

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SYMPOSIA

Bhutan:

A traditional order and the forces of change

A Conference at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 22 - 23 March 1993

Bhutan is still one of the world's most secretive and least accessible countries. Although the Bhutanese government has taken various steps to modernize and develop the kingdom's economy and liberalize its administrative system, Bhutan remains cautious and somewhat aloof from the rest of the world. The only foreigners permitted into the country are a small number of aid personnel and a small quota of high-paying tourists. As a consequence, Bhutan's history, culture, demography and politics are still poorly documented. Even the size of the total population has not been established satisfactorily: up until 1988 the official government figure was over 1 million. The national census of 1988 came up with a figure of 600,000. There can be few countries where such uncertainty surrounds such basic matters.

As a remote Himalayan kingdom, Bhutan has inevitably been characterized in most westerners' accounts as 'the last Shangri-la'. But its reputation has been tarnished during the past three years by reports of human rights abuses committed among the substantial community of Nepali origin which resides in the southern foothills. According to official statistics, Bhutanese citizens of Nepali origin constitute about one third of the total population. The Bhutanese government therefore appears to believe that its unique cultural heritage is under threat. During the late 1980s, it revised its attitude to the Nepali

minority and introduced a series of controversial integrative measures, while expelling large numbers of Nepalis whom it had identified as illegal immigrants. The Nepalis launched a movement which rapidly became politicized, calling not only for recognition of their communal rights, but also for radical changes in Bhutan's political system.

Views on this issue have become highly polarized and facts are hard to come by. There is a serious need for dispassionate analysis and constructive discussion, not just of the southern issue, but of every aspect of the traditional order of Bhutan which is currently under pressure from various forces of change. This conference is intended to provide a forum for such discussions. Each contributor to the conference will address him or herself to a description and analysis of some aspects of Bhutanese culture and society and to an assessment of the ways in which this is changing or might change in the future. The topics covered will include: Buddhist values and institutions; the status and role of the monarchy; nationalism and national values; relations with the outside world; the effects of tourism; views on conservation; language and literature; inter-ethnic-relations; traditional political processes; the role of national and international media; art and architecture, etc.

Probable and confirmed contributors, as of 1st October 1992, include:
 Leo Rose (University of California): inter national aspects of the pressure on cultural policy OR the status and role of monarchy
 Nick Nugent (BBC World Service): on the difficulties of reporting Bhutan (provisional)
 Françoise Pommaret (CNRS, Paris): the impact of Western ideas of tourism and conservation

Michael Hutt (SOAS, London): an attempt at an objective assessment of the 'Southern problem'

Michael Aris (Harvard University): traditional Bhutanese historiography OR the rise and development of the monarchy

George van Driem (University of Leiden): languages and language policy

Thierry Mathou (CNRS, Paris): the growth of diplomacy in Bhutan 1961-91.

Other contributors, whose topics will be announced later, are: Kinley Dorji (Editor, Kuensel), Kanak Mani Dixit (Editor, Himal), Brian C. Shaw (Hong Kong), Corneille Jest (CNRS, Paris), Yoshiro Imaeda (CNRS, Paris), Fredrik Barth (University of Oslo) and Judith Justice (University of California).

Offers of papers are invited.

Contributors are asked to send papers to the convener about a month before the conference. These will then be printed and circulated to all those attending. The conference will be spread over two days, and it will be assumed that everyone has read all the papers prior to the event. Contributors will be asked to speak for 15-20 minutes, summarizing their papers, and presentations will be followed by discussion and debate. I hope that the conference will yield a published volume on contemporary Bhutan, which will follow a volume on contemporary Nepal which is currently being prepared for publication.

This will be the first conference on Bhutan ever organized at SOAS or, indeed, anywhere in Europe so far as I am aware, and is sure to attract considerable interest.

Michael Hutt

PUBLICATIONS

Himalayan Research as Part of a Global Effort for the Mountains - A Note on "Mountain Agenda"

Whether or not the UN conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of 1992 was a (partial) success may be subject to debate. What is sure, however, is the fact that worldwide concerns and international research about Mountains have received greater attention at UNCED than in any international conference held hitherto.

This new development is mainly due to the efforts of the so-called "Mountain Agenda", a small, informal group of individuals originating from three institutions: the United Nations University (UNU), the International Mountain Society (IMS) and the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Kathmandu. The efforts of the group were generously financed by the Government of Switzerland.

In the context of UNCED 1992, "Mountain Agenda" succeeded to achieve the following:

1. To draw the attention of the Third and the Fourth Preparatory Conferences for UNCED (held in Geneva and New York respectively) to the world-wide problems of mountain environment and development. This attention was substantiated finally in a specific chapter on the mountains within UNCED's AGENDA 21.

2. To publish two important documents concerning the mountain problematique:

- *An Appeal for the Mountains*. This 50 page brochure with ample illustrations is intended to appeal to a broad public as well as busy executives and to inform them about the major issues of present mountain ecology and development. It can be ordered at the Institute of Geography, University of Berne (Switzerland).

- *The State of the World's Mountains: A Global Report*. This is a 400 page overview covering the major mountain systems on all

continents of the globe, but dealing also with general issues like global warming and its effects on the mountains. The Report was edited by Peter B. Stone and comprises the contributions of several dozen authors. The coordination of the team was assured by Bruno Messerli and Rudolf Högger. The book was published by Zed Books Ltd in London. It can also be ordered at the Geographical Institute of the University of Berne.

Especially this second document will be of great interest to the readers of the European Bulletin of Himalayan Research. It contains a substantial chapter (written by Jayanta Bandhyopadhyaya) on the Himalaya, focussing on

- Mountain building, climate influences and natural resources

- Environmental constraints on natural resource use

- The people - environment - development - relationship.

To grasp the main spirit, in which "The State of the World's Mountains" is written, the following passage from the Preface might serve as an illustration:

"Can we now attempt to answer the questions posed at the beginning of this Preface? Is complacency, because of the supposed indestructibility of the mountains of the world, warranted, or do we give up in despair because mountain topsoil will all be washed into the oceans shortly after the turn of the century and mountain desertification will prevail? Obviously, there is no one problem and therefore no one answer. Neither complacency nor despair is in order. The answer lies somewhere between the two extremes of childhood folklore and conservationist alarm. Our overarching concern must lie with the uncertainty. While we can make many informed guesses, we simply cannot make stringent predictions. Even the informed guesses, based upon a great deal of accumulated mountain research and acquired experience and wisdom, do not reach the decision makers with sufficient force or regularity. Dams continue to be built

in ridiculously unsafe places and reservoirs are rapidly silted, generators destroyed, or the entire infrastructure swept away; mountain roads are engineered without adequate knowledge

of slope stability, let alone consideration of indirect effects; and the numerous indirect costs, especially cultural and environmental ones, are ignored. Yet bilateral and international millions continue to be put into major projects that do not have the benefit of critical and holistic evaluation. One aspect of sustainable development should be to ensure compromises such that large-scale infrastructures on mountains are placed in the safest possible localities, least impair the local environment and achieve maximum benefits for the investors and the mountain people alike.

Despair is not called for; mountain environments and mountain peoples are far more resilient than is often credited. The word *fragile* can be overused and counter-productive. Mountain forests do grow back on their own and mountain farmers, without government or international aid, do plant trees and tend them. Perhaps one of the most important needs is to recognize that mountain people have much they can do for themselves and much to offer world society at large. After all, the mountain peoples of the world have already provided us with the potato, coffee, maize, teff and many domesticated animals; and there are numerous indigenous food crops that are untapped - quinoa, amaranth, literally hundreds of species and varieties of tubers and chenopods, to mention only a few. And there is the great range of developed and undeveloped medicinal plants, including opium and coca, whether used for good or ill.

Mountain people are also of two genders, and if the role of the subsistence woman farmer, or pastoralist, or person in general, is not recognized and understood, any development effort will likely be confounded. This involves recognizing the humanity of the mountain farmer and the need to support and strengthen existing local

institutions. It is reasonable to conclude that the future for some mountain areas is bleak, for others it is rather more secure. We need greatly to improve our ability to predict, distinguish and differentiate.

Rudolf Högger

Annapurna Sattrek Map, Nepal Satellite Image Trekking Map

Scale 1:250 000 meters

eight-colour print, format 60 x 36,5 cm, 2 sidemaps

Published by CARTOCONSULT Austria, Univ.-Doz. Dr. Robert Kostka, Felix-Dahn-Platz 4, A-8010 Graz, Austria

Compilation, design and supervision by: R. Kostka, Institute for Applied Geodesy and Photogrammetry, University of Technology, Graz, Austria; E. Jiresch, H. Krotendorfer, Vienna, Austria; P. Pohle, Department of Geography, University of Giessen, Germany.

Based on uncontrolled LANDSAT-MSS scenes No. E-2 789-03545-7, MARCH 21, 1977 and No. E-2 790-04003-7, MARCH 22, 1977. Collateral map data derived from different available map sources. According to the production process of the LANDSAT image mosaic the accuracies obtained are confined.

Since the first ascent of Annapurna I by the Frenchman Herzog and Lachenal in June 1950, the mountain range of the Annapurna Himal has attracted more and more tourists from all over the world. The trip around Annapurna is considered to be one of the most scenic trekking tours of the Himalaya. It leads from the rice-growing areas in the monsoon-tropical region through steep gorges and over more than 5000 m high mountain passes into dry, almost Tibetan-like high mountain valleys. On this satellite map the contrast in landforms is clearly shown even for less proficient map users. Nowadays, with the help of remote sensing it is also possible to gain a pictorial view of

extremely high mountain areas. With the help of the satellite image the difference between valleys and mountain ridges is expressed three-dimensionally using a colour-coded relief representation.

For the map user spaceborne image information alone is not sufficient. Additional information about settlements, place names and trails round Annapurna are the result of extensive field surveys. Village and other names on the map are presented using accepted rules of transliteration. As a result a satellite image trekking map has been published, combining vividness and legibility with rich content.

The Annapurna map is the first sheet of a planned series of satellite image maps from the Himalaya. In Austria it is distributed by Freytag and Berndt Company, Vienna (AS 125,-) and internationally through ILH, the International Map House in Stuttgart (DM 17,0).

Corrigenda

Corrections to Six Proposals for an "Ethnography of the Performed Word" by Andrés Höfer, European Bulletin of Himalayan Research No. 3, 1992:

- p. 17, left col., line 40:
read "quotes" from a naive past
- p. 17, left col., line 41:
read murmuring of the "es spricht"
- p. 18, left col., line 46:
read a close scrutiny
- p. 19, left col., line 10:
read unusual reduplication
- p. 19, right col., line 26:
read that the laymen
- p. 21, left col., line 44:
read Maskarincec's (1990: 160)

In the same number of the Bulletin, the names of the authors Prayag Raj Sharma and Ludmilla Tüting have been misspelt. The editors apologize.