

fact been observed by either side; as Nepalese prime minister Kirtinidhi Bista pointed out in 1969, India did not formally consult Nepal at the time of its clashes with China and Pakistan. The strategic cooperation which has taken place since 1951, including the concluding of the secret 1965 agreement in the aftermath of the Sino-Indian border war, would arguably have done so even without any agreement in 1950 since it reflected the bedrock of common interests. The Peace and Friendship Treaty would thus ideally be replaced by a new one which addressed the problems over citizenship and which spelt out the strategic relationship openly and directly rather than letting it rest on secret correspondence. The difficulty, of course, is that any such replacement would require ratification by a two-thirds majority in the Nepalese parliament and a Communist opposition which raised such a furore over the relatively trivial Tanakpur issue would certainly not swallow any re-endorsement of a defense relationship. A new treaty which left out defense altogether would have adverse effects on the economic relationship. It thus seems likely that, unsatisfactory as the present treaty is, it will be with us for some time to come.

John Whelpton

Notes:

¹In his contribution to a 1990 Indo-Nepalese seminar: "*Indo-Nepalese Treaty of Peace and Friendship: A Plea for its Early Abrogation*", in Ramakant & B. C. Upreti (ed.), *Indo-Nepalese Relations*, New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1992, pp.77-92

***Nepal: Past and Present.* Gérard Toffin (ed.)
Paris: CNRS Editions. 1993, 377 p. Price: FF 240.**

Lately, we have seen books on Nepal edited by Gérard Toffin, singly or in collaboration with someone else, come out in steady succession in the market. The present volume is the latest such work. It contains articles mainly by Franco-German scholars working on Nepal that were presented at the conference in Arc-et-Senans in June 1990, and jointly organized by the C.N.R.S. and the D.F.G. (German Research Council) under the auspices of the French-German Programme. The expanding community of foreign scholars of Nepal, perhaps, feels a greater need today than ever before to know about what another scholar in the field is doing to keep his own work on course. The growing circuit of seminars is a direct response devised to get them out of this situation by opening up an opportunity of travel and interaction.

From the title of the book one is led to think that the volume might be devoted to the subject of politics, history or development, rather than to anthropology. Finding an apt title for the proceedings of a seminar in which the papers presented have a diverse focus and preoccupations is always a

problem, unless a broad, thematic focus is aimed at right from the inception of the seminar. In the case of the present Franco-German Conference, the given theme on "History and Anthropology" had itself been vague and lacking in any specificity. However, the 24 articles in the collection have managed to cover all geographical areas of Nepal, from north to south, and from east to west. There are only two articles by scholars falling outside the Franco-German fraternity - one by a British (David Gellner), and another by a Nepali (Ram Niwas Pandey). The editor himself has made no contribution to the volume except for a brief preface explaining the background to the seminar, and acknowledgements. There is another minor, though, for us in Nepal, significant and welcome departure from the policy "only to publish in French" adopted by the C.N.R.S. scholars all of whom have published their papers in this volume in English. The Franco-German collaboration has had a welcome fall-out indeed.

The 24 articles are arranged in six sections, each section headed by a sub-theme. There are 4 articles under 'Law and Legitimation of Power.' The article by Jean Fezas is on Private Revenge for Adultery in accordance with Nepal's Old Legal Code (*Muluki Ain*), in which he examines the relationship between custom and the place accorded to it in written law since 1854. Such law provides a cuckolded husband with the right to kill the paramour of his wife with a sanction, which is called *jār hānne*. Such a way of avenging oneself was seen as the preserve of some high castes. Strangely, it coexisted in Nepal with the widespread social practice of elopement with someone else's wife (*jāri garne*), which was legitimised by paying marriage expenses to the former husband (*jāri kharca timre*). Such a law on *jār hānne* is unreported from any other Hindu society of South Asia, and the Hindu Law books are also silent about it. In Nepal, however, the burden of caste obligated the husband to appear to look for the seducer of his wife, and to keep the wife from dining with him, or, if not, render himself liable for negligence (*Muluki Ain*, 134/9). Although Jean Fezas does not say from where such a custom might have originated, one possible source could be the ancient customs of the Khasa people.

Axel Michaels' article on widow-burning in Nepal is probably the first detailed documentation of legal and historical records referring to *sati* (widow-burning). However, the framework within which he views it, paralleling it with Hindu ascetic values, sounds less convincing. More acceptably, *sati* may be said to be an extreme form of the ever-present Hindu concept of socio-religious and moral value in which a woman's position is always subordinated to that of man. The next article in this section by B. Kölver attempts to draw inductive inferences with reference to landholding rights by women in the late Newar Nepal. He thinks he has found a document of N.S. 81 of rather far-reaching importance in which one person seeks to transfer landholding rights to his three daughters, by taking resort to some ruse, and in contravention of prevailing custom as well as the injunctions of Hindu Law. Although the general import of the document seems to broadly suggest what he has interpreted, there are, however, some key words whose meaning do not become quite apparent to us. One such word in the document is *pim*. Kölver

believes the resort to a ruse is imposed by the need to keep the agreement secret. But, one asks, secret from whom? The three persons who have witnessed the document to render it valid are the legator's next-in-line legal inheritors in the lineage, in the absence of the legator's sons. With them made privy to the agreement, the need for secrecy hardly seems to be anybody's worry. This leaves such an interpretation open to doubt.

Philippe Ramirez's article is on power legitimation studied through the rituals of Dasain festival as observed in the old royal seat of Argha Rajasthal in the Argha Kingdom. Anthropologists delight in regarding the Dasain rituals as an instance of "state manipulation of religious symbols" to assert power and legitimation. So what passes at the time of the ritual between the Brahman priest, the Thakuri *jajamān* (patron) and the deity is an ideological religious drama in this direction. Ramirez's research in Argha Khanci goes a step beyond this, and examines the possible meaning of the erection of other temples belonging to the goddess of the old royal seat, as well as to another Hindu god by a second lineage of the same family of priests, who don't get the same share of the role as the family of the main lineage of Dasain priests. So, for Ramirez, this urge for creating an alternative religious focus signifies as "defying traditional ritual organization" centering on Dasain. However, one wonders whether such acts of temple multiplication in Hinduism are not an abiding part of Hinduism's polycentric nature.

In the section entitled 'Buddhism and Society' there are three articles. Horst Brinkhaus draws two interesting conclusions from his study of different textual versions of the *Swayambhūpurāna*. One is what he calls a trend in the "Nepalization" of the sacred geography, and the other is instilling them with "pilgrimage piety". That Nepalese annals endowed local places of Nepal with high prestige in the 14th-15th century can be gathered from the very titles of works composed during this period - *Nepāla Māhātmya*, *Himavatkhanda*, *Paśupatipurāna*, etc.

In an interesting sociological study of the neo-Buddhist Theravada *Samgha* (order) in Kathmandu, Jens-Uwe Hartmann shows how this supposedly caste-free religious order (in the context more narrowly of the Newars of Kathmandu Valley) has not been able to free itself of lingering caste feelings, and how monk novices from some low castes are denied ordination to full monkhood.

The third article by Petra Kieffer-Pülz is a short description of recently started festivities in Kathmandu and Patan to mark the Buddha's birth on the Baisakha Full-Moon day.

In the next section on 'Social Identity and Tribal Religions' there are good and interesting contributions from Anne de Sales, Michael Oppitz, Martin Gaenszle, Marie Lecomte-Tilouine, and David Gellner and Uttam Sagar Shrestha, touching on diverse and geographically dispersed ethnic groups of Nepal. Annes de Sales' study focuses on the Chantel's concern to forge a new social recognition and identity for themselves separate from their Magar neighbours in the Myagdi district, with whom in the recent past they shared a lot in common, including their occupation as copper-miners.

Michael Oppitz's study of Northern Magars is very ably presented through

a study of their sacrificial practices. He shows the usual disregard of a field anthropologist for textual theoreticians propounding their theories on sacrifice. His suggestion that a universal framework to explain sacrifice among diverse societies should be rejected seems valid. Notwithstanding what he says, the five broad points on sacrifice he draws from his case study of the Northern Magars ring quite true regarding sacrificial practices among Nepal's multiple ethnic groups, with only point no. 4 characterising them in detail. Martin Gaenszle's contribution is on the oral tradition of the Mewahang Rai, epitomized by their *muddum*, and is a careful examination of the *muddum* in the light of changes occurring from interaction with kindred Rai groups and extraneous Hindus living in the area. Gaenszle is conscious not to emphasize the idea of cultural borrowings too much, especially from the "Great Tradition", for the Mewahang Rai. His is the anthropologists' basic concern to view the ethnic group of one's study, endowing it with all its cultural integrity. All borrowing, he believes, is muted and internalized within the Mewahang socio-cultural milieu, being their knowledge transformed in myths, rituals and symbolism. Therefore, their oral *muddum* is constantly "recreated" and always "in flux".

Marie Lecomte-Tilouine's short study is on a minor cult of Bhume in Gulmi district in which she contrasts the approach taken by the Magars, on the one hand, and by the Brahmans-Chetris, on the other. For the Magars, she says, it assumes the form of a larger community celebration.

The article by Gellner and Uttam Sagar Shrestha is about the treatment methods used by a local Tantric Newar healer in Kathmandu. This consists of a free mix of psychic or spiritual powers, rites, the medicinal blowing of *mantras*, and the like. The authors do not agree with calling the healing methods of this particular healer as being "modern" or "popular", in contrast to the more "traditional rural" healers, and establish him well within the class of traditional healers.

Under the section 'Nepal and Tibet,' the article by Christoph Cüppers is an excerpt from the autobiography of an intrepid Lama, Zhabs-dkar, from Amdo (1781-1851), who travelled all the way to Kathmandu and had the Bodhnath stupa renovated there. The gilded copper rings over the finial of the stupa replace what earlier had probably been the yellow-painted stepped finial of bricks such as one can still see in the Chabahil stupa on the way to Bodhnath. The other article in this section is by Corneille Jest giving a sketch of Newar traders in Kyirung and Nyanang (N. Kuti) in the more immediate past.

There are three articles in the next section - 'Art and Music.' Ram Niwas Pandey gives an art historian's survey of the medieval stone temples from the hills of western Nepal, dating from the history of the Western Mallas and post-Malla. The half-tone illustrations serve the article well.

Anne Vergati's article takes up the subject of scroll paintings (New. *yilampu*) from Nepal that have their provenance between the 16th and 19th centuries. The Rajasthani influence in their style of execution is unmistakable. Such paintings in Rajasthan, according to Anne Vergati, are used as aids for story-telling by professional raconteurs on special days. In Nepal, however, scroll paintings are not reported to have been put to such a use, and their

purpose seems merely to have been to unroll them and put them up on display around a yihāra (monastery) or a pre-ordained venue, so that the general public may be able to enjoy the story in graphics frame by frame.

Mireille Helffer's article is about Tibetan musical traditions preserved in the newly built monasteries in Kathmandu.

The last section, on 'Ethnoecology and Geography' contains seven articles. The majority are concerned with action research with developmental aspects. I only briefly comment on three of them. In what is perhaps one of the most stimulating articles, at least for this reviewer, for its novelty of theme and for a vast new field for research it seems to open up in future for the philologist, Michael Witzel takes up the subject of Nepali toponyms - actually hydronyms or names connected with water or water sources. With the help of this tool he proceeds to map out the pattern of settlement by some of the early tribes and cultural/linguistic groups in the early proto-historic period in the middle hills of Nepal. Meagre data and the overlay of later cultural deposits make assertions purely on this basis look bold and sweeping. In one or two instances, Witzel has proposed unsettling revisions regarding people's movement and settlement which differ from the current and prevailing beliefs. But his arguments seem impeccable, and the copious footnotes embellishing the article show the meticulousness with which he has approached the subject.

Richard Burghart's article deals squarely with the subject of development. It makes an anthropological analysis of electoral politics based on popular voting, affecting public policies relating to the installation of pumpsets and private latrines, and to the distribution of piped water and the maintenance of municipal sewerage systems in Janakpur in the south of Nepal. The new politics of the vote has brought the realisation to people that this can be manipulated to bring them some benefits and increase amenities in their day-to-day living. The enquiry, however, is much too brief and fails to crystallize the issue sharply.

Ulrike Müller-Böker's brief article deals with the question of multiethnicity in Citawan district. The outlook on multiethnic living in what is termed the "meltingpot" district of Nepal is presented through the eyes of the indigenous Tharus. The conclusion one may draw from this study seems to indicate that, despite all the interactions and the predominance of one group over another, certain questions of ethnic/cultural identity never completely disappear, and are irreducible.

Four other articles in this last section are by Joelle Smadja on field terracing, by Willibald Haffner on low soil fertility, by Perdita Pohle on the socio-economic activity of the Manangis, and by Denis Blamont on remote sensing and space analysis in the mountains of central Nepal. All said and done, the volume makes for interesting reading, covering a number of aspects of social science research in Nepal.

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