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REVIEW ARTICLE

Stepping into the Public Arena Western Social Anthropology on Development Processes in Nepal

Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka

Bourliaud, J., Dobremez, J.-F. and F. Vigny (eds.) 1990. *Sociétés rurales des Andes et de l'Himalaya*. Grenoble: Versants.

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And selected works listed in the bibliography.

After ten days of Nepalese and Western scholars listening to each other on the occasion of two conferences on recent processes in the Nepalese society held in Kathmandu in September 1992 (1), the periodical *Himal* pointed out in its review a "schism that grew between some foreign and Nepali research camps". While stressing the urgency perceived by Nepalese scholars to address the issues of the socioeconomic development of the country and to attack local problems through, for instance, applied research, Pratyoush Onta, the

author, quoted in a prominent place a Nepalese colleague's opinion on the Western contributions to date: "foreign scholars have done research with no relevance to Nepali society for many years". As is the case with all fundamentalism, it is impossible to argue with such a critic. However, a reply is necessary in order to continue what has been established over four decades (as apparent from Onta's article as well): a dialogue between both "camps".

Such a dialogue is all the more important, since, according to *Himal*, the Western social anthropology of Nepal faces to some extent the same problems that are encountered by our Nepalese colleagues educated within Western traditions: the enormous critical debate about epistemological and ethical issues concerning the Western representation of the "other" and the Western control of discourses on the representation of truth about the other - a debate going on in India for instance through the project of "Subaltern Studies" (2) - has finally reached the public forum in Nepal.

The critical voice in *Himal* has not (yet?) been raised by the "objects" of anthropological inquiries. These basically remain silent within the scientific realm, though not entirely: in October 1992 Alan Macfarlane presented a revealing paper in Oxford about Gurung activists' involvement in his and Sarah Harrison's project to translate Pignède's *Les Gurung* (1966) into English. While in Nepal, and later by fax, he was repeatedly asked to add comments upon specific passages of the book in which the former "objects" of inquiry felt misrepresented. Those whom we study in the course of our research show an interest in