picturesque Journals of Thomas and William Daniell 1786-1794, London, 1980). The painting shows the 3rd Panchen Lama receiving George Bogle (1748-81) as Warren Hastings' appointed ambassador to Bhutan and Tibet during efforts to re-establish trans-Himalayan trade after disruption by the Nepal wars. It has many errors of costume and headgear, etc. to suggest that it is drawn from what Aris calls "an amalgam of Bogle's recollections of his many audiences in Bhutan and Tibet" (p.20). As such it has charm, but Views of Medieval Bhutan has much more.

In addition to important works of art that have not previously been published, this book contains historical records of great importance. Samuel Davis comes alive through lengthy extracts from his own Bhutan Journal of 1783, and the reader shares his fascination with such subjects as monastic discipline, metempsychosis, the absence of cash economy, the Zhwa-nag Black Hat dance and traditional medicine. The unusual assemblage of records that have been brought together by Michael Aris, as most erudite compiler and interpreter, concludes with a remarkable appendix: "The Abbot's Rebuke." As the only contemporary Bhutanese reference to the mission in which Samuel Davis took part, this letter by the retired head abbot Yonten Thaye (r. 1769-71) warns the regent Jigme Senge (1742-89) as incarnation of Tendzin Rabgye (1638-96) not to be distracted by the novelty of English goods and gadgetry, for "the initiate must never have relations of any sort with those who oppose the teachings . . ." (p.118). The author suggests that the rebuke took effect, for no member of the 1783 mission appears to have gained access to the regent himself. But Samuel Davis got his record, and now it is ours.

\*G. Toffin, L. Barre and C. Jest (eds.)

L'homme et la maison en Himalaya, ecologie du Nepal. (Man and the house in the Himalayas, the ecology of Nepal.). Cahiers Nepalais (no no.), Centre Regional de Publications du C.N.R.S. Meudon-Bellevue, G.R.E.C.O. Himalaya Karakorum. Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique 1981. ISBN 2-222-02749-7. 284 pages, with numerous illustrations (drawings, black & white plates, maps). Soft cover, 27-21cm.

Review by: Andras Höfer  
Universitat Heidelberg

This is an anthology of 13 papers by anthropologists and architects whose scope vary. Most of the papers deal with aspects of the construction and/or the use of the domestic space; two of them are devoted to more special themes (Toffin, Sagant). Although the book is meant as a first survey inviting to further research towards a comparative analysis yet to be done, it covers the whole range of human habitat from the lowlands up to the high mountain areas, the latter including Ladakh too. A minimum of prospective synthesis between the different (sociological, ecological, architectural, etc.) approaches is provided by G. Toffin in his introduction. The contents:

- C. Milliet-Mondon: The Tharu house in the Terai.
- M. Gaborieau: Construction and symbolism of the house in Central Nepal.
- V. Bouillier: The use of domestic space among the high castes of Central Nepal.
- G. Toffin: Urban space and religion among the Newar in the Kathmandu Valley (critical comments on Kolver's and Gutschow's theses; the role of the "royal centres").
- M. Le Port: Traditional construction technics of the Newar.
- G. Toffin, V. Barre, L. and P. Berger: The house of the untouchable Pore (Newar).
- Ph. Sagant: House, ritual and politics among the Limbu (on the ritual of "raising one's head" in the context of kinship).
- S. Majhi and C. Jest: House construction in Central Nepal (account by an inhabitant of Parsel village).
- Ph. Alirol: The habitat of transhumant pastoralists in Nepal; milk processing and everyday life on a Sherpa alpine pasture.
- C. Jest: The habitat in Dolpo (construction, housing, symbolism).
- P. Marechaux: Two houses in Nyi-Shang (Nepal) and Zanskar (Ladakh).
- P. Murdoch: Vernacular house form in Ladakh (the only contribution in English!).

Even if the reviewer concedes the difficulty of adequately summarizing descriptive accounts, rich as they are in details, the English abstracts at the end of the volume have come off too scantily. The absence of a register is a serious deficiency of the book. One must also demur to the editors' carelessness about the spelling of indigenous technical terms. The misprints exceed in number what can be considered unavoidable in such texts. Each author uses "his own" method of transliteration; many of them omit the diacritics, assumingly in order to "simplify." (Do you simplify French if you omit writing the "accents," the "cedille" or the "trema?" You don't, at least not for the reader who wants to use your data and who may have no perfect command of French to guess at once what you are driving

at. From the French, renowned for their ethnographic tradition and for the pride with which they tend their own mother tongue, one would expect more consideration to the languages of the country in which they are working.)

In spite of such shortcomings, the book is an important step ahead and a valuable product of the extensive fieldwork the French have been doing for more than two decades in the Himalayas. It provides us with a perspective which could be broadened by a symposium with international participation.

**\*Ekvall, Robert B.**

1981

The Lama Knows

Novato, California: Chandler and Sharp, 126 pp.

Review by: Nancy E. Levine  
University of California

Robert B. Ekvall's most recent book falls into the category of ethnographic novel. It is based on real events, some of which occurred during the author's eight years (between 1926 and 1941) in northeastern Tibet and follows the general pattern of two other, similar works, Tibetan Skylines (1952) and Tents Against the Sky (1954). The Lama Knows reads well simply as a novel, replete with the magic and mystery one expects to find in a story about Tibet and Tibetan religion. But it also contains much that is ethnographically useful and also lightly veiled social analyses.

The story follows one tulku, a reincarnate lama, discovered through the usual signs and portents and installed following customary procedure in a monastic center. But as a boy he rebels at monastic discipline and runs away. The monastic officials claim he has died in the attempt and produce a corpse which they burn--not the preferred way for disposal of a dead lama. Three years later a new boy tulku is found and installed in his place. Seventeen years after that, the first lama--if it is he, and Ekvall never affirms this, only gradually recounts evidence to confirm it--reappears mysteriously. The rest of the story is about his attempts to reestablish his identity as a lama and possibly also to regain his former and rightful place in the monastery.

Prior to the story, Ekvall provides a brief introduction in which he sums up key Tibetan cosmological ideas, simplified for the general reader, notions about reincarnate lamas and their role in Tibetan society and the importance of language and oratory in attaining and sustaining power.

Underlying all this is an account of how Tibetan religion and religious establishments are pervaded by politics. This begins with the selection of a reincarnate lama. Both lamas in the story came from local chiefly or noble families and through their position were able to bring their families' subjects as worshippers and supporters of the monastery through their offerings. For example, as Ekvall writes about the second lama:

Thus the fortunes of two great domains--Thsa Ma Ru and Gurdu—are linked in his person. His sister has been newly married to the king of Ngawa and that marriage has added a third party to a combination of growing power and influence (p.21).

The reappearance of the first lama threatens to disrupt this alliance, aiming for "control of the politics of all Amdo" (p.28). In fact, it causes a schism which eventually "splits all Amdo into two increasingly hostile camps" (p.106). This has occurred even where the lama and his monastic establishment have no formal role in local politics.

The story also draws attention to the problem of differentiating true and false incarnations. One point where the story fails to speak for itself is in making understandable the hostility between nomads and agriculturalists. Another problem is the multiplicity of names, two or more for the same person, which makes the story difficult to follow.

Ekvall's work on northeast Tibet is invaluable for the cultural study of Tibet, but it is scattered across numerous slim books and articles, many out of print or otherwise inaccessible. A compilation of his more important publications would be highly desirable, but probably is not feasible, with the economics of publishing today.

**\*Peters, Larry**

1981

**Ecstasy and Healing in Nepal.**

Malibu: Undena Publications. 179 pp.

Review by: Linda Stone  
Washington State University

Ecstasy and Healing in Nepal is a rich and well-written account of shamanism among Tamangs of Boudha in Nepal's Kathmandu Valley. Peters' work follows in the tradition of scholars like Turner (1967, 1969), and Torrey (1972) who have emphasized the shaman's role as psychotherapist and the dimension of social conflict in illnesses treated by shamans. Peters' Tamang study is very interesting in its own right, but Ecstasy excels in its analysis of the Tamang material with thorough reference to the literature on shamanism and on psychoanalytic approaches to possession and trance.

The book provides a good contextual background for the author's analysis. An opening chapter places Tamang shamanism in cross-cultural perspective. In a few pages, Peters succinctly reviews the major issues in the anthropological and psychological studies of shamanism that are relevant to his own work. This is followed by a discussion of the social and cultural place of Tamangs within the



ethnically diverse kingdom of Nepal. A later chapter gives an overview of indigenous Nepalese medical systems. By this time the reader is acquainted not only with Nepal and the Tamangs, but also with the way in which Tamang shamanism fits into the broader picture of Nepalese medicine, both in its traditional forms and under the influence of modern medical development.

The last two chapters and the Conclusion mark the heart of Peters' study. The first of these chapters is about trance. Here, Peters gives an excellent discussion of the role and meaning of trance and spirit possession in the arduous training of Tamang shamans. This training is analyzed first as a series of psychotherapeutic techniques and secondly in terms of the structure of the dominant cultural symbols through which an individual is ritually transformed into a shaman. The next chapter discusses the Tamang shaman as psychotherapist, a discussion centered around a case study. The Conclusion compares the use of trance and possession in the shaman's initiation with the use of these same mental states in healing rituals. Using concepts developed in Van Gennep's (1908) study of rites of passage, Peters concludes that both the shaman's initiation and the healing rituals can be studied as life-crisis rituals. He suggests that both are therapeutic processes, which, although differing in their purposes, have significant functional and structural similarities.

Peters relies primarily on information from one shaman, Bhirendra. With this informant, Peters adds a special touch to his book by including discussion of Bhirendra's individual personality. The result is that Peters' shaman is a very realistically drawn and believable character, one that will be immediately recognized by others who have worked in Nepal. Far from shrouding this person in a shamanic mystique, or painting him as the wise old man of Shangrila, Peters describes Bhirendra as "a bit of a scoundrel" (p.41) though not without his compassionate side. Thus the reader is drawn into the very human, and often amusing, tactics of this individual, which considerably livens the discussion of Bhirendra's role as a shaman.

Much is made in this book of the fact that Peters himself studied as an apprentice under the shaman Bhirendra and experienced trance states in the course of his training. The author's attempt to so gain an inside view of the shaman's experience is the focus of Jacques Maquet's introduction to the book; and Peters devotes the third chapter to an account of his experiences. Here Peters describes his apprenticeship as an "experiential approach" in fieldwork, an approach outlined by Maquet (1978). Peters states:

Because my research involved the study of both a religious system and the trance states which are its most salient characteristic, an attempt was made to experience these, believing that a more complete knowledge would result if I experienced what my informants said they did.

Peters' account of his trance experiences is, on the one hand, refreshing, in that he describes the whole ordeal with utmost objectivity, admission of his own cultural biases, and confession that this experiential approach did not lead him to "become" either a shaman or a Tamang. Much like his discussion of the character of Bhirendra, one feels that Peters' perception of his trance experience is not clouded with naive romanticism. On the other hand, Peters' own experience with trance, as such, does not in my view assist in our understanding of Tamang shamans or

Tamang ecstatic states. In and of itself, the experience does not add new information or seemingly influence Peters' interpretation of his other data. It is already known that trance states and hallucinations similar to those Peters describes from his own experience, can be induced in some individuals through the use of rhythmic drum beating, rattle shaking, etc. Peters' experiences do not illuminate our understanding of trance states any further than this. He did not, for instance, become possessed by spirits or undergo the shaman's therapeutic mastering of a spirit that initially makes one ill or "made." But more important is that, in my opinion, Peters' trance would not in any case necessarily give us special insight into Tamang trance. On what basis could we claim that an anthropologist's trance, no matter how fully it is carried out in a Tamang setting, will accurately reflect the inner experiences of a Tamang on his way to becoming a shaman? Peters demonstrates that he is well aware of the cultural gulf separating himself from his informants; but he does not deal with the theoretical and epistemological problems that his experiential approach would raise.

What Peters' apprenticeship does do, and this is also acknowledged by Peters (p.53), is open the way for excellent rapport with his shaman informants and particularly with his guru, Bhirendra. By presenting himself as a genuine student and potential initiate, he gained the trust of Tamang shamans in a way that no other field approach would have allowed. Peters' unique social position with the Tamang shamans is reflected in the high quality of his data and, from this perspective, his experiential method was indeed bold and very appropriate to his study.

One problem I see in Peters' book concerns his use of the case study in his interpretation of Tamang shamans as psychotherapists who resolve social conflict. The case involves a woman who becomes caught in a conflict between her husband and the shaman, Bhirendra, who is her own brother. The conflict concerns a loan of money that Bhirendra has persistently failed to pay back to his brother-in-law. The woman suffers from divided loyalties. She has problems with her husband and receives signs of rejection from him. The woman then becomes ill and summons Bhirendra to cure her. Contrary to normal practice, the husband refuses to attend the ceremony or to pay for it. At one point during the ceremony, the woman, in possession by a spirit, "attacks" Bhirendra by screaming out that he is no good and powerless, and by spitting on a sacred area. This spirit is then exorcised. Following the ceremony, the woman is not only cured of her illness but now she is getting along very well with her husband. Everyone claims that the possessing spirit, and not the woman herself, was responsible for the attack on Bhirendra.

Peters' interprets the woman's outburst as a cathartic venting of her frustration against her brother. It was a socially safe move since the woman was possessed at the time and so no one could hold her personally responsible. At the same time, Peters suggests, the woman's "denouncing" of her brother during the ceremony allows her to gain the favor of her husband. In the end, the woman "... had neatly escaped the precarious situation of having to make a choice between two parties to whom she owed loyalty. . . " (p.140).

Peters may very well be right in his interpretation, although it is somewhat difficult to see how the husband could have been effectively moved by his wife's behavior, given that he, along with all the others, adamantly insisted that it was the spirit and not the woman herself who had insulted Bhirendra. What disturbs



me, however, is that this case is used to illustrate one of Peters' main points: that shamans heal by resolving social conflict. In the case he discusses, the root of the conflict is not resolved. The loan is still unpaid; the tension and conflict between the woman's husband and her brother remains active. Beyond the rapprochement with her husband (which may, under the circumstances, be temporary), it is difficult to see how the woman's social position in this drama has in fact been improved. Yet this case is used to support Peters' claim that "The shaman's role in Tamang society is to treat such illness by resolving the stressful social interrelationships that cause them" (p.148). By Peters' interpretation, the shaman's ceremony can be said to have resolved the tension between the woman and her husband. But this case also illustrates that the Nepalese shaman is somewhat limited in the extent to which he can actually resolve social conflict, or the extent to which he can alter the behavior and attitudes of a whole social network within which individual illnesses may be enmeshed. In any event, his conclusions on the Tamang shamans would appear to give them more power than the case study warrants. In addition, in this particular case, it is evidently the patient, and not the shaman, who plays the active role in manipulating the ritual to bring about the "resolve." Peters reports that Bhirendra himself seemed uncomfortable about the incident of his sister's attack.

Despite these minor points of criticism, Ecstasy and Healing in Nepal stands as a lucid description and adroit analysis of the social, cultural and psychological dimensions of Tamang shamanism. The book will be of interest to a wide audience, including scholars of Nepal and South Asia, students of shamanism, medical anthropologists, and especially to those who would like to see a superb combination of anthropological and psychological approaches to non-Western forms of trance, possession and therapy.

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\*Shepherd, Gary

1982

Life Among the Magars. Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press. 269 pp., color B&W photographs, appendices. ISBN 0-88312-921-3

Available from: Sahayogi Press, Tripuresor, Kathmandu, Nepal. NCRs.100., or from, International Museum of Cultures, 7500 West Camp Wisdom Road, Dallas, TX 75326 USA, n.p.

Review by: Donald Messerschmidt  
SECID/RCUP (Kathmandu)

Life Among the Magars is a highly personal account of one man and his family's experiences, and their observations and perspectives, on hill Magar life in central Nepal. Gary Shepherd came to Nepal in 1969 to work with the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) language program (including Bible translation). In 1979, based on a decade in the hills, he was persuaded to document his observations on Magar language and village life. He has done all of this, and is clearly an astute observer and a good linguist.

The book is a fascinating and insightful look into the life of a common, isolated village in Tanahu District. I review it here at some length, because I think it is an important statement about common affairs in a common village; these Magars, their life, and their hardships are typical of the small, poor people of Nepal, and Shepherd's knowledge of their life and times is admirable and, I think, exceptional for an outsider. But in reviewing it I am also compelled to address both its good points and its bad, for it has both mighty strengths and mighty weaknesses.

... Magars has some strong points by which I recommend it (with caution) to a general audience and to Himalayanists. Shepherd's descriptions of daily life, of farming and hunting, and of the myths and legends he was told, are quite good -- descriptive mainly, with no theoretical analysis whatsoever. His chapter on "Community Development Problems" is especially insightful and should be read and re-read by everyone working in the development field, or involved in planning or carrying out government work in the hills! It gives considerable credibility and support to my own professional opinion that the villagers themselves, given the opportunity to speak and act in their own way, are the best judges of what will and will not succeed and how best to manage development inputs. Shepherd describes the local decision-making process with demonstrable insight and understanding. In the following account, "Daje" is the name of the leader of the village panchayat meeting:

Generally speaking, the villagers cannot do all the things we would like to see them do--at least not all at once--so they need to have at least some idea of the alternatives available to them. But as soon as an outside expert, whether foreign or Nepali, attends such a meeting to give counsel or advice, the whole decision-making process is likely to be derailed. The reason is that the outsider is usually not sensitive to the dynamics of village decision-making.

It may be different in other parts of Nepal, but in Arakhala, village decisions are made something like this: Daje, the leader, brings up the topic and itemizes briefly the alternatives and their relative difficulties and advantages. In doing so, Daje will be careful to be completely impartial, and by no means will he publicly reveal his own ideas, even if they are well known.

Then, if some honored person is present, Daje will feel obligated to ask him to express his opinion. This is only a courtesy. At this point in the meeting no leader or honored person should ever express his opinion . . . The most he should ever do is just to clarify some fact that is unclear to them. Then the floor is thrown open for discussion. Everyone is invited to speak his mind and express his opinion, but in fact, no one who is in a position of leadership will express an opinion. To do so would shut the discussion down immediately, because no one with less authority would feel like saying anything to the contrary in public.

If an honored person makes an opinion statement early in the meeting, he can be fairly certain that the village decision will concur with his opinion . . . a face-saving device to appease him . . . later on nothing will ever come of it . . . When there is no action taken on a decision, outsiders commonly are puzzled, and they put the blame on poor leadership or something else. It seldom occurs to them that a resolution duly passed in a meeting could actually mean "decision aborted" to the local people present.

The social dynamics of decision-making require that all non-leaders have the first opportunity to voice their opinions freely . . . This has two purposes, it seems: first, the feelings of the public are fully aired and the popular support for and viability of the various alternatives are thoroughly tested. Secondly, leaders can sit back and nurture their own ideas, altering their own positions without public humiliation, which vacillation would involve. After the non-leaders have had their say, those with a certain amount of authority will begin tactfully to express their support for one alternative or another.

. . . Only when no one else has anything left to say will Daje begin to speak. . . he starts by recalling each of the important points that have been made and giving praise to their logic and value. When this is finished, he will weigh the comparative values and bring forth his suggested solution. Only if Daje has missed a point will anyone say anything to the contrary. Daje's solution will be accepted and passed by all. It will be a solution that brings forth action and support from the villagers.

If Daje has failed to convince everyone in his speech, the consensus will be a false one. Most likely no one will disagree at the meeting, but when it comes time for action, the dissenters will refuse to join

in. Then it becomes necessary to call another meeting in order to air grievances or complaints and to reach a decision that is truly unanimous and that accommodates everyone. (pp.247-249)

Shepherd also has salient observations and recommendations about the problems of deforestation in the Nepal Mahabharat Range in Chapter 12. This work is based on an earlier 54-page paper entitled "Deforestation in the Mahabharat: An Investigation of the Economics of Arakhala," printed by the author in 1978.

Now for the book's weaknesses. It has some glaring faults, particularly from an academic perspective. As a homey, armchair description of Magar life it has a certain appeal; as a piece salted with an exceptional insight into economics and decision-making, it is superb; but as an objective treatise, it falls down. I should say from the outset that the author does not intend this book as an academic treatise. He is not an anthropologist, and does not pretend to be--although he is superb at some forms of anthropological observation, and he is, in his own right, a good linguist. But I was especially turned off by his not always very subtle mystic, sometimes "do-good" attitude. I cannot accept, for example, either the title or the premise of Chapter 1: "Angel Tracks" . . . And I am sure that many readers will be put off by some of the changes in village life actively promoted by the author. His suggestion, and their following, of all-out bounty hunting of monkeys is questionable. His interventionist approach to change in other ways is also hard to accept. Whereas the introduction of income- and food-generating projects with silkworms and new varieties of livestock, for example, are laudable, his overt promotion of cultural and religious change, in the chapter entitled "No More Sacrifice" is discomfoting.

For years I had been afraid that if fundamental changes were not effected in Arakhala's economy, a calamity would surely befall our friends there . . . it came far quicker than I expected. First, they had a year of too much rain. Their corn didn't receive enough sunshine to mature the ear and so the harvest was about half of normal. This was followed by drought the next year. Thus the stage was set for the most unusual event ever known to occur in Arakhala panchayat.

"It's strange, it's weird," Pegleg thought as he puzzled over the echoing of the drums in the valley far below. "It couldn't be a marriage or a procession for the Five-Blood sacrifice again, could it? What has gone wrong? I heard the drums only a few days ago . . . last week, too and the week before that, and the week before that . . . What in the world is happening down there?" he mused from his lonely mountainside home.

The next time Pegleg came down to Arakhala he learned the amazing news: Lower Arakhala was doing Five-Blood sacrifices--every single house! . . . That was unheard of; they must be really desperate . . .

How fearful, how desperate they were can be gauged by the cost of these sacrifices. Tulya's bull alone was worth nine hundred rupees. The money they expended for the Five-Blood sacrifice would have fully fed their family for four months.

No sooner had the drums quit beating on the last Five-Blood sacrifice than a drought set in . . .

But that was just the beginning. The drought had not passed before measles, that dread of every parent, made its appearance. From child to child it spread. More sacrifices . . .

But the gods were still thirsty. Like an alcoholic's desire which grows with each drink of whiskey, it seemed that their gods would never be satisfied. Things went from bad to worse.

Before the last child had died of the measles, an epidemic of a pernicious typhoid-like diarrhea swept across the hills. Again more sacrifices, more sacrifices, more sacrifices . . .

(Finally) Tulya had come up to get medicine for his dying children, but we found out later that he fed it to them only once . . .

He was sorry now that he hadn't believed us; he didn't want us to hold it against him. That was what he probably wanted to say to me as we stood chatting on Daje's open veranda. But he couldn't say it; that was too direct. As the conversation dragged on, another way to express himself came to Tulya. Finally he blurted out, "My father said, 'No more sacrifices'; he's not going to appease the gods any more. I'll never give sacrifices again either!" he vowed with a quavering voice. (pp.228-232)

On local religious predilections, beliefs, and superstitions, the author's biases are glaringly and offensively evident. Readers who seek the normally circumspect objectiveness of a tactful, neutral observer, or the carefully measured and culturally sensitive action of an unbiased fieldworker, will be offended by some of the author's attitudes, remarks and interpretations.

I recommend this book only to the careful and critical reader who can weed out the chaff (e.g., the subjectiveness, the zeal) from the good grain (the rich insightful description of the daily rigors of a difficult way of life).

I had hoped that this book would be a Himalayan complement to William and Charolette Wiser's classic, Behind Mud Walls, now in its umpteenth edition. Behind Mud Walls is written by missionary-anthropologists and is based on years of critical but objectively insightful observation of life in a north Indian village. Unfortunately, Shepherd's . . . Magars is not in the same league.



## Comment on Survey Research Data: Misuse or Misunderstanding?

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The last issue of the Research Bulletin (Vol. II, No. 2, 1982) published a review of The Use and Misuse of Social Science Research in Nepal (Kathmandu, 1979), a book which has attracted the attention of several scholars. One of the major claims of the authors--Campbell, Shrestha, and Stone--in the book is that the prevalence of knowledge about the family planning is grossly underreported in the 1976 Nepal Fertility Study (NFS). This, they argue, is due to the application of survey research techniques which are inappropriate for Nepal. Campbell, et. al., instead, used anthropological (probing) techniques to establish their claims.

Admittedly, questions about which particular research instruments under which conditions are most appropriate is far from being resolved--not to mention problems related to the biases and orientations of investigators. At the same time, it should be pointed out that more often than not some fundamental differences inherent in separate undertakings tend to be overlooked in the debate. Such differences have a great deal to do with accounting for the presumed superiority of one research instrument over another. It is, therefore, not surprising that different sets of results turn out to be less puzzling once the respective findings are put in an appropriate context.

Recently, the FP/MCH (Family Planning/Maternal and Child Health) Project of Nepal evaluated the claims made in The Use and Misuse. Its findings, reported in Nepal FP/MCH Data Analysis: Final Report (Kathmandu, 1981), emphasize three major criticisms of Campbell et al.

First, Campbell et al. included over 40 percent males in their sample, whereas the NFS study was restricted to women of child-bearing age (15-49). This is the fundamental difference in the two undertakings. Males are more likely to be exposed to modernizing influences than females, especially in a society such as Nepal where sex stratification is a significant factor. The samples from these two studies are therefore not comparable.

Second, the data reported by Campbell et al. is based on an areal sample which cannot be taken as representative of all Nepal. They included only three hill villages, two of them located near urban areas and the third located in an area where experimental family planning programs have been carried out over the past decade. These villages thus received proportionately more family planning "inputs" (such as mass media and family planning workers) than would be the case in a typical rural village. Hence, it is not surprising to find a higher level of contraceptive knowledge in those three villages than in the areas samples by the NFS throughout Nepal.

The third point pertains to the rate of increase of family planning knowledge. Even if the data reported by Campbell et al. were assumed to be representative of Nepal, an evaluation of their findings in the context of the NFS data does not

reveal significantly different results. The following example will illustrate this point. Campbell et al. found that the level of knowledge of family planning in their study villages increased by 14 percent after their research assistants engaged in anthropological probing. This 14 percent can be considered a "correction factor" for possible underreporting in the NFS data. Since the overall knowledge of family planning as reported in the NFS data is 22 percent, we can multiply it by Campbell et al.'s 14 percent correction factor to obtain  $.22 \times .14 = .03$ . Thus, the NFS data need to be inflated by 3 percent, raising the overall level of family planning knowledge to 25 percent—not significantly different from the 22 percent reported by the NFS.

In conclusion, as much as the authors of The Use and Misuse of Social Science Research in Nepal try to critically examine some aspects of family planning information collected by the NFS through survey research techniques, it is obvious that they have overlooked fundamental differences in study designs. Furthermore, they have failed to properly evaluate the implications of their own findings in the context of the NFS results. The FP/MCH Project's recent evaluation suggests that the evidence regarding family planning information as presented by Campbell et al. is as misleading as it is informative. Analysts should therefore exercise more caution before jumping to conclusions about the validity of the NFS data on this matter.