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## Book Reviews

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Jean-Francois Bodremez (ed.).

1986

Les collines du Népal Central, Ecosystèmes, structures sociales et systèmes agraires. Vol. I: Paysages et Sociétés dans les collines du Népal. Vol. II: Milieux et activités dans un village népalais. Paris: Institut National de las Recherche Agronomique, 1986. Vol. I, 182 pp., Vol. II, 190 pp. Numerous diagrams, ink-drawings, black and white photographs.

The two volumes of "The Hills of Central Nepal" contain independent contributions by 17 authors, agronomists, ecologists, geographers and anthropologists. As pointed out in the introduction, the publication has resulted from a multidisciplinary (thus not interdisciplinary in the strict sense of the term, as it seems) project focused on the relationship between the ecosystem and the social system, with particular stress on the rationality of behavior in man's interaction with his environment.

Volume I deals with wider areas to the south of the Ganesh Himal: 1. Natural environment: relief, climate, soils, vegetation. 2. Population groups of the Ankhu Khola-Trisuli region: short ethnography, history, religions. 3. A survey of agricultural systems and methods in 16 villages. 4. A typology of agro-pastoral production as determined by altitude and population pressure. 5. Local and regional exchange processes, such as freelance trade, market-orientated trade, wage-labor, peasant-blacksmith relations, etc.

Volume II is devoted to one village, Salme, in Nuwakot district: 1. The forest of Salme: structure, biomass and production. 2. Traditional forestry and the use of forest products. 3. Demography and ethnography of the Tamang village of Salme (social and political organization, religion, housing). 4. The agricultural potential of the Salme area.

The scope and level of reflexion of the contributions vary. It has to be borne in mind, however, that the book presents the results of the first survey of the area. The data on ecology in particular are valuable.

No index, no general bibliography of the sources cited, and no English summary. Two map supplements.

András Höfer

Thomas E. Fricke.

1986

Himalayan Households: Tamang Demography and Domestic Processes. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press. xiv, 227 pp. 2 appendices, bibliography, index. \$49.95 cloth.

This book, based on the author's 1984 dissertation, "And Another to Plough the Fields . . . Economy, Demography, and the household in a Tamang Village of North Central Nepal" (see Himalayan Research Bulletin V.2/3:39), addresses issues of ecological adaptation and population growth in a Tamang village in the Nepal Himalayas. Fricke proceeds with his analysis of the interactions among the environment, population processes, and social structure from "the perspective of the version of cultural ecology presented by John Bennett" (see The Ecological Transition: Cultural Anthropology and Human Adaptation. New

York: Pergamon, 1976). He attempts to describe the processes that encourage population growth in a mountain community in Nepal, focussing on the annual subsistence cycle, the demographic processes of fertility and population expansion, and the household development cycle.

The choice of Timling as a research site reflects Fricke's conviction that the interaction of culture, behavior, and environment can be most easily examined in marginal environments where human labor is the most important means of extracting a living from the local ecology. The village of Timling lies at an elevation of 6,500 feet, four or five days walk north of the market town of Trisuli. The analysis, which focuses on households as the principle units of social structure, and as the loci of production, consumption, and reproduction. Data was collected during six months of field work during 1981 in a village of 132 households with a total population of 639 individuals. Economic surveys were taken from 30 randomly chosen households, and life histories from 50 household heads. The validity of his arguments rests heavily upon the quality of the data and Fricke discusses his research difficulties candidly and in some detail.

Timling is "poised at the threshold of a great crisis," (see pages 2, 188, and 193) and population growth, according to Fricke, is the "key variable" causing structural change (3, 188). He argues that Timling's population cannot be supported by the "subsistence strategies" which characterize the current village and household economies, and, as a consequence, the area suffers frequent shortfalls in food production. He attributes the impending crisis to the logic of Timling's adaptive strategy of economic diversification which encourages women to bear as many children as possible (190, 193, 196). Fricke's account portrays a steadily expanding population that can no longer respond to its growth through the opening of new land, the planting of new crops (e.g. potatoes), or the adoption of additional economic strategies (pasturing yak in high pastures). In his view, the people of Timling have now reached a point beyond which they cannot subsist without selling their labor at a disadvantage in the market place. This, he points out, is the direct but ironic result of their adaptive strategy that encourages population growth.

How does Timling compare to other similarly-situated Himalayan villages? Is the situation facing Timling different than that facing other villages in North-Central Nepal? The principal features of Timling's economic structure cited by Fricke as responsible for its current situation are common to most villages in the Himalayas. Indeed, Fricke notes that "most of these processes have been commented on by other researchers in villages throughout Nepal" (199). Economic diversification, for example, is common of the populations throughout the hills and mountains of Nepal (see for example Michael Vinding, "Making a Living in the Nepal Himalayas: The Case of the Thakalis of Mustang District," Contributions to Nepalese Studies, 12.1:1-55). Similarly, households are the common units of production, consumption, and distribution among most groups throughout Nepal. What is striking about Timling is that the village appears to be relatively better off than many others in the Himalayas. Timling has considerably more land per capita (.654 acres) than the average in Nepal (.427 acres) and more than three times the average for villages in similar ecological zones (.247 acres). Furthermore, as Fricke illustrates, Timling's fertility rate is lower and mortality rate higher, than the average for Nepal. This results in an estimated rate of population increase of 1.2% annually versus 2.1% for Nepal as a whole (195). Relatively speaking, Timling's population is not rapidly expanding (49), and we might well wonder, instead, why Timling's fertility is as low as it is (3). (Fricke addresses the question of how the fertility rate is maintained so low but unfortunately his data on breastfeeding is insufficient to convincingly establish his argument concerning lactational infecundability [108]). Given more comparative data, we might better focus on what makes Timling's crisis less extreme than elsewhere in the Himalayas. Population growth is unquestionably a significant factor pushing Himalayan populations toward a crisis but the presence of population growth alone does not help us understand differences among adaptive responses. How are we to evaluate Fricke's claim that where environmental risk is high the security value of children will also be high, when it appears that the security value of

children (as reflected by a higher fertility) is higher where the environmental risk is lower (in the Terai and lower hills of Nepal). This requires further explanation.

Fricke acknowledges that change comes from a combination of external and internal factors, but his assumption that population growth is the most important cause of change obscures the intervention of external events in Timling's economy, and fails to explain differences in adaptation among mountain populations in central Nepal. One would like to know more about previous patterns of seasonal or permanent migration, trade with Tibet, etc. For example, Fricke mentions the trade of grain for salt with Tibet prior to 1959 but he gives us no further details. If, as he claims, the economy of Timling has never been organized to produce a marketable surplus (61), what was the basis of the pre-1959 trade with Tibet? Did the people of Timling only trade for enough salt to meet local needs or did they participate in a wider network, first exchanging grain for salt in Tibet and then trading salt for other goods further to the south?

Fricke's assertion that "the study of a people's way of life must finally be a study of process" (2) raises a central issue facing ethnography; how to understand, measure, and portray process based on data collected at one historical point in time? Fricke concludes "in the absence of detailed historical information we can only infer the long-term adaptive processes that have characterized Timling's adaptation" (193). He relies upon population models to make statements about trends and processes in Timling. This approach suggests interesting patterns but its utility is limited. The data can neither prove nor disprove the predictions of the models; it can merely demonstrate its consistency with the models' predictions.

Fricke's descriptive study gives us greater empirical depth and suggests several important avenues for further research. We need additional studies like this in remote areas of the Himalayas.

William F. Fisher

Bernhard Kölver and Hemraj Sakya.

1985

Documents from the Rudravarna-Mahavihara, Patan. /Vol./1. Sales and mortgages. Introduction, edition, translation. Nepalica /series no. 1/1. Sant Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1985. 281 pp. Numerous plates, including the facsimiles of documents. ISBN 3-88280-023-2.

A critical edition of 60 palm-leaf documents in Sanskrit intermingled with Newari, and stemming from the period between Nepal Samvat 100 and 899 (10th - 18th century A.D.). The transliterated originals and their annotated translations are preceded by an excellent introduction of 70 pages giving a palaeographic description, examining the formalism of deeds, the landownership rights, the contracting parties and the administration, and the economic background (taxes, compulsory labor, right of cultivation, position of tenants, etc.), along with three appendices (coinage; names and titles; place names). A further appendix is devoted to some unverified documents. Bibliography. Word index, subject index. In the review copy, pages 181, 188-189, 192-193 and 196 are missing.

András Höfer

Ulrike Müller.

1984

Die Ländlichen Newar-Siedlungen im Kathmandu-Tal. Eine vergleichende Untersuchung sozialer und ökonomischer Organisationsformen der Newar. /Rural Newar settlements in the Kathmandu Valley. A Comparative Analysis of forms of Newar social and economic organization/. Giessener Geographische Schriften (published and edited by the Geographisches Institut of the Justus Liebig University of Giessen, R.R.G.), Heft 56. Giessen, 1984. 181 pp. Numerous plans, maps, diagrams and black and white photographs.

The aim of the author, a geographer who also makes use of a great deal of ethnographic sources, is to examine the Newar rural settlements from a socio-political point of view. The method chosen derives from the concept of the "géographie humaine," and the Newar are thus treated as "a group sharing in a common way of life, related to a certain region." The introduction, devoted to problems of theory and method, is followed by a chapter describing the historical development and contemporary structure of settlements. The next chapter focuses on the caste hierarchy, the family, and the guthi organization. The core of the book, chapter 4, deals with the agricultural production (land tenure, farm-structure, land use, etc.), the tertiary sector (crafts, trade and private services), and infrastructural problems (education, health care, public service, traffic and transport). In conclusion, the rural settlements are shown to be both socially and economically relatively "intact." Traditional organizations and value-orientation, such as "the spatial realization of religious concepts," provide security within the fold of traditional economy; they are, with the sole exception of "caste barriers," no impediment to the Newar "to react flexibly to economic stimuli /originally/ alien to him." The main factors limiting the development of a market-economy are, besides caste, the lack of capital and a poor infrastructure.

The plans, in color with German-English legends, showing the spatial distribution of castes, ownership rights in land, and the different types of land use, provide particularly useful information for future research. Most of the place names and indigenous terms are given in correct transliteration. English summary on pp. 164-168.

András Höfer

Manis Kumar Raha and Satya Narayan Mahato.

1985

The Kinnaurese of the Himalayas. Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India. 371 pp. 4 appendices, bibliography, 10 plates. 293 rupees, cloth.

This study of the inhabitants of Kinnaur District, Himachal Pradesh, was conducted as part of the broad based project "The Himalayan Border Area Studies" of the Anthropological Survey of India. Its objectives were 1) to examine the nature of ecological adaptation to the Himalayan environment, 2) to understand the socio-cultural implications of being located between major nations and civilizations, 3) to monitor trends of socio-economic changes since independence, 4) to study variations of cultures between three different eco-zones and altitudes of the Great Himalayas.

The results are based on a total of twelve months of research conducted during the three summers of 1970-72. Three multi-ethnic villages, one in each of three different ecological zones of Himachal Pradesh were chosen as loci for the study. The three villages included one high-altitude village at 11,000 feet above sea-level in a cultural area



characterized by the authors as one dominated by Buddhism, a low altitude village at 7,500 feet in Zone II dominated by Hinduism, and a third village at 9,500 in Zone III where the authors found a mixture of Hinduism and Buddhism.

The Kinnaurese, (also called Kinner, or Kinnaura), residing at altitudes varying from 6,000 to 14,000 feet in Kinnaur district in northeastern Himachal Pradesh, are not a single homogenous population, but are composed of a number of groups. The authors note that while the Kinnaurese are a scheduled tribe, some of the sub-divisions of the area's population have been designated as scheduled castes (see page 135). Their discussion of this issue in the chapter on social structure helps to clarify this potential confusion. As described by the authors, the cultural pattern of these multiethnic villages is distinct from the plains and from other areas of the western Himalayas. Among the groups resident in the area, Rajput (also known as Khas or Kanet) and Koli are numerically dominant. The Koli, a scheduled caste, are weavers, agriculturalist, and leather workers. Low-status Lohar (iron and silver smiths), Badhi (carpenters and masons), and Nangalu (basket makers) are few in number. Rajputs and Kolis are usually found in all villages. Lohars and Badhis are also generally found in all villages but dominate none, while the Nangalu are found only in lower Kinnaur. Of the study population 72% were Rajputs, 24% Koli and the rest belong to the other ethnic groups.

The material is conventionally divided into sections on economic structure, social structure, political structure, and religious structure. The topic of change, though it is mentioned frequently and appears in all the chapter titles, is addressed only superficially. By far, the greatest emphasis of the descriptive text, which is cast in the ethnographic present of 1970-72, is placed on social structure.

As a comprehensive work on a little-studied Himalayan population, this is a welcome addition to the descriptive literature.

William F. Fisher

Gérard Toffin.

1984

Société et religion chez le Néwar du Népal. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1984. ISBN 2-222-03468-X. 668 pages, numerous plates and figures.

Toffin's "Society and Religion among the Newars" is the second comprehensive ethnography after "The Newars" by G.S. Nepali (1965). The author, who lists 20 previous publications of his on various aspects of Newar culture, draws on his own fieldwork, but in order to evaluate the data in a historical perspective he also resorts to older, both Western and (mainly translations of) indigenous, sources.

The first part is devoted to kinship, village politics and administrative and life-cycle rituals as observed in Pyangaon village. The second part examines the institution of the guthi in its setting provided by kinship and settlement structure in the rural area of Thecho. The following parts deal with an urban settlement, namely Panauti, to the southeast of the Kathmandu Valley. This ancient capital of a small kingdom is treated as a local model of the essentially urban Newar society. Part 3 analyses the caste hierarchy, in particular its religious base, economic framework and the political institutions (both traditional and modern) connected with it; further chapters are devoted to subjects such as social mobility, the internal structure of castes, marriage and family. In part 4, Toffin attempts a detailed presentation of Newar religion, with emphasis on Hinduism, comprising its historical origins and development, its pantheon (from the great gods up to lineage divinities), festivals, Newar Tantrism, daily religious practices, astrology, sorcery and traditional healing.

A "Conclusion" summarizes Toffin's main theses. One of them is that the formative period of the Newar "ethnos" dates back to the time when, as a consequence of Muslim invasions, the Kathmandu Valley was cut off from Indian influences (p. 589). Another thesis emphasizes that religion, as a "system of beliefs and values", pervades all spheres of social action in that it provides both the infrastructure and super-structure. This is particularly true, we are told, of the caste hierarchy. Toffin contends (against Dumont) the genuineness of Newar caste hierarchy and maintains that the castes are simultaneously "the ideological representation and the mover of socio-economic life", provided they are guaranteed as such by the royal power (pp. 370, 599).

The ethnographic material is rich; the data on each model locality are analyzed comparatively through references to Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur; and the author tries his best (here and there to the detriment of conciseness) to make the book accessible also to those who are not closely acquainted with the Indian background. There are a few mistakes with regard to etymology; the number of misprints in the transliteration of indigenous terms and bibliographical references does not exceed the amount which is unavoidable in such a voluminous publication. In sum, Toffin's courageous effort to treat such a complex matter in a monograph deserves admiration, independently of what philologists, historians, and anthropologists specializing in Newar culture and/or in the theory of caste society might perhaps find objectionable in his approach.

Exhaustive indexes and a bibliography of the sources used. Unfortunately, no English summary.

András Höfer