

## REVIEW ARTICLE

### Recent Anthropological Research on Garhwal and Kumaon

Monika Krengel and Antje Linkenbach

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It would be no surprise if anthropologists working in the Indian part of the Himalayas would be caught glancing across the eastern border comparing jealously the flourishing anthropological research on Nepal with the somehow

meagre efforts in their own region. Leaving aside any comments upon the quality of the scholarly approaches in both regions, it is quite obvious that there exist considerable formal differences between the research on Nepal and that on the Indian Himalayas. Simply by flicking through the issues of the *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* one easily can get the impression that Nepal is an area well-covered by diversified anthropological research (including e.g. linguistics, oral traditions, development studies) undertaken by Nepali and international scholars and which can claim to be at the summit of current theoretical debates as well. Nepal research has a strong institutional base nationally and internationally, interdisciplinary collaboration is encouraged, as is cooperation and intellectual exchange between researchers. To sum up, anthropological research on Nepal has established an international and interdisciplinary discourse, which has developed a dynamic of its own.

Without any doubt, research on the Nepal Himalayas owes much of its strength to the fact that Nepal is a (sovereign) state, the greatest part of which is located in the Himalayan mountains. Attracted by splendid landscapes and the world's highest mountain ranges - habitat of diverse ethnic groups -, Nepal assembles anthropologists from different parts of the world. All this does not apply to the Indian Himalayas, and especially not to Kumaon and Garhwal: in comparison to the plains of India, the mountain regions of the country are viewed as marginal - geographically and culturally. Amazingly, on the one hand, the *Holy Himalaya* is romantically and excessively praised as the abode of gods, as a place of pilgrimage and retreat; it is regarded as an arena for some of the most important cultural and religious dramas of Indian history (preserved in the *Mahābhārata*), as a storehouse of India's cultural heritage. On the other hand, the social sciences (anthropology, sociology), busy with deciphering the constitutive principles of "the" culture and society of India, have scarcely referred to the Himalayan hills. Characterized not only as geographically remote, the culture of this region was also perceived as backward and lacking the classical traits of the so-called Hindu tradition.

The present article focusses on works that have been published recently, some being relevant in the context of current theoretical debates as well. But additionally, in order to touch somehow on the history of research of the region, it seems appropriate to mention also a few earlier publications.<sup>1</sup>

Systematic research focussing on the hill culture of the Indian Himalayas proceeded in conventional channels for a long time and did (does) not succeed in developing its own discourse. It began in the early sixties - the milestone being **Gerald D. Berreman's** monograph *Hindus of the Himalayas*<sup>2</sup>, which concentrates on Garhwal and which became a "classic" in Central Himalayan research. Berreman lays down the aims of his study in three points:

"(1) To provide an ethnographic community study in an important and previously unreported culture area of India; (2) to analyze the functioning and interrelationship of kin, caste, and community ties in a Hindu society known to be differently organized in some significant respects than those of the adjacent and well-known plains; and (3) to study the effects of recent

governmental programs and other outside contacts on a relatively isolated and conservative Indian community" (1993:2).

Referring to the prevalent anthropological discourses of the time, Berreman's research is located in the tradition of village studies, studies of social stratification (primarily caste and kinship), and studies of social dynamics and change. He wanted to nurture these (up to then) regionally limited discourses by adding a new regional focus, which probably could provide new insights.<sup>3</sup>

In the same years in which Berreman worked on his village study, **R.D. Sanwal** was preparing his Ph.D. thesis on caste and social stratification in Kumaon (1976)<sup>4</sup>. In this, Sanwal combines historical and anthropological perspectives:

"The study presented here is of somewhat wider scope than the conventional anthropological field study; it does not present a detailed description of a village or any particular local community. Nor is it a historical study in the conventional sense of the term. What the study seeks to do is to identify a set of basic social categories, and examine their mutual relations and the ways in which these relations (and the categories themselves) have been changing over time" (1976:10).

Sanwal, who for the first time gave a systematic, historically based account of caste structure and caste interaction in the hills, did not receive great publicity (as did Berreman), but for scholars working on the Kumaoni society and culture his book became basic reading matter.<sup>5</sup>

In his book Sanwal tries to show that, in Kumaon, caste cannot be viewed merely in terms of ritual criteria, but has to be seen as a system which is characterized "by the convergence of wealth, political power and high rank" (1976:vi). In the first chapter Sanwal traces the roots of the social structure of Kumaoni society - a structure which was still extant when the British conquered Kumaon - back to the early times of Chand Dynasty (from the 11th century up to the time of the Gorkha invasion in 1790); in the next chapter he analyses the economic positions (landownership, occupation, economic exchange) of the basic status groups. Sanwal postulates that by the sixteenth century when Chand power was firmly established in Kumaon, the status structure also received its final shape. It was characterized by a threefold hierarchy of politico-economically defined status groups: the Asal- or Thul-Jats (immigrants from the plains, holders of superior tenures, monopoly of bureaucracy), the *Khasī* ("indigenous" people, under-tenants, actual tillers of the land) and the Dom (ethnically different "indigenous" people<sup>6</sup>, menial tasks, devoid of landrights). But by considering ritual rank (*varṇa*), one uncovers that it cuts across this secular hierarchy:

"(i) the Asal - or Thul-jat, including the Asal- or Bhal-Baman caste (consisting of the Chauthani and the Pachbiri sub-castes) and the Thakur-Rajput or Kshetri caste; (ii) the Khasi including the Pitali-, Hali- or Khasi-Baman and the Khasi-Jimdar (divided into *naee* and *purana*) castes; and (iii) the Dom" (1976:27-28).

As Sanwal points out, due to this hierarchical structure in which secular rank does not coincide with ritual rank it happens (a) that "Thul-jat as a whole rank higher than Khasi as a whole; consequently Thul-jat Rajput rank higher than Khasi Brahmin" (1976:2), and (b) that the Brahmins (the Chauthani) who are monopolizing political and administrative functions<sup>7</sup> are enjoying higher status than those (the Pachbiri) who hold priestly functions as *purohit* and *pujārī*.

After a painstaking analysis of political, military and economic functions of different groups and sub-groups of the Kumaoni social structure and analyzing marriage relations and social mobility, Sanwal dedicates the final part of his book to the political changes the Gorkha invasion and British rule have brought to Kumaon.

Sanwal's theory of stratification has been criticized recently by **Charles W. Brown** and **Maheshwar P. Joshi** (1990). In their opinion, Sanwal's theoretical approach contains some serious mistakes, the most important being that the caste structure is treated as an expression of the principle of immigration, and that a too strict organization is postulated for Kumaoni society, whereas according to their own "more fluid model", caste should be seen as a result of the transformation of both, immigrants and indigenous groups (1990:249). Furthermore, Chand rulers have been wrongly attributed to be the main architects of Kumaoni caste structure; even if they were "most decisive", the structure itself has been "solidified" both by the Gorkha and the British rule (1990:246). The authors state:

"In fact there does not exist any work other than that of Sanwal which has been carried out in a very systematic and scientific manner. However, the weakness of Sanwal lies in his over-reliance on the works of early British and Indian writers (...) who had *invented* history for the Kumaonis. By the time Sanwal carried out his field work, the local people had become so much history conscious that they gave a coloured version of their community. Thus, certain things were accepted as historical facts" (1990:257).

A synthesis of Berreman's and Sanwal's approach was undertaken by **Allen C. Fanger** in his Ph.D. thesis (1980)<sup>8</sup>:

"The primary integrating theme of this dissertation is that an understanding of synchronic ethnographic data can be enhanced when seen in the context of a diachronic and historical perspective. It was apparent during my fieldwork in the Himalayan village of Bargaon that village society and culture had been undergoing rapid change. As I researched the historical roots of this sociocultural change, I found that the more I investigated the past the more I understood the present" (1980:1).

The dissertation is divided into two sections. The first section presents a diachronic analysis of Kumaoni society "with special attention focused on the patterns and directions of change in Kumaoni social stratification" (1980:1), the second gives a synchronic analysis of the village of Bargaon<sup>9</sup>. In the first part Fanger relies heavily on the work of R.D. Sanwal, which he indicates only in a

footnote (1980:67). In the second part, he follows the lines of Berreman's study. We will restrict our comments to the latter part.

Fanger claims to present the first village study on an "important ethnographic zone", "a region of the Himalayan foothills known as Kumaon" (1980:4). He aims to investigate the village as "a meaningful structure in itself" and as "a structural unit of a broader social system" (1980:15). Fanger tries to analyze the organizational structure of village society under the aspect of dynamics and change: he concentrates on caste structure, caste interaction (food exchange, economic exchange)<sup>10</sup> and the process of "Sanskritization". When dealing with the village economy, Fanger takes into account labour processes, property relations and the development of cash economy and employment migration. The structure and change of family and family relations are correlated with the changing economic conditions. In contrast to other analyses that predict a connection between employment migration and the decline of the joint family, Fanger postulates that employment migration "seems to be contributing to its strength" (1980:446).

We have mentioned that Berreman, Sanwal - and we can add Fanger as well - with their regional studies implicitly contributed, or explicitly wanted to contribute, to a more general theoretical debate on kin, caste and social stratification. In his foreword to Sanwal's book M.N. Srinivas pointed out that "the time is indeed ripe" to concentrate first on the empirical reality instead of "proceeding from some intuitively-grasped principle" (Sanwal 1976:vi). This argument, even by being an empiristic one, contains an element of truth.

Recently, **John Leavitt** (1992) took on the task of criticizing holistic approaches in the sociology of India (Dumont, Marriott), referring to Kumaoni data on ritual, pantheon, and regional history, "all areas that call for more complex analyses than holism offers" (1992:5)<sup>11</sup>. Leavitt criticizes that the premise "India is one", labelled as "cultural holism", leads to the interpretation of local data only as exemplifications of holistic patterns, "radically underestimating the reality and importance of regional and historical specificity in South Asia" (1992:4).

For Leavitt, holistic models are particularly powerful in locating ways in which widely shared South Asian conceptions differ from Western ones (1992:11). But they are not suited for analyses that try to interpret traditions and customs in their own rights and along region-specific meanings, they may even lead to an ignorance of traditions that do not fit into the general pattern.<sup>12</sup> Leavitt suggests "to seek structure on the level of local materials, structure that is not necessarily a reflex of that found somewhere (everywhere) else (...)" (1992:40). Neither can the Kumaoni materials be reduced to the label "residual", nor to that of a variation of the "great tradition". The two examples that should support Leavitt's argument are "the patterning of time" and the "patterning of divinity" (1992:21-28).

Still within the tradition of village studies and written in the monographic style are the works of **Monika Krengel** (1989) and **Joanne Moller** (1993), both on Almora District, Kumaon.<sup>13</sup> In contrast to their "predecessors" the authors claim to place emphasis on understanding the social life of village people by means of emic categories. Additionally, both are taking strongly into

consideration the perspective of women, focussing on research on women's daily routine and interactions.

Krengel's research is located in the traditions of British social anthropology (Meyer-Fortes, Nadel) and French structuralism (Dumont, Lévi-Strauss). As indicated by its title, the book is intended as a presentation of the social structure of a Kumaoni village, centered around the institutions of household and family, caste, kinship, and marriage. Individuals (especially women) are seen in their different roles and changing identities in the course of life, attention being paid also to the description of rites de passage. The exchange of gifts, women and services are for Krengel of utmost importance for an understanding of Kumaoni social life. Exchange is seen as a symbolic message and language substitute, governing practically and ideologically the production and reproduction of life and social system. In the first pages of her book Moller states that

"Kumaoni villagers conceptually organise their social world on segmentary principles, locally expressed by the opposition between the inside (*bhiter*) and the outside (*bhyār*). The conceptual opposition of 'inside' and 'outside' is replicated at various levels of society. The segmentary logic means that the inside/outside dichotomy is flexible ... Who 'outsiders' are (and hence who 'insiders' are) varies from context to context and depends on the level of identification" (1993:11).

With the inside/outside-dichotomy Moller claims to have identified "the" meaningful local concept governing social praxis and cultural interpretation. The study as a whole aims to examine this conceptual opposition with regard to inter-household and intra-household, affinal and intercaste relations, and relations with the people of the plains. It differentiates between men's and women's perceptions and between the perceptions of outmarried women (village daughters/sisters) and unmarried women (village wives). Differentiating between "inside" and "outside", the work of Moller deals with a set of ideological oppositions, which for her seem to be constitutive of social interaction, like moral superiority - inferiority, order - disorder, trust - mistrust etc. Arranging the material within the above mentioned conceptual framework, Moller gives a precise account of high caste village life.<sup>14</sup> Her results widely overlap with those presented by Krengel.

The works of Berreman, Sanwal, Fanger, Krengel and Moller have something in common: they all deal with village life, village structure and village dynamics under a historical and/or contemporary perspective. Moving now from totality to particularity, different aspects of hill culture come into focus.

Several publications take on the task of presenting and discussing the *jāgar* - a specific way of communication with gods and spirits through medium possession, especially prevalent in Kumaon. In his article on *jāgar* ceremonies Allen C. Fanger (1990) differentiates between existing forms of *jāgar* (house or inside/village or outside *jāgar*, *jāgar* held in times of crisis or as a thanksgiving ceremony<sup>15</sup>); he further describes the functions and roles of the essential participants and gives a description of one *jāgar* performance, also

citing the recitations (but only in a translated version). A more analytical way of dealing with *jāgar* can be found in the article by Beatrix Pfeleiderer and Lothar Lutze (1979). After first describing the *jāgar* as a performance the authors give "the anthropologist's interpretation" (starting from an ethno-psychoanalytical approach), which centrally reflects on the therapeutical and re-integrative value of the *jāgar*.<sup>16</sup> Short presentations of *jāgar* ceremonies are also part of the monographies of M. Krengel and J. Moller, an even earlier interpretation has been given by M. Gaborieau (1975).

Whereas, regionally, the research on *jāgar* ceremonies is largely limited to Kumaon<sup>17</sup>, there is another field of anthropological study that deals with an aspect of cultural life and covers Kumaon as well as neighbouring Garhwal: the study of marriage systems and marriage prestations.

In 1987 an anthology was edited by M. K. Raha on *Polyandry in India* containing several articles on polyandry in the Himalayas (including Himachal Pradesh, the Tibetan border region, etc.). In his contribution (first published as early as 1962), G.D. Berreman tries to compare the polyandrous region of Jaunsar Bawar with the non-polyandrous neighbouring region of Garhwal<sup>18</sup>. Peoples of both regions live under "virtually identical physical conditions and their populations and cultures are very similar" (1987a:157). After examining the forms of "monandry" and "polyandry" (including a discussion of current explanations of polyandry), he comes to the conclusion that "a most important feature" has been overlooked by previous commentators: Within the joint family system, prevalent in this area, sexual and interpersonal connotations of the two systems are very similar. Polyandry and monandry are, according to Berreman, relatively minor variations on a central theme, namely: "that a wife brings common benefits to a group of brothers who have acquired her by common payment and who share other rights and property in common" (1987a:169). In one case the reproductive capacity of the wife is shared, in the other it is not.

In a subsequent effort (1975, also reprinted in Raha's anthology), Berreman demands to take into account the "domestic cycle" (or "developmental cycle") when talking about Pahari polyandry. He shows that in so-called polyandrous systems the "domestic unit" may change in the course of time and according to circumstances and choice (1987b:195). So families occur which successively "take the form commonly described as monogamy, fraternal polyandry, polygyny, and fraternal polygynandry or group marriage, with the number of wives and husbands varying" (1987b:195). To illustrate his theses Berreman constructs an idealtypical family passing different forms in the course of time, starting by a fraternal polyandrous family, passing the other states and ending up as a typical monogamous household.

In research on polyandry, the status of women in polyandrous societies is being taken up as a new topic, for example by G.S. Bhatt and S.D. Jain (1987). The authors examine the status of the women in Jaunsar Bawar according to their different roles as village daughter (*dhyantī*, living in the father's house) and wife (*ryantī*, living in the husband's house). G.S. Bhatt has also presented a more systematic field-based study of women's status in the polyandrous regions of Rawain and Jaunpur (1991). He concentrates on this region because in comparison to Jaunsar Bawar marriage habits there are "hitherto unexplored" (1991:1). Several short periods of fieldwork (one to three

weeks) were done in five villages with different social and physical settings (difference according to caste structure, population size, altitude, economic prosperity, distance to roads, etc.).

The study of marriage prestations seems to be of special interest in Garhwal and Kumaon because of the ongoing transformation process from bridewealth (brideprice) to dowry among Rajput clans. Allen C. Fanger analyzes this process in a Kumaoni village. He argues that "diverted bridewealth" (e.g., jewellery given from the groom's side to the bride; cash, which is used by the parents of the bride for the bride's jewellery, dowry and for the wedding feast) characterizes the transitional phase. In his opinion, the transformation from bridewealth to dowry in the Pahari region can be explained by "Sanskritization", migration and the declining economic importance of women<sup>19</sup>, and by the growing prosperity which allows people to afford ceremonies and customs "befitting a Rajput's position in society" (1992:54).

The last two authors we want to discuss - William Sax and Jean-Claude Galey - are concentrating on fields which are most crucial for the understanding of Indian culture and society: religion and politics. Both authors try to locate their approaches in current theoretical debates.

The publications of William Sax are dealing with ritual praxis (1990, 1991 a+b, 1994), trying to decipher the implicit meanings of different ritual practices for the cultural and social life in which they are embedded. For Sax, anthropology is an interpretative science "in search of local logics, particular processes, and fluid systems of meaning"; the "others" are seen by him as human beings with "creative capacity to construct alternative universes of meaning" (1991a:5). And, as meaning is related to context, the worldviews of people have to be taken under closer scrutiny, not as static cultural determinants but as a dynamic set of ideas and practices.

"The concept of world view needs to be expanded so as to incorporate action and practice (...) A world view is only realized in its pragmatic public applications, wherein it is transformed, being shaped by the history and practices of the people that hold it, even as it, in turn, shapes that history and those practices" (1991a:11).

Without referring to the notion, a concept of "agency" is implicit in Sax' writings. Accordingly, his major work *Mountain Goddess* (1991a)<sup>20</sup> "is an attempt to synthesize some important local categories of place and person, and to examine the ways in which these categories shape and are in turn shaped by social practice." (1991a:9) For his analyses he draws upon material collected during his fieldwork in Chamoli District of Garhwal (1984-86, 1987; participant observation of Nanda Devi pilgrimages), the emphasis being laid upon orally transmitted genres like legends, stories and - most prominently - songs. Giving a key to shared sentiments in a cultural context the songs also reveal differences in perspective and interpretation breaking down the presumed totality of this context. Sax tries to show the interrelation between places and people in the social as well as in the political context, he also tries to show how traditions are the object of reinterpretation through the agents.

*Mountain Goddess* (1991a, also Sax 1990)<sup>21</sup> is dealing with the pilgrimages of Nanda Devi, a goddess widely worshipped in the eastern part of Garhwal and parts of Kumaon: the *Choṭī Jāt*, which meanders for three weeks in the mountainous Badhan region of Chamoli District; and the *Rāj Jāt*, a three weeks 164 km barefoot journey in Chamoli District from Nauti, near Chandpur Fort, to Roopkund. During the *yātras* Nanda Devi is seated in a palanquin moving from her parent's home in the "lowlands" to her husband's place on the mountains (Mount Kailash).

Sax points out that Nanda Devi's story parallels the life stories of Pahari women who, living in a virilocal society, are expected to shift from their native place (*mait*) to their husbands' place (*sasurāl*) after marriage. Together with the shifting of place - i.e. the shifting to a new social context with a new set of relations, rights and obligations - the bride is expected to undergo a personal transformation. The pilgrimage of Nanda Devi is seen by Sax as a ritual dramatization of a social practice - the geographical change of place and the psychological drama of changing one's context of identification -, leading to an immense individual (and collective) tension which has to be overcome.

The songs of Nanda Devi which "capture the emotions and ambivalence associated with marriage" (1991a:71) also mirror different views on the mutual influence of persons and places: the perspectives of women and of men. Men<sup>22</sup> say that the bride is totally transformed by moving to a new place, her relations to the people and gods of her *mait* are terminated by marriage and a new set of relations takes their place (1990:495). By contrast, women argue that the old relations never cease and the bond to their natal home will remain strong throughout their lives. Sax points out that the ethnography of Garhwal is a proof that "marriage does not replace one set of relations with another but rather adds a new set of relations to a pre-existing one. (...) a woman never ceases (...) to be the *dhiyanī* of her *mait*." (1991a:126)

Sax shows that relations between persons and places are effective on the political level too. The historical relation of the goddess Nanda Devi (*Rājarājeśvarī*) to the ruling Panwar dynasty of Garhwal served to legitimate their claim for sovereignty and royal power. The royal pilgrimage "traditionally reified and strengthened the unity of king, land, and people in Uttarakhand by physically circumambulating them" (1991a:198). But the kingdom of which the royal pilgrimage is a collective representation, has vanished, and the lack of unifying power reveals its consequences. In the *Rāj Jāt* of 1987 a far-reaching dispute between two factions of priests arose. Related with different places (Chandpur Fort/"Lowland"/*mait* vs. Homkund/"Highland"/*sasurāl*), they traditionally worship the goddess successively, each group in its own place. In the royal pilgrimage of 1987, each group of Brahmins claimed exclusive religious authority, and the conflict escalated to the refusal of *pūjā* by the "Highlanders". Territorial and religious fragmentation and conflict have been experienced by the pilgrims, the different factions and by the anthropologist as a severe challenge of the royal pilgrimage of 1987, which affected tradition and traditional customs deeply (and which, for Sax, proves the fragility of Victor Turner's *communitas* model).

The dynamics of ritual praxis and changing traditions in contemporary pilgrimages, especially the *Rāj Jāt* of 1987, are shown by Sax to be effective on

other levels, the most important of which are: (1) The abandoning of animal sacrifice and the ongoing dispute on the necessity of blood sacrifice for the self-containment and the security of society; (2) The participation of females, Harijans, and one stranger in the last part of the *yātra*, which was formerly forbidden to them; (3) the participation of the media in the pilgrimage and their influence on discourses and ritual practices.

Though Sax presents a most stimulating work, he does not fully utilise the potential the perspectivistic concept would have offered. In his approach to Nānda Devi pilgrimages, Sax relies strongly on oral tradition and interpretations of Brahmins, being personally acquainted with Brahmin groups. He does not take into consideration systematically the views of the Rajput and Harijan groups, whose interpretations and cultural expressions may differ in certain respects.

In another field of research, the *Pāṇḍavalīlā* as a form of ritual theatre, Sax concentrates on performances in Rajput villages (1991b). *Pāṇḍavalīlā* in its many forms is a dramatic translation of local versions of the *Mahābhārata* performed by villagers. The *Mahābhārata* is strongly linked with the Rajputs and the *mise en scène* of the epos has to be interpreted as a stabilization of Rajput identity. As a collective effort, it further serves to promote the unification of the village; as a form of worship (*pūjā*), it generates prosperity and general well-being. Sax classifies *Pāṇḍavalīlā*, in the course of which possession constitutes a central dramatic and ritual element, as a form of folk theatre, locating the difference to classical theatre in the overcoming of the "distinction between actors and the characters they play" (1991b:293).<sup>23</sup>

The publications of Jean-Claude Galey (1990, 1984, 1980) are mainly concerned with the relation between ritual and politics in India on a theoretical as well as an empirical level. The writings clearly reveal that Galey is to be located in the anthropological tradition of Louis Dumont, working explicitly in Dumont's discursive framework. But, in his historic-anthropological reconstruction of the former kingdom of Tehri Garhwal, he follows a more empirical approach. In *Reconsidering Kingship in India* Galey starts from one of the most problematic aspects of Dumont's theory on India. Dumont, on the one hand, conceptualizes king and kingship basically as a secular function, which stands in a relation "of mutual but asymmetrical interdependence" with the priestly function of the Brahmin (1990:145). But, on the other hand, he attests that the king has kept a "magico-religious character" (1990:146). With regard to Dumont, Galey complains that "we are left with separate levels with no clue to understanding how they are related and combine to order a common set of meaning." (1990:146). Thus, the main question for him is:

"whether kingship in India was primarily political with ritual or ideological justifications, or a ritual imperative with political consequence [sic]" (1990:181).

Galey tries to exemplify that kingship as found in Tehri Garhwal has to be conceptualized as a "ritual organisation which, along with priesthood and the gods, orders the world in a continuous series of transformations" (1990:184, emphasis added). Structure and history of the former Tehri State bear evidence that kingship as ritual organization is characterized by the concurrence of

religious **and** territorially based political networks, which originate in local kinship relations, clan dynamics and related power structures. Dominant clans, unified through kinship and ritual ties (clan *devtā*), exercise power over their local clientele, but "along a strict secular thread." They can extend their "mastery" by incorporating the clan *devtā* into the local pantheon or by replacing the ruling deity of a locality (1990:162).

"What matters most here is the ritual status now given to a head of the House. Ceremonial prerogatives over locality transform political mastery into religious potency. Power therefore becomes authority through ritual. We should then distinguish them and separate the power of chiefdoms from the authority of lordships" (1990:162).

Galey proceeds in claiming a **royal function** for the lords. The investiture of the **king** requires a special set of rituals which "demonstrate the exceptional character of the office and separate its representative from the rest of society" (1990:167). Royalty in Tehri was ritually defined as a unique combination of three complementary elements:

(1) The ceremony at the moment of investiture, when the king comes to sit on the throne (*gaḍḍī*): It takes the form of a ritual marriage and is seen as a repetition of the original union between his ancestor and the local princess<sup>24</sup> as well as a union with the feminine counterpart as a source of ritual energy (*piṭha*).

(2) The ritual association with the *Devī* who is the family deity (as *Rājarājeśvarī*) and the territorial goddess (as *Bhagvatī*). The cult of the *Devī* serves "to keep the manifold levels of royal authority alive, to restore its permeating energies within a kingdom ritually defined as an active field (*kṣetra*) and animated by female energies (*śakti*): an arena of potency submitted to growth and decay." (1990:168)

(3) The relationship between the king and the *avatār*<sup>25</sup>, which related to the principle of renunciation. The kingdom is established as "a *realm of order* and the *access to deliverance*" (*tīrtha*) (1990:170).

Without saying so, Galey has revised Dumont in three aspects: by putting into the foreground the ritual dimension of kingship; by integrating territoriality as a basic category in his model; and by conceptualizing kingship as a key concept for the understanding of social organization. The last aspect is of crucial interest. By connecting the royal function and royalty with the basic elements of sociality - kinship, marriage, patronage -, Galey locates the idea of kingship in the heart of society. Kingship is the constitutive principle, the seed from which society in its social, political and ritual aspects unfolds.

In an earlier work, *Le créancier, le roi, la mort* (1980), Galey presents debt ("la dette") as a key concept for the understanding of the social and political organization which is mainly characterized by relations of dependence:

"la dette, et plus largement la relation de débiteur à créancier, est un paradigme central pour qui voudrait saisir le fondement des relations de dépendance" (1980:145).

He develops this concept in the course of his study on bonded labour in western Garhwal, in which he first gives a statistical account of indebtedness in the area under research. He then analyzes debt as structural basis of economic inequality and dependency, explaining the different forms of service. But indebtedness is not seen as an isolated phenomenon, rather it gets support from the caste-based structure of society. "Mise au plan de valeurs, la hiérarchie sociale répond à une hiérarchie des dettes" (1980:162).

Galey constructs a far-reaching analogy: "Dette" as a paradigm serves to explain economic inequality as well as political subordination and religious dependency. It is reflected in the relations between castes (*système des vaincus*, 1980:114), in the different forms of prostitution (*prostitution pour dette*, *prostitution de temple*) and adoption, in the relations between the sovereign and his subjects, between men and gods, between the *rāja* and the gods.

Galey's analysis of sociality with the help of a central paradigm is based on categories related to the field of economics. Ten years later his endeavour for an all-embracing interpretation persists, but the language has shifted. Galey's categorical edifice now derives from the field of politics and is closer to the categorical framework of Dumont.

The picture of Galey's work would not be complete without mentioning one of the most important consequences inherent in his approach of conceptualizing kingship. The conceptual dissociation of king and royal function leads to the conclusion that despite the disappearance of the king from the political scene, kingship is still present on many levels of society. Kingship as an "operating agency" (1990:130) has remained almost unaffected:

"Present in the minds of those who have witnessed its last decades of rule, alive in all the oral traditions, it continues to have a direct influence on the daily lives of the local population and still governs many of the customary institutions ruling over land control, patronage networks, life rituals and calendar ceremonies" (1990:129).

Galey (1990) finds empirical evidence for his hypotheses in the working of clan mechanisms and the ritual calendar (ceremonial cycles around the year). In an earlier article "Souveraineté et justice dans le Haut-Gange" (1984), which deals with forms of jurisdiction and its representatives in Tehri Garhwal (justice du palais, justice au niveau local), he analyzes in depth the juridical functions of the *wazīr* and the *sayānā* acting on the local level and which seem to prove the continuous existence of the royal function after termination of the rule of the Tehri *rāja*. In contrast to *sayānā*-ship, which represents a secular form of jurisdiction, *wazīr*-ship is connected with a temple and the authority of the *wazīr* derives from the gods: "la justice du *wazīr* est d'abord celle de la sanction divine" (1984:374). Galey attributes to the *wazīr* (who mostly has a political and territorial power base as *sayānā* or *thokdār*) a royal function because of his ritual position:

"En somme, la fonction royale assumée par le *Wazīr* dispose ici d'un pouvoir religieux, qui lui permet d'effacer le crime ... il faut aussi souligner que la justice du *Wazīr* se réclame du *dharma* (...) (1984:385).

Galey's work contributes to the expanding field of historical anthropology, which in the Indian context has its main focus upon "little kingdoms" and centers on the confrontation of perspectives deriving from Louis Dumont and Arthur Hocart, respectively, re-evaluating the interrelations between kings, religion and caste "system". In Galey's case, structural analysis prevails against historical analysis of processes and interactions. He tends to adopt the ethnographic present while discussing specific institutions and uses a generalistic mode, abstracting from the particularities of context. *Wazīr*-ship (like *sayānā*-ship), e.g., is presented as a typological model (Galey 1984) without indicating how this relates to the different circumstances Galey must have encountered in the different localities he seems to have visited.<sup>26</sup> It is striking that the author for the most part dispenses with the presentation of ethnographic details, places and contexts. In addition, nowhere are the dates of his fieldwork given with any precision (at least not in the publications consulted).

\* \* \*

Instead of a resumé, we simply raise a question: What has been achieved in anthropological studies on Garhwal and Kumaon, and what is yet to be done? Our answer deals with four main aspects.

- (1) The publications concentrating on Garhwal and Kumaon deal largely with the topics, most prevalent in the anthropology of India: caste, kinship and marriage, religion (ritual) and politics. Research from an anthropological point of view, which would deal systematically with the most challenging regional problems - processes of modernization and integration into larger society, denial of political autonomy, environmental degradation, and local strategies of (re)action - is lacking.
- (2) Besides having region-specific value, some works are contributing to current theoretical debates as well (not necessarily restricted to the Indian context). Further theoretical efforts would help to bring the region more into the forefront, to gain attention and relevance in wider circles.
- (3) The literature reveals a tendency, a "trend", to take into serious account the perspectives, interpretive schemes and life-worlds of women. But still preference is given to the high caste perspective in most of the works, largely ignoring those of the low-ranking groups.
- (4) Researchers working in the Pahari region hail from different countries, use different languages, and relate to different theoretical backgrounds - there seems little willingness to get involved in a common discourse, even when there exist points of contact, as between Sax and Galey.<sup>27</sup> Exchange, cooperation and discourse among scholars within the region and beyond must be developed.

## Notes:

1 This review article does not claim to be all-embracing. It does not present every anthropological piece which has been written on the region. We selected (available!) works which in our opinion are of crucial importance and also can illustrate in some way the region's "history of research". The discussion of ecological issues of the Himalaya regions of Garhwal and Kumaon, which is concentrated in related disciplines, though including anthropological questions, has been presented in Linkenbach (1992).

2 Berreman's book was first published in 1962. It is based on fieldwork carried out 1957-58 in Garhwal, in a village near Dehra Dun, and on his dissertation, submitted at Cornell University in 1959.

3 Parallel to his monograph Berreman wrote a piece in which he reflects on his personal experience in the field (1962). But according to the conventions of the time, Berreman isolated his reflections on fieldwork from his publication; they were included as a *Prologue* only in the edition of 1972.

4 The thesis *Changes in Caste in Rural Kumaon* was submitted in 1966 to the London School of Economics. The book *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon* was published in 1976 (posthumous).

5 Besides the works of R.D. Sanwal and G.D. Berreman, the famous Gazetteer of E.T. Atkinson (1882, 1884, 1886) serves as a base for all research on Kumaon and Garhwal. Especially for Kumaon, the publication of G.W. Traill from 1928 (reprinted in 1992) needs to be mentioned.

6 To trace the origins of Doms in history seems to be a highly speculative task, as reliable historical sources are not available. All too easily the Aryan - non Aryan (Dravidian) - dichotomy gets reproduced.

7 But from the Chauthanis also came the holder of the important function of *dharmādhikārī*, the final authority in dharmic matters. "It was this official who interpreted caste law, and declared and legitimized the upward movement of a group in the caste hierarchy (...). The *dharmādhikārī*'s position had to be respected even by the rulers of Kumaon." (Sanwal 1976:viii) For the *dharmādhikārī* in Garhwal under the Tehri Garhwal *rāja* and after see Galey 1984.

8 The empirical data for the thesis were collected by Allen Fanger in the course of his fieldwork in 1966-67. The dissertation was submitted to Syracuse University in 1980; it is unpublished. Later publications of Fanger (1987, 1990, 1991, 1992) are based on this fieldwork as well as on data collected during two later visits (1981-82, 1986/87).

9 Bargaon is the pseudonym for Pakhura, situated not far from Almora. In later publications (e.g. 1992, s. footnote 10) Fanger uses the real name of the village, because villagers themselves had encouraged him to do so.

10 An overview of caste structure and economic exchange in Pakhura and the nearby region is presented by Allen Fanger (1992).

11 John Leavitt (1985) has written a doctoral thesis on Kumaon. It is unpublished and not accessible to us.

12 Leavitt points out the limits of holism:

"(...) a tendency to privilege the widespread over the local; to privilege the classical over the vernacular; to privilege those aspects of life that fit classical models over those that do not; and a tendency to replace specific analysis with exemplifications of a preordained scheme" (1992: 12). Seeing Leavitt's strong criticism of holistic approaches, it is quite amazing that he pleads for the use of holistic categories when comparing for example India and the West. First, if regional traditions do not fit into the "general pattern" - is it justified to recognize this pattern as "general"? If Brahmanical "sanskritic Hinduism", which describes the single cultural pattern underlying the holistic model, has itself to be seen as a result of historical change (1992:29) - is it justified to take this hegemonial and limited pattern as generally valid, transcending time and space? Second: Cultural holism does necessarily reduce the multidimensionality of cultural interpretations by *constructing* a single one. Why then oppose and compare "constructs"?

13 Monika Krengel conducted fieldwork in a village near Almora for 18 months in 1983 and 1984/85. The publication "Sozialstrukturen im Kumaon" is identical with her doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Heidelberg in 1988. Joanne Moller carried out fieldwork between 1989 and 1991 in a village near Ranikhet, Almora District. Her dissertation was submitted to the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1993; the thesis is unpublished.

14 By the way, Moller mentions that her thesis "is primarily an account of high caste Kumaoni villager's ideas" (1993: 12). But most of the time she is writing in a generalizing manner.

15 Pfeleiderer and Lutze (1979) differentiate between "*jāgar* of unhappiness" (*dukh kā jāgar*) and "*jāgar* of happiness" (*sukh kā jāgar*); the latter is performed when the former has proved successful.

16 The article of John Leavitt, "Oracular Therapy in the Kumaon Hills: A Question of Rationality", was not available and could not be included in this review.

17 In Garhwal the village *jāgar* exists, but systematic research has not been undertaken. J.C. Galey mentions the *jāgar* in Tehri *riyāsat* (s. Galey 1984).

18 Berreman mentions in a footnote that also for Rawain and Jaunpur, immediately adjacent to Jaunsar Bawar (Rawain today belonging to District Uttarkashi, Jaunpur to District Dehra Dun), polyandrous marriages have been reported. See also Bhatt (1991).

19 This argument does not seem correct, especially for areas with high male migration, where the role of women in the household increases.

20 The book was also included in the review article by Berg (1993).

21 Again an article on Nanda Devi songs and the inherent perspectivism has been published most recently in Sax 1994.

22 Sax points out that the men's discourses are not uniform in that one has to differentiate between men as husbands and men as brothers (the latter linked with the bride's natal place).

23 For an indological contribution to Pāṇḍavalīlā see Zoller (1994).

24 It is said that Kanak Pal, the legendary founder of the Panwar dynasty of Garhwal, who came on pilgrimage to Badrinath from the Dhar region of west central India, married the daughter of the king of Chandpur (according to Rawat 1989).

25 *Narasimha-Badrināth*, the incarnation of *Viṣṇu*, is the divinity of the kingdom (*rāṣṭra devtā*) and the king's personal divinity (*iṣṭ devtā*). In the palace the king is treated as the divinity (*Bolanda* [speaking] *Badrināth*), in the temple he is the main worshipper of the god (*pradhān sevak*).

26 Three temple-localities, Hanol, Lakhamandal and Purola, are mentioned in a footnote in Galey 1984. Of these only Hanol is described in more detail in Galey 1986 and 1980. In his article of 1986 Galey presents three temple-localities, Hanol, Joshimath and Badrinath. In these places the hierarchical totality, the mutual interdependence of pure - impure found in social (caste) relations is paralleled in the relation between men and gods and between the gods themselves.

27 A first attempt to bring together research from different disciplines on different Himalayan regions has been made by Fanger, Joshi and Brown in editing *Himalaya: Past and Present*. But as far as we know, this effort did not lead to a continuous exchange between researchers.

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