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Book review of 'South Asia Bulletin: Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East' by Nanda Shrestha (Guest Editor)

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economy, Gellner also leaves consciously, perhaps to later works or other hands.

Theodore Riccardi, Jr.
Columbia University

South Asia Bulletin: Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East "Special Issue on Nepal," Volume XII, Number 1 & 2, 1992, pp. 1-92. Guest Editor: Nanda Shrestha

This special issue of the **South Asia Bulletin**, guest edited by Nanda R. Shrestha, includes eight articles that discuss a variety of contemporary topics. The first four of these articles--those by Nanda R. Shrestha ("Enchanted by the Mantra of Bikas: A Self-Reflexive Perspective on Nepalese Elites and Development"), Jeffrey Reidinger ("Prospects for Land Reform in Nepal"), David N. Zurick ("The Road to Shangri-La is Paved: Spatial Development and Rural Transformation in Nepal"), and Stacy Leigh Pigg ("Unintended Consequences: The Ideological Impact of Development in Nepal")--all make important contributions to ongoing debate about "development" in Nepal.

Nanda R. Shrestha's interesting article, building upon his personal transformations from a poor schoolboy in Pokhara dreaming of development to a scholar in an American university who now skeptically views the colonization of the mind involved in development, provides a valuable view of development as *bikas* through the eyes of those who desire it and suffer from an unrequited desire. Shrestha's articulation of his prior and present views helps to shed light on what exactly is desired in the romance with *bikas*, how actual *bikas* becomes confused with *bikasi* objects, and how *bikasi* becomes identified with things western. Striving for these objects and idolized goals alters world views and social interactions. The vision of *bikas* Shrestha details is largely delusory--except for a few individuals, primarily those individuals who milk the process of development as consultants, finding that profits accrue to their acceptance of and propagation of an invasive and seductive ideology. These consultants, as Shrestha notes, are the only ones who achieve state policies and the penetration of the global market economy make him pessimistic about the chances for effective land reform in the near future. In Reidinger's opinion, the unintended consequences of development and reform initiatives have created tensions that aggravate already existing difficulties concerning state control. Reidinger's discussion of the threats to state control, Nepal's current agrarian structure, the effects of previous policies and reform initiatives, and recent reform proposals, is clear and succinct. He acknowledges that the contemporary political situation presents new political space for peasant activism and the expression of their concerns, but at the same time it also contains strong obstacles to the solidification of peasant class political influence, a fact which is apt to leave the strength of political party support in

Kathmandu and with rural high caste communities. Reidinger concludes that elite dominance, continued regional factionalism, the strength of rural patron-client dependencies, the lack of an organized peasantry, and geographical constraints make meaningful land reform unlikely at present.

David Zurick critically examines the integrated rural development (IRD) approach to regional planning in Nepal which was so popular in the 1970's and 1980's. He takes as his case study the Rapti Project and examines the degree to which its outcome was shaped by the territory it was meant to cover, the difficulties of integrating local decision making into the planning process, and a spatial bias that is typical of the delivery of development resources. Here, as in other rural projects, the first steps involved the construction of roads, and the establishment of service centers in hill towns and district headquarters. These steps resulted in strengthened linkages between these locations and the urban centers, linkages which generally contribute to dramatically changed opportunities for rural people, but often with consequences unintended by the planners.

The Rapti Project was the largest of the IRD projects initiated in Nepal, all of which suffered from poor performance, unsustainable gains, lack of accountability, and an unequal distribution of resources. This style of development project necessarily involved top-down imposition of development frameworks that strengthen already wealthy development clientele and fueled the creation of patron-client relationships. Zurick examines changing spatial frameworks, looking at how subsistence systems are replaced by transactional relations and resource entitlements shift to new political and economic brokers. Where conflicts emerged between commercial and subsistence use of land, subsistence growers lost influence and access to resources which deprived further development efforts of their experience and knowledge. The unmanageable project area resulted in unequal distribution. Towns and urban centers, which were easier of access, already important, and useful as showcases for new buildings and facilities got a disproportionate amount of attention. Not surprisingly, the process enriched wealthy landowners and failed to elicit local participation. The failure to provide new substantial opportunities for mountain communities lead to further deterioration in their ecological systems and the dislocation of people from formerly productive and stable land use.

Like other post-structural critics of development, Stacy Pigg advises that we analyze development in terms other than those by which the development industry assesses itself. She argues that all too often the questions asked about the impact of development interventions have been too limited, and have thus failed to identify and critically assess the ways in which planned development initiatives contribute to all kinds of change, most, if not all of it, unintended. In order that these unintended consequences of development not escape scrutiny, it is important that we get past the categories of the development discourse and see development not as some neutral, objective, technical intervention but as an intervention rooted in an ideology which itself should be subject to scrutiny.

Her analysis of *bikas* picks up some of the themes of Shrestha's article and systematically questions what the word has come to mean and how it has influenced behavior in Nepal. She discusses how *bikas* has shaped a new worldview, and fueled regional, ethnic, caste, and class politics in Nepal in a process through which some cultures, languages, and behaviors have come to be considered to be more *bikasi* than others. In the public imagination *bikasi* is something desirable and even necessary. The goal is to become development providers and to avoid being on the receiving end of development. Pigg argues that foreigners often play into this domestic ideology unwittingly, trapped as they are in their own ideological categories and unaware of the way in which the idea of *bikas* plays into the ethnic and regional politics of Nepal.

Naomi H. Bishop ("Circular Migration and Families: A Yolmo Sherpa Example") describes migration from a single Yolmo village over the past twenty years, migration which is generally transnational and temporary. Bishop's data on migration were collected during the course of her research into the relationships among the physical environment, subsistence activities, and human demography in this middle altitude village in Nepal. Her association with this village dates to 1971. The article briefly describes the patterns of circular migration during a twenty year period (1971-91) and discusses the costs and benefits of this process for villagers. Unlike individuals who migrate internally in Nepal in search of land, Bishop's villagers migrate externally to India for cash income. As Bishop describes it, this pattern of migration is not a simple seasonal one which moves laborers back and forth from a village and a work site but instead involves "complex arrangements of family members through time and space between two countries, in response to a variety of needs and opportunities that shift all the time" (p. 61). She concludes that contemporary migration from the village is the same pattern seen in 1971, differing only in scale due to a recent increase in the numbers of villagers working in India.

Mary Des Chene ("Soldiers, Sovereignty and Silences: Gorkhas as Diplomatic Currency") addresses

the question of Nepalese serving in foreign armies, an issue currently debated once again in Nepali political fora. Des Chene's article reviews the history of the Gorkhas and points out how often they have been instruments of international diplomacy in order to highlight the absence of the Gorkhas in the negotiations that have affected their fate. But her critical review of this history is not intended to advocate a simplistic rejection of a colonialist historiography with a counter-colonialist stance. In her consideration of the questions "How is one to understand this history of Gorkhas as diplomatic currency", and "how ought this history to figure in current debates", she acknowledges the positive part of public debates about representation, discrimination and economic disparities among ethnic groups. As Des Chene points out, "the Nepalese bodies that were bartered by the Ranas were not just *any* Nepalese bodies. They were, in particular, Gurung, Magar, Rai, and Limbu ones" (p. 78). Incorporated into the official caste hierarchy as *matwali*, these groups have generally had less access to national economic and political power. Soldiering, Des Chene observes, was a means to a measure of economic autonomy. The greater freedom of communication opened up by democracy may provide a means by which those whose lives and livelihoods are affected can participate in the decision making process which affects them.

Barbara Parker and David W. Patterson ("He's No Good: Sexual Division of Labor and Habitus among Nepal's Marpha Thakali") discuss Thakalis from the village of Marpha as an example of a society in which gender relations are loose and flexible. They use Bourdieu's notion of habitus ("the durably installed principle of regulated improvisation") in an analysis of the Thakali festival of Torongla to demonstrate that interactions between men and women in Marpha involve a higher level of involvement and attention than is the case in societies in which the spheres of activity are clearly differentiated by gender and the division of labor is prescribed. The ambiguities of the sexual division of labor in Marpha, which, they argue, is preferred rather than prescribed, "produce a high level of strain and tension in the daily interactions of opposite-sexed individuals" (p. 88). They describe how these tensions are dramatized during the new year's festival of Torongla. In Marpha, they conclude, "interpersonal interactions between males and females are rich, complex, unpredictable, and deeply involving" (p. 89).

Surendra Pandey's research note ("The Vadi Community and Prostitution") provides information on the Vadi community collected through a questionnaire-based survey conducted in Nepalgunj Municipality, Ward no. 8 from the 5th to the 10th of Magh 2048. Of the five hundred Vadi people who live in this ward, thirty-three Vadi women and two Magar women were interviewed, all of them engaged in prostitution. The author concludes with seven suggestions advocating government intervention in the Vadi community.