



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

Volume 8
Number 1 *Himalayan Research Bulletin*

Article 6

1988

Book Reviews

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Recommended Citation

. 1988. Book Reviews. *HIMALAYA* 8(1).

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya/vol8/iss1/6>

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BOOK REVIEWS

Stephen E. Batchelor
1987

The Tibet Guide. London: Wisdom Publications.
466 pp. 188 maps and diagrams, 3 tables, and illustrations. £13.95
paperback.

The Tibet Guide by Stephen Batchelor is the latest of a number of guidebooks that have appeared over the last few years, since Tibet has been open, more generally, to western travellers. The year 1986 saw the publication of Elizabeth Booze's A Guide to Tibet, closely followed by Michael Buckley's and Robert Strauss's Tibet: A Travel Survival Kit.

In these works some balance has to be struck between various aims, such as the description of traditional cultural sites, explanations of Tibetan history and Buddhism, accounts of nature, general life, recent political events, and practical advice. The concerns of the gazetteer, the specialist scholar and historian, and the more usual interests of the traveller, are not all one and the same: in practice any such attempt reflects a certain point of view and particular priorities.

Stephen Batchelor's focus is an account, written in the main part for a popular audience, of the religious culture and history of Tibet. In particular it covers the central region, the route to Nepal, and the Mt. Kailas/Lake Mansrowar areas (the last prepared by B. Beresford and S. Jones). The work makes skillful use of early photographs, such as those of Sakya and the western gateway to Lhasa before their destruction. Overall it evokes the contrast between the Tibet of before 1959, and that of after 1979. The iconographical guide (prepared by R. Beer) and index will be useful, as will be the main text as a work of reference, for the traveller.

Some scholars and general readers will not be at ease with the parts of the text that deal with Buddhist philosophy, ritual and human psychology. For example, statements such as 'mandalas are symbolic descriptions of the deity in his or her world' may be a particular and contingent part of the truth, but as the author would probably be the first to admit, this is not the whole truth. Moreover, the free use of phrases such as 'the ultimate nature of consciousness' will not commend the book either to a technical and scholarly, or to a truly popular, audience. Above all, what is conveyed by this choice of language is a particular style, one which has become the hallmark of the popular western Buddhist press.

The text could benefit from more signposts, a fuller treatment of some themes, and more tabular presentations of other material. At present it is not the ideal introduction to the country and people for all travellers. Lack of sharpness and comprehensiveness are points against it as a practical travellers' guide. Sentences such as '... there is supposedly a bus from x to y but I do not know how frequently it runs nor from which bus station. We took a land-cruiser, rented for ...?' have no place in a guidebook. And here the work suffers from the problem common to all such guides in the face of rapid changes in China's policy: the regulations, facilities, and procedures detailed may have long since changed by the time the book reaches the shops.

Many of the photographs are excellent: but the quality of the color separation and printing in at least this edition does not always allow one to recognize this. Similarly, the practical importance of some advice, such as that on altitude sickness, is obscured by the section being buried in the middle of the text, without emphasis.

The book is just a bit too heavy to slip comfortably into a bag, without thought, as a travel companion. If intended as a general travel-guide, it would benefit from a further investment in practical research and design, severer editing, and closer control over printing standards. But though in its general production The Tibet Guide may not approach the quality of an APA Guide or a Michelin, it is to be commended as a travellers' account and popular summary of Tibetan Buddhist Culture and History.

Graham E. Clarke

Barbara Brower
1986

Yak, Man, and Mountain: Sherpa Livestock Management in Sagarmatha (Mount Everest) National Park, Nepal. Outreach Publication Series. Berkeley, California: The Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, University of California, Berkeley. 26pp, glossary, slide key. Can be purchased with 79 slides: \$85.00 incl. domestic postage. Monograph alone: \$3.50 incl. domestic postage.

This beautifully written, velo-bound monograph describes Sherpa pastoralism in the Khumbu region of Nepal within the boundaries of Sagarmatha (Mount Everest) National Park. It is the initial monograph in the Outreach Publication Series from The Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, an innovative approach to disseminating scholarly information to a broad audience of educators, students and scholars. Accompanied by a set of 79 slides by Dr. Brower, the monograph will be useful for both teachers and students in advanced high school and beginning level college classes to supplement courses in geography, environmental issues, and current world affairs.

The monograph is based on Brower's field work in this region, which formed the basis for her doctoral dissertation in Geography ("Livestock and Landscape: The Sherpa Pastoral System in Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) National Park, Nepal", University of California, Berkeley). Her work examines Sherpa livestock management as a way to address the changing relations of people to their environment in Khumbu. Acknowledging that the traditional lifeways of Sherpas have been based on flexibility and diversification, she examines their present situation as they adjust to political, social, environmental, and economic realities and changes in the region today. By necessity, the monograph cannot discuss the full range of issues raised in the dissertation, but through skillful organization and writing, Brower is able to present a remarkably complex picture in only 26 pages.

In addition to the expected topics (political and geological background of the region, vegetation and climate, Sherpa land use and economy, and animal management techniques), the monograph introduces issues currently being discussed by scholars in this field. For example, with only a few pages, she presents the diverse array of factors involved in the choice between herding hybrids as opposed to cows or yaks. These include the biology of the animals themselves, the availability of resources needed by the different species, and the economic implications of each choice, including the importance of factors outside the region such as the closing of the Tibetan border and increase in tourism. The monograph also touches on the current controversy over the role of livestock and people in past and present environmental degradation in this region. Brower raises the point that it may not

be human and animal impact per se that is at issue but the rate at which that impact occurs. Furthermore, the discussions of geology and vegetation lead the reader away from simple uni-causal explanations, and toward the idea that natural processes as well as human activities have always been sources of environmental change, that change itself need not be detrimental, and that elements of the habitat vary in their vulnerability to particular types of use.

The accompanying slides are of high quality, and with the captions provided in the key, allow a good look at this beautiful region as well as illustrate the monograph. The final twelve slides (and captions) contain information supplemental to the text on reforestation projects, tourism, and the National park. As an instructional tool, this package is appropriately geared to high school and beginning or survey undergraduate college classes. I cannot imagine lecturing from the monograph alone, but I can easily envision a lively discussion based around the slides, once students have read the monograph. Its length makes it useful for a single class "case study" discussion, in which students could get an idea of the complexity of cultural-environmental adaptations, as well as the practical difficulties of finding solutions to modern environmental problems. The setting within a National Park makes this case study useful in discussions of both cultural and environmental conservation, sustainable development, tourism, and the role of protected spaces in the world today.

The utility of the monograph could be broadened had Brower placed even more emphasis on current environmental problems and the alternative explanations and solutions being proposed. Although she says that the monograph will focus on "...overgrazing by livestock--and the ways foreign aid is involved in exacerbating and attempting to mitigate livestock impacts in the National Park" (p.6), there is little information provided about either of these topics. The final section, "Animal Husbandry and Environmental Problems in Sagarmatha National Park," could be three times longer, especially for those readers who have no other exposure to current discussions of environmental and conservation issues in the Himalayas. Brower's thesis provides an excellent discussion of these topics, and it is a shame that more of her well founded and balanced appraisal did not make its way into the monograph. Two special publications that would be of interest to instructors and students using this case study are: Cultural Survival Quarterly 10.3 (1986), "Mountain Peoples"* and the National Conservation Strategy for Nepal: A Prospectus (published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural resources in 1983).** These brief publications provide background and context on the environmental crisis in Nepal and the Himalayas in general.

Barbara Brower is a gifted writer, whose eloquent, spare prose conveys a detailed, yet compact, picture of the complex livestock management system of the Sherpas in Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) National Park. In such a case, I suppose it is natural for a reader to want more.

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*Available from Cultural Survival Publications, 11 Divinity Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138 (\$3.00 plus \$1.00 postage).

**Available from UNIPUB, 4611-F Assembly Drive, Lanham, MD 20706, USA (\$6.00-mailing extra).

Keith Dowman.
1988.

The Power-Places of Central Tibet: The Pilgrim's Guide. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 345 pp. Maps, photographs, appendices, glossaries, indexes. \$16.95 paper. ISBN 0-7102-1370-0.

Keith Dowman's excellent Pilgrim's Guide is based on the nineteenth century Kyentse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet. Its stated purpose is to provide information that may be of practical use to pilgrims about the location and significance of major religious sites. Whereas Kyentse's guide covers Central, Southern and Western Tibet, Dowman has limited his attention to Central Tibet, the old province of U, which includes the Kyichu Valley system and the reaches of the Tsangpo in its passage from Chaksam to Kongpo. All of the sites described in the guide are within a 250 km radius from Lhasa (with the exception of sites mentioned in Chapter 18, "Across Tsang to the Nepal Border"). The guide describes approximately 170 sites, most of which were visited by the author during the summers of 1985 and 1986. Dowman has updated and expanded the information from Kyentse's Guide, adding a few sites ignored by Kyentse, expanding the commentary, and describing the contemporary conditions.

The "power places" covered by Dowman include cave-sites, temples and monasteries, chortens, and rocks known as residences of local deities. The largest single category of "power-place" is the temple with a monastery built around it. Outside of the few great shrines preserved around Lhasa most of these sites remained in various states of ruin and disrepair in 1986. Those which are still intact have been used for more than twenty years as granaries, store-houses, go-downs, or offices. Dowman notes that about forty sites remained in ruins in 1985 (though there are plans to renovate many of these sites). At forty other sites new temples or chortens have been rebuilt since 1980. And at almost forty additional sites the structure of at least one pre-1950 temple remained, though usually defaced and stripped of its sacred ornamentation. The guide also contains information about natural sites, particularly cave-sites, the most renown of which are associated with Guru Rimpoche, Padma Sambhava. Thirty of the 170 sites covered by Dowman are cave-sites mentioned by Kyentse Rimpoche, which remain "intact and retain the qualities that have always given them importance."

Despite the widespread destruction, the creation of museums out of the great monastery towns in Central Tibet, and the involvement of party cadres in the rebuilding of many sites, Dowman finds reason to be optimistic about the status of Buddhist dharma in Tibet. He argues that while "at the beginning of the 20th century [the pilgrim] found an archaic religious culture in a state of stasis and ossification, today the pilgrim finds a youthful and resurgent culture relying on its own inner strength" (p.12).

The Guide includes an introductory chapter that summarizes useful information for the general reader including a brief discussion of pilgrimage, the general characteristics of power places, and brief outlines of Tibetan history and the schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The chapters which follow describe Lhasa, the route west to the Nepal border, and sixteen possible pilgrimage routes within a 250 kilometer radius of Lhasa. Each chapter gives a brief historical background, discusses access to the area, describes the significant sites, and includes a very useful visual glossary of line-drawings depicting the most common images of Buddha reproduced from Three-Hundred Icons of Tibet and Nyingma Icons. The updating of Kyentse's guide with contemporary information allows a comparison between pre-1959 Tibet and what now remains. Maps have been provided for all of the major areas and the text contains accurate descriptions about how to reach each site. Most of the valley sites are

now accessible by jeep. The Power-Places of Central Tibet is an excellent guide, indispensable for any pilgrim to Tibet--scholar, tourist, or religious wanderer.

WFF

Peter Gold.
1987.

Altar of the Earth: The Life, Land and Spirit of Tibet. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion. 221 pp. 22 color photographs. \$14.95 paper. ISBN 0-937938-44-0

In this brief book, Peter Gold has attempted to capture what he perceives to be the spirit of Tibet. In that attempt the author makes no concession to the traveller, who might have need of more practical information, nor to the scholar, who might desire more technical and historical accuracy and specificity. The book is not a scholarly description of Tibet (the reader should expect to learn little of the life and land of Tibet), nor is it a chronological account of the author's experience, nor a geographical guide to Tibet (though the author makes some attempt to order his musings within chapters that proceed from the Yarlung Valley, to Lhasa, through the "Heartland" and on into the Highlands). Rather, it is an enthusiastic and impressionistic story of Mr. Gold's encounter with Tibet. Readers put off by smug ethereal prose, ponderous poetry, and the mystical quality of incomplete sentences may not enjoy this book.

WFF

Deepak Shimkada, ed.
1987

Himalayas at a Crossroads: Portrait of a Changing World. A Collection of Papers on Himalayan Arts and Culture. Pasadena: Himalayan Arts Council, Pacific Asia Museum. 147pp.

The volume contains nine papers on the Himalayas, the first five delivered at a symposium on the Himalayas arranged by the editor of this volume, the other four invited but not delivered, were added to "complement the general theme by adding many facets of the Himalayas to the book". The papers are: Thomas O. Bellinger, "Hariti Ajune: A Newari Pagoda Temple on the Platform of Sengu, Kathmandu, Nepal;" Gerald L. Larson, "The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom is a Broken Heart;" J. Anne Holman, "Nepal's Changing Environment;" Chandra L. Reedy, "Tibetan Art as an Expression of North Indian Buddhism;" Ronald M. Bernier, "Himalayan Woodcarving: A Search for Origins;" Kurt W. Meyer, "Kailesh Manasarovar;" Biswarnath Debnath, "Ethnicity in Contemporary Sikkim;" R. Redwood French, "The Law and Codes of the Dalai Lamas: Their Origins, Style and Use in Tibet and other Himalayan Kingdoms;" P. M. Blackwood, "The Kathmandu Connection: Village Tamang and the Commodity Production of Thangkas." None of the papers delves very deeply, but this reviewer finds the papers of French and Debnath of particular interest.

This book is well-produced and the photographs clear.

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