1981

Research Proposals, Projects, and Reports

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya

Recommended Citation

Available at: http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya/vol1/iss3/6
II. RESEARCH PROPOSALS, PROJECTS, AND REPORTS

*Nepal: The Gurungs

Researcher:    S. S. Strickland, Jesus College, Cambridge, England

Project:
S. S. Strickland is preparing a thesis on the chants of Gurung priests. The chants, pe, were taken down by dictation and tape-recorded during 1979-1981, in a part of Kaski District, West Nepal. The study considers: (i) belief in and understanding of the pe, and the ways in which knowledge of them is disseminated; (ii) linguistic features and aspects of the style of pe; (iii) the cosmology which the pe describe and assume; (iv) certain pe narrating journeys which provide clues to the historical and cultural affinities of the Gurungs; (v) the meanings of the term pe. It is hoped that the thesis will be completed by the middle of 1982.

*Nepal: God-makers of Uku Baha, Patan

Researcher: Tristram Riley-Smith, Department of Social Anthropology, Cambridge, England

Project:
Tristram Riley-Smith carried out 14 months of fieldwork among the god-makers of Uku Baha, a Buddhist community in Patan celebrated for its craftsmanship in making metal statues of the gods. His thesis, currently being written, combines a study of the community's social structure and self-image, an examination of the economy, techniques and beliefs of god-making, and an analysis of the different roles of statues in traditional and contemporary Newar society in the light of recent developments.

*Mobilization of Local Resources for Hill Irrigation

Researchers: Ed Martin, Agricultural Economics, Cornell University
Bob Yoder, Agricultural Engineering, Cornell University

Project:
The purpose of the project is to investigate the mobilization of local community resources in construction and management of irrigation systems in the hills. A primary objective will be to identify and evaluate the technical, economic, and social resources in local communities which have been or could be used in irrigation development. Physical, economic, and social factors affecting the optimal use of water resources will be identified and examined. An attempt will be made to develop a methodology for rapidly assessing the irrigation potential of an area, evaluating the local resources which can be invested in developing and managing an irrigation system, and determining what resources must be supplied from outside the local community.

Background. There is currently considerable concern in Nepal to strengthen the economy in the hills through increased agricultural production. Since very little additional land remains to be brought under cultivation, this requires intensifying the utilization of already cultivated lands. A key element in the intensification of
agricultural production in many places is irrigation, and the Sixth Five-Year Plan calls for expansion of the area under irrigation in the hills. The authors of the plan recognize that irrigation development in the hills will be dependent upon the mobilization of local community resources with a limited amount of assistance from the central government. In many places governmental concerns for mobilization of local resources for rural works projects are limited to economic resources such as contributed labor for construction and maintenance, land provided for the rights of way, and user fees in cash or kind. Important resources which are often neglected are farmers' knowledge of the local environment, rural residents' technical construction skills, and farmers' skills in the management of water at the local level and in the effective utilization of the water in agricultural activities. Much can be learned by studying and evaluating the technologies and management of existing community irrigation systems.

There is evidence from many countries that irrigation systems are operated at a low level of efficiency of water use. It is our hypothesis that community irrigation systems which have been operating for some time are in some kind of stable equilibrium between those forces favoring irrigation development and efficient water management (e.g., increased population, urban market demand, availability of new varieties which respond to better water control) and those opposing efficient irrigation management (e.g., costs of improving physical structures, costs of better social coordination for improving management, increased labor requirements of more intensive production). Through the study of several community systems and the factors deemed important to the performance of irrigation systems, knowledge should be gained which help predict the performance that can be expected from new irrigation systems as well as the costs involved in improving the performance beyond the present equilibrium.

*Food Systems of Nepal*

Researcher: M. Pierre Spitz, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

Project:
UNRISD is currently sponsoring a major study of food systems in northeast India and is seriously considering extending the project's scope to include Nepal. Two reports outlining the project's approach and methodology have been produced, and are available through Pierre Spitz at UNRISD, Palais des Nations, CH 1211, Geneva 10, Switzerland. These are:

Drought, Reserves and Social Classes, by P. Sptiz

Project Proposal for the Study of Food Systems in Eastern India, by B. Chattopadhyay

*Paleontological Research in Nepal*

Researcher: Robert M. West, Milwaukee Public Museum

Project:
The first paleontological investigation of the Nepal Siwaliks, in 1974, failed to produce fossil vertebrates from the eastern part of the country (West et al., 1975). In the spring of 1976, following a study of aerial photographs, one month
was spent in well-exposed Siwaliks along Babai Khola in western Nepal. This effort yielded a mammalian fauna of six species which indicated correlation with the Lower Siwalik Chinji fauna of Pakistan (West et al., 1978). A short visit in 1979 was devoted to an aerial reconnaissance of western Nepal; this showed numerous areas of well-exposed Siwaliks between Butwal and Nepalganj.

During the 1980-81 winter field season five weeks were spent in western Nepal with major support from the National Geographic Society (Grant 2240-80 to Dr. Jens Munthe). This work added three taxa of mammals and nine of lower vertebrates to the Babai Khola fauna and corroborated the correlation with the Lower Siwaliks elsewhere. Another productive area was found in Tinau Khola, a few kilometers north of Butwal. That small fauna includes the hominoid Ramapithecus punjabicus as well as a biochronologically important suis, a rodent and a proboscidean. A series of oriented rock samples were collected in Tinau Khola; the magnetostratigraphy, studied by Kean, gives an age of about 11 million years for the Ramapithecus, making it the oldest hominoid yet reported from South Asia. The rocks in Tinau Khola suggest a rather moist depositional environment, somewhat different from the situation in the hominoid-bearing rocks of India and Pakistan. The results of this most recent season have been submitted for publication (Munthe et al., in review).

Proposed Research. The results of the 1974-81 work have demonstrated the presence of interesting and well-preserved vertebrate fossils in the Nepalese Lower Siwaliks. Thus I propose to continue systematic paleontological and stratigraphic study of them in 1982.

The beds examined to date are only a small portion of the available Lower Siwaliks, so additional collecting should increase the size and diversity of the fauna. The present mammalian assemblage can be correlated with India and Pakistan, but the lower vertebrate component is distinctive. A larger collection will make interpretation of these differences more convincing. No faunas above the Lower Siwaliks or including Hipparion have been found. Thus the Middle and Upper Siwaliks, which are present in conformable sequences with the Lower Siwaliks, are unknown paleontologically. They will be searched. In India and Pakistan the bulk of the hominoid specimens are from the Middle Siwaliks, so extension into that level in Nepal could prove fruitful. Further, hominoids in India and Pakistan are relatively restricted stratigraphically; I hope to be able to fill in some temporal holes in the record with specimens from Nepal.

*Buddhist Hermeneutics*

Researcher: Nathan Katz, Department of Religion, Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts

Project:
Nathan Katz is currently engaged in the study of Buddhist hermeneutics. His essay will first define a hermeneutical problem within the Buddhist tradition, viz., the sense of the term yana (theg-pa). Then will follow a general discussion of Buddhist hermeneutics under three typologies: text-based hermeneutics; adept-based hermeneutics; and the madhyamaka deconstructionist hermeneutics. He then returns to the original yana problem as discussed by Tsong-kha-pa in his sNgags-rim Chen-mo, elaborating his hermeneutical method as informed by these three typologies.