

INTRODUCTION

by Franck Bernède

Expressions of ethnic diversity, the variety of musical genres in the Himalayas, cannot be reduced to unilateral definitions or analyses. At the heart of different groups, music is the knowledge of specialists or of artisanal castes; it permeates all of society. Revealing identities, whether through festive or commemorative rituals, music, or more broadly any organised event with the phenomenon of sound, is one of the preferred areas of study in the humanities.

Since the pioneer work of A.A. Bake in 1931 and 1955-56, the field of ethnomusicological research in the Himalayas has not stopped growing. Thus, it seemed the time to present the research in this area. Beyond different geographical and cultural anchors, the articles in this issue are evidence of a great variety of approaches touching upon aesthetics, performance, apprenticeships, organology, myths and rituals. There was no question of choosing a particular approach but of revealing the vitality of the multifarious discipline.

This issue has been organised by geo-cultural area. The first group of articles presents different facets of Newar musical tradition and choreography. After a homage to the Newar god of music and dance by R.K. Duwal and M. Maharjan, R. Widdess, traces the history of the *caryā* songs of Newar Tantric Buddhism and their recent revival. He discusses the interesting question of the movement of a religious tradition and a non-ritual art form. I follow up with a description of the apprenticeship of the *dhimay* drum, specifically the role of musical discourse in the expression of territorial identities in this same community. Starting with a comparative analysis of several spring songs (*basanta gīt*), I. Grandin suggests means for considering the possible links between the musical tradition of the Maharjan peasants and the great traditions of the Indian sub-continent.

The articles devoted to the Damāi tailor-musicians in Gorkha accentuate two major manifestations of musical-ritual expression of this community. C. Tingey explores the nature of relations between two groups of musicians during Dasaī — "auspicious women" who sing inside shrines and men whose music is played out-of-doors. She shows how music reveals different phases of the ritual. As a counterpoint, S. Laurent writes on the notion of style based on an analysis of the music played in the temple of Manakāmanā. She shows how each instrumental ensemble develops from particularisms at the centre of an extremely codified ritual genre.

Emphasizing a cognitive approach, P. Moisala studies the *ghāntu* song and dance among the Gurung. She simultaneously analyses musical performance and choreographic description. The image of flowing water appears in the structural model of this repertoire.

Beginning with a portrait of the late Ram Saran Nepali, a *saraṅgi* player, H. Weisethaunet discusses notions of style and tradition among the Gāine caste of minstrels, whose lifestyles are indissociable from their music.

M. Helffer's article on the drums of Nepalese mediums relies on examples kept in the Department of Ethnomusicology of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. She mentions the many observations of ethnologists and urges a comparative study of the manufacture and use of frame drums in this area.

Despite the geographical and cultural distance of the Tibeto-Burman group, the Hani of Yunnan, the editors have decided to include P. Bouchery's article, the first study in a western language on the musical traditions of this group. With their six vocal repertoires and their distinctive instruments, the distance separating the Tibeto-Burman populations from the Himalayas can be measured, presupposing their permeability to foreign influences.

Finally, a brief note by C. Jest accompanies the recording of imitations of bird songs by Gyendra Rana Magar. Man conceives bird songs as intelligible language. It is used by hunters to capture birds.

In addition to these contributions, two bibliographies are included, one by M. Helffer of Western sources, and the other by R.S. Darnal of Nepalese sources. These references cover the period from 1960 to the present and are a valuable tool for further research.

We wished to present reviews of the principal books published in Himalayan ethnomusicology: M. Helffer, *Mchod-rol. Les instruments de la musique tibétaine*; I. Grandin, *Music and Media in Local Life*; P. Moisala, *Cultural Cognition in Music*; and C. Tingey, *Auspicious Music in a Changing Society*. We thought it useful to translate the last three previously published book reviews from French.

Finally, this issue includes the abstract of Mark Trewin's dissertation "*Rhythms of the Gods: The Musicological Symbolics of Power and Authority in the Tibetan Buddhist Kingdom of Ladakh*". This work sheds new light on the Mon caste, homologous to the Damāi of Nepal.

This first survey of Himalayan music, however, still appears to be incomplete. Compartmental knowledge can never be used to draw up a musical atlas. Some regions have not yet been studied. The absence of musicological research in the Terai (especially among the Tharu), as well as in eastern Nepal (Rai, Limbu) is particularly noticeable.

Today, more than ever, "l'ethnomusicologie d'urgence" ("urgent ethnomusicology"), extolled by G. Rouget, seems to confirm a priority in Himalayan studies, not so much from the aspect of documentation collection as the broadening of traditional musical knowledge. As each of us knows, the process of "folklorization" paired with the advent of new media definitively upset ancestral traditions (cf. the report from the Bhutanese newspaper).

Apart from the collections already carried out, the rights of communities to keep their own cultural patrimony cannot be sufficiently insisted upon. Noting the anxiety of our interlocutors on this subject, there is a very real necessity to examine this request and to provide honest responses. The ethnomusicological formation of Nepalese researchers should be encouraged. We hope that the newly established Department of Music, directed by G.M. Wegner, at Kathmandu University in Bhaktapur, will fulfil the triple function of training researchers, preserving and diffusing the musical heritage.

We are happy to illustrate the contributions of this issue with a compact disc. Recordings provided by the authors are presented along with rare archival recordings (Bake, 1956, Pignède, 1958, Jest, 1965). The choice of tracks included on the CD is above all scientific, and explains the unequal technical quality of the whole set.

Acknowledgements

The publication of this special issue on music was made possible largely due to the interest of my colleagues in UPR 299 of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique. Acknowledgements are especially due to the Société Française d'Ethnomusicologie which granted the necessary funds for the production of the compact disc, as well as to Jean Schwarz who assembled the master disc. My gratitude also goes to Susan Keyes for her translations.