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## Memorials

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## In Memory - Richard Burghart

(REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE EUROPEAN BULLETIN OF HIMALAYAN RESEARCH NUMBER 6, 1994)

Richard Burghart, our Editor-in-Chief, colleague and friend, died on January 1st at the age of 49, after long months of suffering. Born in the United States, he received his higher education at Williamstown (Mass.) and Ibadan (Nigeria), and then settled in London to take up the study of social anthropology at the School of Oriental & African Studies in 1966. After obtaining an M.A., he first worked for the Belgian newspaper "Le Soir", writing articles on South Asia for its supplement. Dissatisfied with this experience as a journalist, he soon resumed his studies in London. He received his Ph.D. in 1976 and stayed at the SOAS where he worked as a lecturer in Asian Anthropology for nearly ten years, and where his colleagues came to value him as an outstanding partner. A hard start awaited him when, in 1987, he accepted the chair of Ethnology at Heidelberg University and became Head of a Department with a large number of students and with too small a staff. It took him some time to achieve the first steps toward "modernizing" the Department, in the widest sense of the term, by amending the curriculum, improving the technical equipment and, above all, by intensifying exchanges with scientists from other departments of the South Asia Institute and from institutions abroad. Stimulating seminars on the "Structure of Hindu Tradition" and "Sovereignty in the Himalayas", with participants from France, Britain, the United States, Nepal and India, were just two of his attempts to reconsider old ideas and motivate new research.

This is not the place for an appreciation of Richard's work as a whole. It will be sufficient to mention his articles analyzing the social organization of the Vaishnavite pilgrimage centre at Janakpur (where he did extensive fieldwork), the concept of the nation-state in Nepal, and the structure of Hinduism, and to point to those writings in which he made an attempt to transcend the then-prevailing structuralist and Dumontian perspectives on Indian society. His was a vision which always aimed at what one may call the *essence in its context*; it drew benefit from his talent for perceiving contrasts, hidden boundaries and underlying unities, and was articulated in concise, unpretentious language, without indulging in rigidly abstract or wholesale generalization. Sadly, several book projects, among them *Spoken Maithili in its Social Context* and *State and Society in Nepal* remain unpublished.

The European Bulletin of Himalayan Research owes its existence to Richard's initiative and commitment. He intended it to function as a genuinely European undertaking, a forum of information devoted to recent publications and ongoing research, to be produced in cooperation between different countries, and to be developed, step by step, into a Journal. It is in the spirit of this legacy that we shall continue with two new members on the editorial board: Michael Hutt, Lecturer in Nepali at SOAS in London is now in charge of the work of editing, while Brigitte Merz, the recently appointed representative of the South Asia Institute at its Kathmandu Branch Office, will supply us with ideas and manuscripts from Nepal. It is planned (according to a preliminary agreement reached in 1990) to pass on the Bulletin to the Centre d'Etudes Himalayennes in Paris around 1996 for a term of two years or so.

*Please see RECENT PUBLICATIONS for more about the European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*

# In Memory - Hugh Swift

John Mock

*"Of the few who have the will to cross mountains, even fewer have the time."*  
David Snellgrove, 1981 (Himalayan Pilgrimage:xxvi).

A photograph of the peak Baltoro Kangri, taken from the Kondus Glacier in the Karakoram Range of Pakistan, hangs on the white-washed wall of the Batura Inn in Pasu, a small village along the Karakoram Highway in upper Hunza, Pakistan. The photograph is signed by the photographer, Hugh Swift. Among the travelers at the Batura Inn one evening is a Britisher, who, upon seeing Swift's signature remarks: "Hugh Swift. Everyone hears about him, but no one ever sees him. Where is he now?"

The stuff of legend in his own time, Hugh Swift, alas, died in February 1991. For a man who traveled more widely through the Himalayan area than almost any other person of this century, his demise came most unusually and unexpectedly; he fainted and his skull shattered against the curb in Hayward, California. He leaves behind a notable legacy of work: **The Trekker's Guide to the Himalaya and Karakoram** (Sierra Club Books 1982), later revised and expanded into two volumes: **Trekking in Nepal, West Tibet, and Bhutan** (Sierra Club Books 1989), and **Trekking in Pakistan and India** (Sierra Club Books 1990), as well as a body of photographic work, which has been published in **National Geographic Magazine**, **Smithsonian Magazine**, **GEO**, numerous books, and also appeared perennially in **The Himalayan Calendar**, among others. His more recent writings, edited, expanded and adapted by Eric Hansen, have been published posthumously along with his photographs in **The Traveller** (Sierra Club Books 1993).

Hugh's guidebooks are not about American and European culture inventing an exotic destination to be collected as yet another commodity, nor about viewing a chaotic Other against a stable self-assuredness. Hugh's books are about leaving behind complacency and expectations for the immediacy of being. Peter Bishop in **The Myth of Shangri-La: Tibet, Travel Writing and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape** (University of California Press 1989), writing about influences which shape contemporary images of Himalayan landscape and culture, mentions "the pervasively influential and seemingly indispensable guidebooks which are filled with cultural vignettes, snatches of traditional wisdom and splashes of local colour" (p.287 ft.12), and remarks "among the best are Hugh Swift's work..." Hugh was clear about his perspective, writing, "My heart truly lies in the hills: with the people to be met and the places to be visited". With this clear realisation, he set out to organize his life so that he could do what he loved. Such clarity of vision and the will to live it is a rare quality in any time.

Hugh's Acknowledgements in his 1989 book close with a thank-you to a long list of, not Americans or Europeans, but of his favorite companions, the people who lived in the Himalaya and with whom he most loved to trek. It bears repeating, both as a farewell from Hugh, and as a testament to his humility, empathy, and gentleness: "Finally, I wish to thank the many friends and those whom I may never see again in the hills of Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan, who have walked with me, opening my eyes to the people, their ways, and their environment".