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## Recent Research

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## RECENT RESEARCH

### Recent Swiss Research in Nepal

Compiled by Joanna Pfaff and A. Höfer

In recent years several social scientists from Switzerland have conducted sociological, ethnographic and linguistic research in Nepal. The following project descriptions are meant to acquaint a broader audience with Swiss "human scientific" research in the Nepalese Himalayan area.

### ETHNOGRAPHIC FILMS AND VIDEO ETHNOGRAPHY

**Investigators:** cand. phil. Albin Bieri and cand. phil. Majan Garlinski, Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität Zürich, Freiestenstr. 5, 8032 Zürich

**Projects:**

*Makai* — Based on the project "Video and Everyday Conflicts" (1988) a documentary feature film which deals primarily with increasing conflicts between Brahmins and "untouchable" people in a village in Gorkha District (in cooperation with Hartmut Zimolong).

*Deva and Cinta* — Based on the project "Video and Ritual Culture" a documentary video which deals with ancestor worship and shamanist practices among the Mewahang Rais in Bala (Valley of Sankhuwa, Eastern Nepal - in cooperation with Martin Gaenzle).

Since Spring 1987, several studies were conducted in Nepal as a basis for future film-projects, e.g. "Video and Material Culture" - about pottery in Bhaktapur. In Spring 1990 a visit was made to the Gorkha village where the film "Makai" was shot in order to show the film to the protagonists as well as to learn their reactions to the film, this being considered a crucial aspect of the documentary film work.

### TIBETAN BUDDHIST RITUAL

**Investigator:** Dr. Martin Brauen, Völkerkunde Museum der Universität Zürich, Pelikanstr. 40, 8001 Zürich

**Projects:**

*The Kālacakra Initiation: Analysis of a Maṇḍala Ritual* — Based on observations of the Kālacakra Initiation in Rikon, Switzerland and on texts written by Tibetans and Westerners. Planned publication in 1991 (by Dumont Verlag, Köln).

*Life in a Bhutanese village, with special emphasis on the role of women* — Based on field study in Summer 1988. An exhibition and publication are planned for 1992.

**Recent and Forthcoming Publications:**

*Das Maṇḍala Symbolik und Ritual* (Köln: Dumont Verlag, forthcoming 1991).

*Rin 'byung - A Buddhist Pantheon* (London/Boston: Wisdom Publications, in preparation).

*Nepal - Leben und Überleben*, (Editor and co-author), *Ethnologische Schriften Zürich*, Band 2, Zürich 1984.

"Sind die Tibeter anders? Zur Akzeptanz asiatischer Flüchtlinge in der Schweiz." in: *Schlussbericht eines Seminars über: Fremdenfeindlichkeit und Diversität ethnischer Minoritäten der Nationalen schweizerischen UNESCO-Kommission*, Bern 1988, pp. 62-70.

"Eine Pilgerreise um den Pasum-See (Kongpo) - Einige kulturgeschichtliche Bemerkungen." in *Liber Amicorum* voor B. & C. Trock, Antwerpen 1986.

## ANTHROPOLOGY, LANGUAGE & LITERATURE, AND LINGUISTICS

**Investigator:** Dr. Karen H. Ebert, Seminar für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Zürich, Plattenstr. 54, 8032 Zürich

**Project:** Chamling Language and Oral Tradition — (funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Ila 1, Eb 49/2-4)

The aims of the project are:

1. Analysis of the Chamling language and publication of a grammar and dictionary
2. Collecting oral tradition, especially mythology
3. Relating Chamling to comparative Kiranti (and Tibeto-Burman) linguistics
4. In-depth analysis of typologically interesting features and comparison with languages outside Tibeto-Burman.

### Recent and Forthcoming Publications:

"Grammatical marking of speech act participants in Tibeto-Burman." *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol. 11, 1987, pp. 473-82.

"Evidence for closer relationship Kiranti-Rung? Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman area." (in press).

"Review article: George van Driems, *A grammar of Limbu*." *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* (in press)  
*Inverse paradigms in Chamling and Chukchi*.

**Investigator:** Dr. Werner Egli, Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität Zürich, Freiesteinstr. 5, 8032 Zürich

**Project:** Social change, time dispositions and cognitive abilities among the Sunuwar of East Nepal

The proposed study has two aspects, a sociological and a psychological one. These two aspects are at the same time two steps in the course of the research procedure. The sociological part of the study consists in a community study and its basic method will be the classical ethnographic fieldwork method of participant observation. The aim of this part of the study is the collection and the analysis of ethnographic field data from one or more East-Nepalese village communities inhabited by a majority of members of the Bodic ethnic group the Sunuwar.

The psychological investigation deals with cognitive abilities in children and adults and the different interrelations of these abilities with changing social and especially economical relations. The method of the psychological study consists primarily in non-verbal psychological tests as developed by the Swiss psychologist J. Piaget and his co-workers.

**Investigator:** cand. phil. Cody Ott, Quartiergasse 17, 3013 Bern

**Project:** **Changing Patterns of Trade and their Impact on Community and Family Structure in High Himalayan Communities**

Stating the necessity of trade in the agriculturally limited areas of central and northwestern parts of the Nepal Himalayas, and arguing that the organizational structure of trading communities is based on the patterns of trade, the project intends to analyze the changing living conditions for High Himalayan dwellers.

An attempt will be made to draw a synthesis out of the scientific literature (among other things: ethnographies on Central and Northwestern Nepal) with regard to impact of changing economic and political conditions on community and family structure. The next step will be to establish possible rules in the reorganization of groups. Important aspects of discussion will be: Hinduization/Nepalization, new dependencies, changes of ethnic affiliation and position in the caste system, economic and political stratification, the dwindling unity of groups and families, communities falling apart by migration of groups or individuals, the loss of tradition and the acceptance of new marriage and heritage rules, new roles of the members in community and family - especially the diminishing importance of old generations, the worsening position of women etc.

**Investigator:** Dr. Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität Zürich, Freiensteinstr. 5, 8032, Zürich

**Project:** **Accepting Innovations in the Nepalese Hill Area: Leadership Patterns and Forms of Participation in Regional Comparison**

The main aim of the study is to elaborate on some crucial issues of development processes taking place in Nepal, paying special attention to specific regional conditions. The main line of comparison lies between the Bajhang District which belongs to the "Remote Areas" of Nepal and the centrally located districts of Nuwakot and Dolakha where various development projects have been conducted during the last decades. However, crucial differences in the course and scope of development processes can be already detected between the latter two districts. Thus, in the first step of the study an attempt is made to elaborate on the main factors (environmental, political, economic, social and ideological) underlying the differing development patterns.

The main part of the study is devoted to the decisionmaking processes employed in accepting innovation in relation to the patterns of political, economic, social and ideological change as aspects of the development process. It is argued that the processes of decisionmaking are affected by a variety of conditions; in the first place, adaptation to local, natural and social (including patterns of dominance) environment has to be combined with the impact by supra-local structures on local societies. While decisions of villagers are determined to an important degree by their experiences which have been acquired in the past, they are additionally increasingly shaped by access to new technologies, knowhow etc. Due to the specific social conditions, such decisions are going far beyond pure economic considerations, and are the outcome of forms of dominance, communication flow, access to specific institutions, forms of communal participation etc. as well.

#### **Recent and Forthcoming Publications:**

*Power and Ritual Purity: Hindu Caste System and Ethnic Relations in the Development Process of Nepal*, Grusch 1989, PhD. (in German)

*Aspekte der hinduistischen Hierarchie im nepalesischen Hügelland unter besonderer Berücksichtigung eines Zentral-Nepalesischen Multi-Kasten-Dorfes*, Belkot 1980. (M.A. Lizentiats - Arbeit).

"Das hinduistische Kastenwesen im nepalesischen Hügelland," in *Nepal, Leben und Überleben*, Hrsg. M. Brauen, Zürich 1984.

"Status of Affines Among High Caste Hindus in the Nepalese Hill Area," in *Recent Research on Nepal*, Ed. K. Seeland, 1986.

- "Der Himalaya als Kultur - und Sprachregion. Integration und Differenzierung im einem aussereuropäischen Gebirgsraum." in the *1986 Annual of the Swiss "Akademie für Geisteswissenschaften"*.
- "State and Community: Changing Relations of Production after the 'Unification' of Nepal." in H. Klassen, *Early State Economics*, in press.
- "Differing Development Processes in Dolakha and Nuwakot District. An essay from the socio-anthropological perspective" Zürich, Infrac 1990.

**Investigator:** Dr. Hanna Rauber, Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität Zürich, Freiensteinstr. 5, 8032 Zürich

**Recent and Forthcoming Publications:**

- "Stages of Women's Life among Tibetan Nomadic Traders: The Humli-Khyampa of Far Western Nepal." *Ethos*, 52: 1-2, 1987, pp. 200-228.
- "Trade in Far West Nepal: The Economic Adaptation of the Peripatetic Humli-Khyampa." in Aparna Rao, Ed., *The other Nomads, Peripatetic minorities in cross-cultural perspective*, 1987, pp. 65-87.
- "Beer, Its social, ritual and economic meaning in Humli-Khyampa Society, Far West Nepal" (MS in progress).
- Nomadic Traders in Far Western Nepal*. A children's book.

**Investigator:** cand. phil. Corinne Sala, Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität Zürich, Freiensteinstr. 5, 8032 Zürich

**Project:** Analysis of the meaning and function of women organizations in connection with social change: their influence on the development of village structures and survival strategies at the example of Aama Bikase Toli in a Gurung village of Sjongya District.

**Investigator:** Dr. Klaus Seeland, Eidgenössische Hochschule Zürich, Forstökonomie und Forstpolitik, ETH-Zentrum/HG, 8092 Zürich

**Project:** **Environmental Perception in Rural Communities of South Asia. A Comparative Study**

The aim of this comparative study is to obtain information about how people of selected rural communities in South Asia perceive their local environments.

The ecological crisis of our planet is claimed to become more and more serious every day. In the industrial countries, environmental awareness constantly arises and it has become a factor in social and political life what long since has been a movement of concerned people.

Literature on the preservation of natural resources representing Western notions of environment attracts the attention of interested people all over the world, whereas hardly anybody knows anything about the perception of people in developing countries, who are more and more disposed to the hazards of environmental degradation.

The environmental situation in many Third World countries is claimed to show an aggravation in areas which are already stressed by the overexploitation of resources, overpopulation, erosion, deforestation etc. This diagnosis, however, is the view of experts who have been trained in a Western scientific paradigm.

The present study tries to collect authentic data to give answers to the following questions:

- \* How do the affected people themselves see their environmental situation?
- \* Do they have developed strategies of survival and do these strategies reveal patterns of persistence and if so, what are they like?
- \* How do local people cope with their daily environmental problems on a cultural level?
- \* Do people of rural communities have something that might be equated with an "ecological consciousness"?
- \* What are their self-help activities and what do they expect from their government or from foreign aid?

**Recent and Forthcoming Publications:**

- "Ökologische Problemlösungen in traditionellen Kulturen," *Internationales Asienforum*, 1-2/ 1985, pp.5-23.
- "Ecology and Sacred World View in Nepal," in K. Seeland, Ed., *Recent Research on Nepal*. Köln: Weltforum Verlag, 1986, pp. 187-198.
- "Sanskritisierung und ökologische Krise im Himalaya - Naturräumliche Auswirkungen von Animismus und Hinduismus." in H. Zinser, ed., *Der Untergang von Religionen*. Berlin: Reimer, 1986, pp. 151-170.
- "Ecology and the Comeback of Religiousness." in Chittaranjan Das, ed., *Comparative Religion and the Challenges of the Present*, Cuttack: Institute of Oriental and Orissan Studies, 1988, pp. 1-12.
- "Traditional technologies - An Alternative for the Future." in Chittaranjan Das, ed., *Societies in Transition: Alternatives for the Future*, Cuttack: Institute of Oriental and Orissan Studies, 1988, pp. 43-53.

**Investigator:** cand. phil. Hartmut Zimolong, Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität Zürich, Freiestenstr. 5, 8032 Zürich

**Project:** Power Structures in a Hindu Caste Society in the west-Nepalese Village G.

The research attempts to identify persons as well as groups (castes, ethnic groups) who have acquired a dominant position over people and over resources. It further examines how their control and dominion are legitimized. Having identified the members of the Brahmin caste as being dominant, the question emerges who or which groups within this caste exercise control and what are the requirements in order to achieve and to maintain their authority.

The research concentrates on the following topics and questions:

- \* uncovering the relationships within the Brahmin caste as well as the Brahmins' relationships to "lower" castes and ethnic groups (separation, division of labor, hierarchy etc.)
- \* the increasing role of education within the social process
- \* the access to key positions within the political-administrative system
- \* control over the means of production
- \* the relationship between the overtly maintained ideology of the caste system and the actual behavior (separation of power and status; changing tendencies);
- \* questions of identity and identification processes.

The study attempts also to examine the increasing "anti-Brahmin" atmosphere among the "lower" caste people which could be observed during recent field research. Will so-called "Lower-Caste-Meetings" still be organized? In what form? What intentions and goals are behind them? Assessment of whether this movement can be seen as an anti-caste movement? Also of interest is the reaction of villagers from different castes to the film *Makai* which was shot here in March 1988 and which touches on the theme of the relationships between castes and on the wishes, problems and dreams of two students from "untouchable" castes.

## Recent Research from University of Bonn

Compiled by Thierry Dodin - Venusbergweg 4, 5300 Bonn 1

**Investigators:** Thierry Dodin, Heinz Räther, and Alex Smejkal — Zentralasiatisches Seminar at the University of Bonn, Germany.

**Project:** Buddhism and Society in the Himalayas

Up to the present time, Buddhism has been the leading power in the political, economical and spiritual life in the Himalayan societies of Tibetan culture. But today the political events of the last decades (e.g. the British retreat from India, the Chinese take-over of Tibet, the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962, the Indo-Pakistani border dispute, etc.) as well as the progressive affiliation of the Himalayan region to the "modern world" have led to a fundamental change of these societies. In confrontation with this new situation, Buddhism had to define anew its position in society.

The purpose of our project is to analyze the contemporary interaction between the cultural, economic and political changes in the Himalayan societies on the one hand and the institutional and doctrinal changes of Tibetan Buddhism within those societies on the other.

As an interaction between modern world and traditional cultures free from direct foreign influences has obviously only been possible since the end of the colonial era, the emphasis in our work is set on the historical period beginning with Indian independence in 1947. Earlier events will only be taken into account, if they are of any importance for the understanding of the current state of affairs.

Our research concentrates on the Himalayan countries which are under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism and whose inhabitants traditionally regard Tibet as the homeland of their culture. These are Ladakh, the alpine regions of Nepal inhabited by tribes ethnically closely related to the Tibetans, Sikkim and the adjoining districts of West-Bengal including Darjeeling and Kalimpong, and finally the kingdom of Bhutan.

Tibet herself is not to be taken into account, since, because of the well-known events, "natural" developments in society and religion such as will be examined by us could not take place there. Nevertheless the community of Tibetans in Indian exile has to be studied, since their leading religious authorities - above all the Dalai Lama - exercise a great influence on the whole Himalayan area.

The following topics have to be examined:

1. New interpretations of Buddhism such as the shifting or emphasizing of certain doctrinal positions
2. Activities for the maintenance and further development of tradition
3. Conflicts arising from the introduction of new social norms
4. Political activities of Buddhist religious leaders and laypeople and their legitimation through Buddhist doctrine
5. Change and continuity in the political, economic and spiritual role of the monasteries

The results of our research on the five topics expounded above shall be an extensive phenomenological account of the subject. The data material will be commented on and classified under the different regions to

be investigated, each of which will be introduced by an historical account. First, the typical trends, events, and peculiarities of each region will be worked out. Then it will be possible to discuss the interregional trends.

The information collected will be dealt with from three different points of view here formulated in the three following questions:

- What are the influences of social factors on the forms of Buddhism practiced in each of the four regions?
- What kind of influence does Buddhism exercise on the development of new trends in society?
- What is the role of the community of Tibetans in exile in the process of change in the indigenous Buddhist societies to be studied?

An interregional comparison from these three points of view will show whether (proceeding from regionally different conditions) the same or similar factors of change have led to comparable or to entirely different social and religious trends or whether different factors have led to the same or similar trends.

The projected publication will be complemented by translations of the most important sources made accessible through our research as well as by an extensive bibliography, lists of names and addresses of Buddhist institutions and chronological tables of religious and social developments in each of the regions investigated.

## **Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project News**

**Submitted by Dr. Franz-Karl Ehrhard, Resident Representative to NGMPP,  
Kathmandu, Nepal**

In 1969 the Tibetan block prints and manuscripts in the National Archives, Kathmandu, had not been catalogued. There existed only a handwritten inventory, which was incomplete and not in accordance with the actual text bundles (Kaschewsky 1969).

During the years 1973/74 this collection of Tibetan works was microfilmed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project. They are available on 340 microfilm reels (Nos. A 635 - A836 and B 543 - B 682), copies of which are kept both in the National Archives, Kathmandu, and in the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin. A provisional catalogue of the texts contained on these reels was prepared in 1979 (Ehrhard 1980).

From 1983 onwards up to 1990 the Tibetan section of the Nepal-German Manuscript Project conducted 15 microfilm expeditions to the northern parts of Nepal and microfilmed a total of 4,000 manuscripts with about 200,000 folios. These are available on 321 microfilm reels (Nos. L1 - L 321). At the same time Tibetan manuscripts that have been placed at the disposal of the Project by private individuals, or that the Project has been able to locate in Tibetan monasteries of the Kathmandu Valley, have been microfilmed at the Nepal Research Centre (Ehrhard 1989, 1990).

An overview of further collections of Tibetan texts was prepared by a Russian scholar (Bolshokhoyeva 1985, 1986). Special mention is thereby made of the Tibetan collection of the National Museum of Nepal; unfortunately this collection has not been systematically sorted out, nor has it been inventoried or catalogued. With the transfer of this collection to the National Archives the possibility is given that also this part of the cultural heritage of Nepal and Tibet can be preserved for the future.

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