

Nevertheless, she has performed a huge service by providing an annotated historical account of the trade routes, traders, and economy of the trade itself, which will be essential reading for anyone interested in the area, or trade in general. I do have a criticism of the production, which is that there is such a wealth of information and detail in the book that I would have found it useful to have more detailed maps and tables to summarise some of the information. However, she has managed to present the story in such a readable way that I believe that the book will be of interest even to those unfamiliar with Ladakh. But it is likely that her most appreciative readers will be in Ladakh itself.

***Party Building in Nepal: Organization, leadership and people. A comparative study of the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)* by Krishna Hachhethu. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 2002. ISBN 99933-10-13-1, 25 tables, 2 appendices, index, 311 pp.**

Reviewed by Karl-Heinz Krämer

Democratic experiments in the 1950s saw political parties in Nepal as a rather weak agent compared to the monarchy which managed to regain more and more of the traditional power it had lost to the Ranas in mid 19th century. For lack of constitutional regulations, the political parties of the 1950s had few arguments for greater power sharing besides the late King Tribhuvan's vague promises of 18th February 1951. Even King Mahendra's constitution of 1959 left little doubt that parties were only tools in the monarch's hands to manage state powers. King Mahendra finally outlawed parties altogether and introduced his partyless *pancāyat* system of government.

It took another 30 years before a western democratic system with a constitutional monarch was introduced in 1990. The people have now become sovereign and use party politicians as their democratically elected representatives to exercise executive and legislative powers.

Two parties stand out as the most important ones right from the beginning of this new political system: the Nepali Congress [NC] and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) [CPN-UML]. There may have been other books on Nepali parties before, but Hachhethu's book

is the first attempt in English language to analyse the structure and working style of both leading parties of Nepal before and after 1990 in a comparative way. The book explains the parties' transformation from illegal, underground, cadre-based, elitist and ideology-oriented organisations to legitimate, competitive, mass-based, heterogeneous and power seeking parties.

Even before 1990, both parties played vital roles as agents of change, whether as democratic or as progressive forces. The NC has been the most important force in bringing down the erstwhile Rana system and introducing the aspect of party based democracy in the late 1940s and early 1950s, while the CPN-UML's forerunner organisation, the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) [CPN-ML], originated against the background of landlord-peasant cleavages in eastern Nepal in the early 1970s. Both parties' cooperation in early 1990 made the success of the *Jana Andolan* (people's movement) possible and guaranteed their popularity in the early 1990s.

But euphoria soon gave way to disillusionment when party politics more and more degenerated into a power game for the self-aggrandizement of the power elites. Especially during the days without single-party majorities (1994-99), bribery, horse trading, blackmail, abduction of MPs and ministers, conspiracy, manipulation of constitutional loopholes, violation of parliamentary norms and practices, party splits, etc. continuously occurred. Within four and a half years, Nepal faced seven different governments: two minority governments of CPN-UML and NC respectively, two coalition governments with the NC as dominating factor, and one coalition government dominated by the CPN-UML. The remaining two governments were coalitions of the NC with the CPN-UML each with its own splinter group CPN-ML.

The NC was involved in five of these seven governments and thus became identified with the deterioration of democratic morality and ideology while, at the same time, popular support for the CPN-UML was steadily growing. Both parties experienced inner power struggles, but while the NC could evade formal splits time and again, the CPN-UML could not settle these conflicts and formally split in early 1998 when the party was just on its way to pass the NC as most popular parliamentary party. In the 1999 parliamentary elections, the CPN-ML did not win a single seat, but it took away about 6% of the popular votes and thus prevented the CPN-UML from becoming the strongest party by seats and votes for the first time and winning a clear majority of seats in the 1999 House of Representatives even though at that time the NC had regained its unity.

Many Nepali parties have difficulties with the implementation of inner party democracy. The NC is one of the major examples on this, with its strong presidential system that gives quasi-absolute powers to the central level and especially to the party president. It was only in 2001 that some changes were introduced during the national party convention. For the first

time, the delegates elected half the members of the Central Committee (CC) of the party, while the other half was still nominated by the party president. Hachhethu sees this as a breakthrough against the old NC tradition of using compromise or forced consensus as a formula for the management of internal competition for leadership (p.263).

But the NC is still far from democratic participation of local representatives in the central decisions of the party, and this is not ameliorated by the fact that the NC claims to aim at a balanced gender, area, caste and ethnic representation in the party apparatus, with reservations for Dalits and women. G.P. Koirala's key agenda for strengthening the party, propagated by him when he became party president in 1996, has never been implemented. This proves that the NC still follows its traditional style of functioning, guided by indiscipline and the domination of personality and not by the letter and spirit of its programmes.

The CPN-UML is far better organised and managed. Party committee members are democratically elected at all levels. Nevertheless, Hachhethu sees problems in translating this rational structure into an effective mechanism. The CPN-UML may propagate a system of party control over government, but there has been rather conflict among and resistance by party leaders when the party was in power. Another shortcoming of the CPN-UML mentioned by Hachhethu is the fact that the party has been used as a powerful state organisation when it was in power, though this has been true for the NC as well.

The author sees the issue of unity vs. division as the main determinant for the parties' position and strength in national politics. The struggle for power, position and patronage, and the clash of interests, ego and personalities are the root causes for conflicts within Nepali parties. Hachhethu mentions four common features leading to the weakening of internal cohesion with NC and CPN-UML: growth in party size, de-ideologization, clash of interests, and erosion of leadership authority. Lack of consensus among leaders and proliferation of power centres are additional reasons for CPN-UML disintegration.

When the book was written, the NC had still avoided a split despite numerous internal divisions. Hachhethu values this as a proof for the NC's greater capacity to absorb internal conflicts, compared to the CPN-UML which had split in 1998 after years of internal power fighting between the Madhav Kumar Nepal / K.P. Oli and the Bam Dev Gautam / C.P. Mainali factions. But recent months have proved the opposite: While the CPN-UML reunited in early 2002, the NC split, and it was not Koirala and Bhattarai but the former and Deuba who were responsible, with both of them applying disciplinary measures against each other.

Post 1990, the NC appeared to be a party without clear vision, perspective, or programme. It has not been able to formulate policies for the

solution of the socio-economic problems the country has been facing after the introduction of democracy, like gender issues, minority problems, grievances of disadvantaged groups, poverty, unemployment, corruption, etc. Thus, it has become more a conservative force than an agent of change. One example is the adoption of the principles of privatisation and market economy, which Hacchethu sees as a result of international pressure dictated by donors' priorities.

On the first view, the CPN-UML with its self-identity as protector of the poor, minority groups, and backward communities may appear more people-oriented and progressive than the NC. But Hacchethu hints at the CPN-UML's ideological ambiguity and policy inconsistency, because of which the party suffers from "a lack of clear vision and perspective for the development of the people and the country."

Hacchethu's book provides a comparative overview of the parties' evolution, but its highest value lies in the evaluation of the period after 1990. The study contains an impressively detailed analysis of historical events, organizational structures, and ideological statements, as well as leadership behaviour and power struggle. Even the most critical readers will find few, if any, factual errors, which are in any case of no importance for the substance of the book. It must be emphasized that the book provides a neutral analytical picture of Nepal's leading political parties that is free of any personal attitudes. Finally, the numerous tables with their detailed comparative information are another highlight of the book. Hacchethu's book is a must for all who want to get an insight into the working and structure of Nepal's party political system.

***Policy in High Places: Environment and development in the Himalayan region* edited by P.M. Blaikie & S. Z. Sadeque. Kathmandu, Nepal: ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development), 2000. ISBN 92911523-3-1, 209 pp.**

Reviewed by Ulrike Müller-Böker

'Policy in High Places' is first of all a report of an ICIMOD project – without any doubts, a very ambitious one – intended as policy recommendation. If a reader of this publication expects a theory-guided contribution of the well-known author Piers M. Blaikie he/she may become disappointed.