

Ingemar Grandin, *Music and Media in Local Life. Music Practice in a Newar Neighbourhood in Nepal*, Linköping : Linköping University (Sweden), Department of Communication Studies, 1989. XX-233 pp.*

Review by Mireille Helffer

This book is the outflow of a Swedish programme, "Music, modernity and the communication of a national identity in Nepal". The author's objective was the study of musical practice (performance and listening) and "mediatization" (assimilation of and accommodation to new resources) in the micro-society of a small Newar town in the Kathmandu Valley from 1985 to 1988.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter describes "everyday" and "extraordinary" situations in which musicians/performers practice various forms of music (religious festivals, processions, marriages, cultural programmes) or how the residents of a specific neighbourhood understand and listen to music. The second chapter focuses upon the Newar musical heritage and describes the diverse musical forms which have survived and the circumstances in which they are performed. The third chapter takes into consideration "modern" music (*adhunik*), transmitted by the media (radio, cassettes, film)—Nepali or Newari songs, songs adopted from popular Indian films or, among the young, western rock, pop or disco music. An interesting distinction is made between "love songs", predominant on the radio, and "societal songs", undoubtedly corresponding to the Nepali term *sāmājik*. The latter attract much interest in Newar society but do not appear on official programmes. The fourth chapter discusses the results of a neighbourhood survey of 27 out of 53 households which responded to a questionnaire. The analysis of these responses from a total of 61 individuals, from 12 to 72 years of age and nearly all men, reveals the role played by the presence of a radio and the programmes broadcast by Radio Nepal (which do not really allow much choice) and the marked preferences of the choice of cassettes. The fifth chapter analyses how the contemporary phenomenon of gradually substituting some repertoires for others has already manifested itself over the years and how

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some circumstances, such as *jātrā* religious festivals, today favour the merging of diverse repertoires. The sixth chapter puts forth an interpretation of the observed facts by emphasizing the musical compatibility of repertoires marked by a common association with "Indian civilisation" or by the use of the same instrument (combination of harmonium and *tabala*, for example). Grandin also discusses the ideological currents which articulate Newar ethnic awareness today, within the realm of music, but also extend to the linguistic and political realms.

In contrast to his predecessors, who followed a more familiar approach to ethnomusicology, and were more interested in Newar music and instruments, Grandin deals with the subject from a new and justified sociological perspective. He clearly shows the turning point marked by the fall of the Ranas, the openings to modernity following the revolutionary movement in 1989-90; he always places such changes within the perspective of the Newar minority. The methodology employed, despite its extremely positive side, nevertheless has serious drawbacks; it assumes as a matter of fact that the reader without knowledge of Nepali will be familiar with the acoustic material in question or have on-site experience. I would have hoped that in addition to the very useful glossary of Nepali and Newari terms, a cassette of recordings would have been included to allow direct access to the sounds of the Newar of Kirtipur.

Besides the questions which the representativeness of the sampling bring up, one might also question the choice of the town of Kirtipur in relation to other Newar towns in the Kathmandu Valley, or even towns which are predominantly Nepali-speaking.

In conclusion, this text by Ingemar Grandin is a valuable source of information and most useful because of its numerous Nepali references (texts, records and cassettes, often unavailable in the West). However, it is likely to have greater interest for the sociologist and risks disappointing the ethnomusicologist anxious to better understand Newar music.