

SHORT REVIEWS

* *Books*

THE FESTIVALS OF NEPAL. By Mary M. Anderson.
288 pages, 23 illustrations. Published by George Allen & Unwin,
London 1971. Price £ 5.75.

Since the opening of Nepal in 1951 and the influx of tourists, embassy personnel and development projects, visitors to the country have been fascinated by the round of feasts and festivals which truly constitute a way of life for the people of the Valley of Nepal. Mary Anderson, however, was not satisfied to be the usual tourist with a camera who takes home a stack of slides but has no real understanding of what the events photographed mean to the people of Nepal. She used her five years in Nepal as the wife of a diplomat to probe deeper into the "meaning of the ancient processions and rituals, the mythological, religious and historical backgrounds of the ceremonies, and the wealth of delightful legends and folk-tales surrounding them." The result of her research is a well written and beautifully illustrated account of the principal Hindu and Buddhist festivals observed by the people of the Valley of Nepal.

Though many of the principal feasts and festivals described in the book are celebrated by people throughout Nepal, and indeed all over India as well, Mary Anderson was concerned with the observance of these feasts in the Valley of Nepal and the meaning of them to the people who live there. It is this fact which makes her book of special interest.

The Valley of Nepal is something of a unique cultural unit. Before the unification of Nepal at the end of the 18th century the Valley of Nepal was a relatively closed cultural unit with its own special characteristics. The Valley knew no outside conquerors before the coming of the King of Gorkha and it was spared the terrible destruction of the Moslem invasions which destroyed many of the cultural institutions and edifices of North India. Its culture, which was influenced by successive groups of people who came from India to make their home in Nepal over a period of nearly two thousand years, was left intact; and the round of festivals described in this book embodies that culture. Here one finds the principal Hindu festivals observed by Hindus and Buddhists alike, each with their own interpretations of their meaning, their own legends, and their own rituals. One finds Buddhist festivals observed as they were in India before the coming of the Moslems and the disappearance of Buddhism in India. One also finds a number of festivals that are wholly indigenous to Nepal such as the *Gai Jatra*, or procession of sacred cows, when decorated cows; or young boys costumed to represent cows, are taken in procession round the city by all those who have had a death in the family within the past year, and the many Newar festivals, such as the *Bisket*

Jatra of Bhatgaon, the Red Macchendranath *ratha jatra* of Patan, and the White Macchendranath *ratha jatra* of Kathmandu, some of which are peculiar to individual villages or sections of the city.

In the case of each of these festivals the author has observed the celebrations, noted the principal rituals, and questioned the people of the Valley to determine what the festivals mean to them. She has not consulted the pandits for a philosophical account of the festivals and their religious meaning nor has she probed historical data to determine when and how these festivals came to be observed in Nepal and how they have been subsequently changed by later cultural influences. This was not her purpose. Her purpose was rather a survey of the living tradition and the legends surrounding them which are current among the people. Consequently the book presents a delightful account of the folk religion of the people of Nepal as embodied in their festivals. In her foreword the author admits the possibility of error; perhaps one could say rather, the possibility of different interpretations of the festivals and different rites or observances surrounding them. When one is dealing with folklore and legends there are bound to be differences in what the festivals mean to people of different social, economic, and educational backgrounds. This is compounded by the great number of festivals. Thirty six are described by the author, and these are by no means all of the festivals observed in Nepal or even in the Valley of Kathmandu.

The festivals are presented chronologically beginning with the observance of the Nepalese New Year in mid-April and ending with the *Sapana Tirtha Mela* on the last day of the year when people gather at the stream outside of the Tokha village to bathe and pray for renewal of life and health during the coming new year. Twenty-three pages of lovely colour plates illustrate the principal festivals and help the reader to share in them in a way that no amount of text could do.

The account of the festivals is preceded by a brief introduction sketching the geography of Nepal, its history, religion and culture to give the reader some background for what follows. A brief bibliography is appended to show the reader where he can pursue this background in greater detail. Regrettably, the author's introduction is marred by a few errors of fact, the most serious of which is the confusion of the unification of Nepal toward the end of the 18th century and the war with the British in 1814-16 which resulted in the loss of about half of Nepal's territory. The confusion of these two events results in a faulty interpretation of both.

The friends of Nepal certainly owe a debt of gratitude to Mary Anderson for this popular introduction to the life and culture of the people of Nepal, and those who came to Nepal as advisers to cooperate in the economic development of the country will find here an aid to an understanding of the culture of the people they have come to assist. The people of Nepal, in turn, will indeed be pleased to see the

interest of their friends in their culture and religion, and perhaps be spurred on to further research into their own cultural and religious heritage.

All of us, however would like to have received the book from the publisher at a much more reasonable price.

John K. Locke

** Reprinted books*

TEXTBOOK OF COLLOQUIAL TIBETAN.

By G.N. Roerich and Lobsang Lhalungpa.

2nd edition, revised and enlarged by Lobsang Lhalungpa.

280 Pages. Published by Mañjuśrī Publishing House, New Delhi,

1972. (Bibliotheca Himalayica, Series II, vol 3)

The first edition of this book was in many ways the most practical manual for learning spoken Tibetan. Lighter and more easy to carry about than Nornang-Goldstein, and with conversational material more useful than that to be found in Bell or Betty Shefts-Kun Chang, the book was for several years hard to come by; and Mañjuśrī, who have already given us so many worthwhile volumes, are to be congratulated on making it available once more. This is not just a reprint of the first edition (as stated on the back of the title page) but a second edition incorporating revisions and additions (as stated in the Preface). About forty-five pages have been added, and some deletions have been made in Parts I & II. Suffixes and prefixes, and the declension of verbs are now dealt with at some length. The vocabulary has been expanded to include more modern terms, useful phrases and rhyming terms. More proverbs have been added; and there are now two more sections in the conversational exercises. Blank pages have been inter-leaved for note-taking; and there is a new section on Tibetan handwriting. The present writer has not yet had access to the phonographic record "available separately or with the book", on which "selected important passages" have been recorded.

Most of the deletions seem commendable. But a lot of the new material has been added somewhat carelessly and the proof-reader seems to have spent a lot of time nodding. Herewith some suggestions are offered in the hope that they may be of help in bringing out a third edition.

- p.3,1.1 For 'words combined with vowels', read: 'words formed by consonants combined with vowels'.
- p.3,1.26 For 'The letter 'b' is pronounced 'ba' when preceding a syllable', read: 'The letter 'b' is pronounced 'pa'...'

- p.7,1.8 *Tshur* and *phar* mean as often 'this side' and 'that side' as 'here' and 'there'.
- p.7,1.12 In Tibetan, read *yol-ba* for *yal-ba*.
- p.7,1.13 The translation of *rus* by 'caste' and *rigs* (p.8) by 'caste, kind' can only lead to confusion in the beginner's mind.
- p.26,1.3 For 'chieftan', read 'chieftain'.
- p.27 In the plural forms of *rta*, much print has disappeared.
- p.28. In the plural forms of *groñ-khyer*, much print has disappeared.
- p.36,37 In the singular and plural of the Pronominal Declension (*ña*), some print has disappeared.
- p.39,1.4 'la' has disappeared in the loc. singular and plural.
- p.41. 'la' has disappeared in the transcribed renderings of the 'dative': '*di-la*, '*di-tsho la*.
- p.50 I do not understand why *dañ* has been changed to '*ten* (?) on lines 17-21.
- p.51 'Four and five make nine' is true; but the Tibetan states that four and and five make ten, which is untrue.
- p.53,1.20 For 'it is ten to one', read: 'it is ten to two'.
- p.53,1.24 For 'it is five to one', read: 'it is five to two'.
- p.61 If *ñas phyin-pa yin* is to be called an 'Imperfect', should it not be translated 'I was going' rather than 'I went'?
- p.65,1.21 I think 'go in peace' should have been retained before 'goodbye' as 'please sit down' has been retained before 'goodbye'.
- p.65,1.25 The change in translation from 'prepare the food well' of the first edition, to 'please help yourself' is interesting. I think 'please stuff yourselves' would be closest to the real meaning. It is always difficult to isolate short phrases from their context. I believe it was Bertrand Russell who first pointed out that 'well, friends, this is it' is the English for 'Allons, enfants de la patrie, le jour de gloire est arrivé'.
- p.68,1.4 'I do not wish to do it' is an improvement on the previous 'I did not say that I wish to do it'.
- p.81,1.23 I do not understand the relevance of 'Are they doing it ?'
- P. 82 In view of the example given, the sentence: 'Where a verb follows an interrogative neither *yod red* nor *yod ma red pas* is applicable but only *yod red*' should surely read: 'Where a verb follows an interrogative, only *yod red* is applicable'.

- p.83,1.20 Is 'seeing' a slip for 'being seen' ?
- p.86 *ña-rgyal* can have several shades of meaning; but if *ña-rgyal bslañ-pa* is rendered by 'to arouse pride' surely *ña-rgyal lañs-pa* means also 'to feel proud'.
- p.89,1.19 The Tibetan and transcribed forms of *kañ-yin-na* have been omitted.
- p.105 The note to *zhal-tog* 'any.eatable' seems to me wrong. *Zhal-tog* is primarily the honorific form of *çiñ-tog*: it can have particular regional meanings like 'sweets'.
- p. 106, 1. 19 Should read *rañ-gi yon-tan yag-po gson*.
- p.110 The original 'What is that man asking?' seems to me better than, 'What did that man say ?' Once again, the context will determine the meaning.
- p.111 'Am I not working at present?' would be closer than 'Am I not working?'
- p. 111, last l. *kha-sañ nas* can signify 'recently' but means literally, in my present opinion: 'Since the day before yesterday'. *kha-sañ* and *mdañ* are not easy to delimit in time: there seems to be a certain over-lap in their usage. However *mdañ* is always equated to Nepali *hijo/hiju* and *kha-sañ* to Nepali *asti*.
- p.113 For 'They will probably play', I suggest: 'They will probably be playing'.
- p.114 For 'reletive', read: 'relative'.
- p.120 For 'once own', read 'one's own' .
- p.131 The transcribed form of the sentence beginning *groñ-khyer chuñ-chuñ* no longer corresponds to the Tibetan.
- p.140 left column, 1.14. For *thub-ki* read: *thub kyi*
- p.142 The sentence beginning 'usually in each locality' ... is no longer English, and does not fully translate the Tibetan.
- p.179 The second,third and eighth lines of the passage in Tibetan are not easy to decipher in my copy.
- p.209 *lo ga-tshod phyin-na'añ* is not translated. I suggest: 'Whatever the age'.
- p.209 'Wine' still seems to me an unfortunate translation of *chañ*; 'beer' is better.
- p.214 For *gnod suyel-ba* read *gnod skyel ba*.
- p.215 'Bank' would be a more usual translation than 'Treasury' these days for *dñul-khañ*.

In the third edition of this book, perhaps more precise definition of culinary terms might be included: the definition of terms such as *phyur-ba*, *la-phug gob-btsas*, *man-chi'i-tse*, *gsol-'dres*, *methud*, which have remained unchanged in the present edition, are inadequate. One is also surprised to note that *mog-mo* is still missing from the vocabulary. Again one is often struck by the fact that very common meanings are not indicated; *thag gcod-pa* means 'to decide' as often as 'to fix'; *lte-ba* certainly means 'main, principal, rite' but also 'navel'. *rtsag-ge rtsig-ge* can mean 'various' but it usually means 'unstable'. *çubs* does mean 'case, container, scabbard', but it would be useful to add that *yig-çubs* means 'envelope'.

On the other hand much of the new vocabulary is very useful. Terms like *dbañ*, *luñ* and *'khrid* are more adequately translated than is usually the case. Unfortunately the Tibetan for 'eight noble paths' (p.248) has somehow slipped out of print. *Slob-dpon* is translated correctly on p.255 as 'spiritual teacher' but on p.261 as 'spirited master' which may or may not be the case.

Much of my criticism may sound carping, but I have personally found this book so helpful that I would like to see it in a tidier form. The section on 'Tibetan Handwriting' could surely have been less of a mess. Jacques Bacot's article, 'L'écriture cursive tibétaine' in *Journal Asiatique*, jan.-fév. 1912, should have been quoted in this context as it still remains most useful, particularly with regard to abbreviations. And the bibliography should be revised to include at least Chos grags, *Brda'-dag miñ-tshig gsal-ba*, Peking 1957; Desgodins, *Dictionnaire Thibétain-Latin-Français*, par les Missionnaires Catholiques du Thibet, Hong Kong, 1899; and the vocabularies to be found in R.A. Stein, *L'épopée tibétaine de Gesar dans sa version lamaïque de Ling*, Paris, 1956.

I remain sceptical about the form *ñar* which is used throughout the book. *ña rañ la* and *ña la* seem to me much more frequent in both spoken and written usage.

A.W.M.

HISTORY OF NEPAL. By Munshi Shew Shanker Singh & Pandit Shri Gunanand. (Edited by Daniel Wright) *xiv*+320 pages.
14 plates. Originally published in 1877. Reprinted 1972 by Nepal Antiquated Book Publisher, Kathmandu, Nepal. Price. N. Rs. 60/—

In the last issue of Kailash a review of a Calcutta edition of this book was printed, criticising the heavy editing done by the Calcutta publisher. We are pleased to inform our readers that this valuable book has again been reprinted, this time in an unabridged, unedited reprint (offset) edition. Only two plates are missing in this reprint edition, plate VII on page 78: "The footsteps of Manjusri and of Buddha", and plate XIII on page 213: "The prayer composed, and written in fifteen characters, by Rāj Pratāpa Malla, A.D. 1654". (Plate VII has been included on page 64 in a reprint of *Hodgson: Essays on the languages, literature and religion of Nepal and Tibet*, (Bibliotheca Himalayica, Series II, Volume 7, Manjusri Publishing House, New Delhi, 1972.)

Despite the two missing plates, this reprint is of good quality; both paper and binding are above the usual standard of such reprints now flooding the market in India. It is encouraging that Nepalese publishers now take an interest in reprinting unavailable books on Nepal.

* Journals, anthologies, etc.

THE HIMALAYAN REVIEW. Volume V.

1972. *vi+72 pages, 12 charts.* Edited by S. L. Amatya. Published by the Nepal Geographical Society, c/o Department of Geography, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal. Price: Rs 10/-per copy.

These short reviews are not intended to do full justice to the material reviewed; they are primarily intended to draw the attention of our readers to books, journals, phonographic recordings etc. relating to the subject matter of this journal.

The Himalayan Review, started in 1968 by the Nepal Geographical Society, is edited by three eminent Nepalese Scholars, Professor S. L. Amatya, Dr. Harka Gurung and Dr. Mohan N. Shrestha. The previous four volumes have maintained a high standard of scholarship, and this fifth volume is no exception. It contains the following articles (1) The Growth and General Distribution of Cash Crops in Nepal, by S. L. Amatya, (2) Rotating Credit in Gurung Society: The Dikhur Associations of Tin Gaun, by Don Messerschmidt, (3) Distribution and Mobility of Graduates in Nepal, by Harka Gurung, and (4) Agricultural Condition in Kathmandu Valley for the last 150 years, by U. M. Malla. The journal is well printed, and the maps and charts accompanying Dr. Gurung's article are excellent. We hope our readers will support this journal actively.

PINES—Academic and Cultural Quarterly Volume I—Part 2. (1972 ?)

iv+72 pages. Edited by B. Shastri. Published by the Literary and Cultural Cooperative Society, Laiturnkhrah, (Cottage of Dr. I. B. Roy), Shillong-3, Meghalaya, India. Annual Subscription: Rs. 8/-.

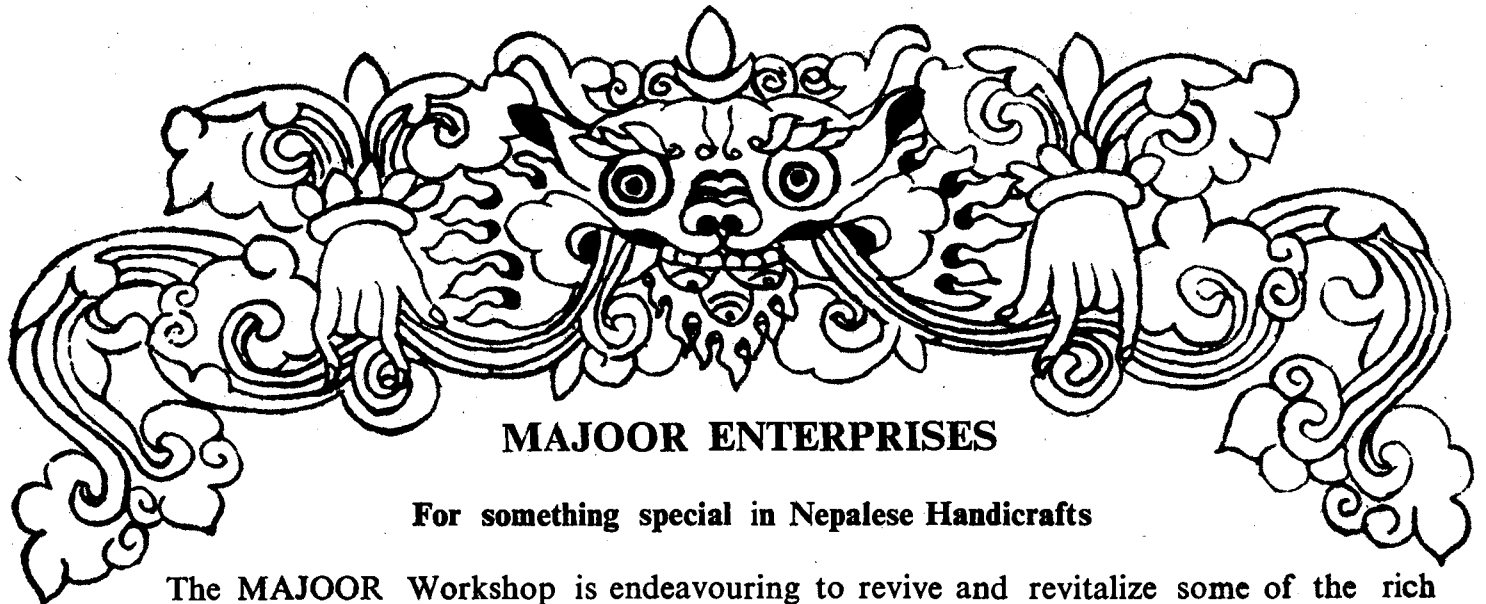
After a long silence, PINES again has re-appeared. In our last issue we briefly reviewed Part 1.

Introducing Part 2, the editor laments the difficult financial position of the journal, and concludes: "Wiser and sobered by experience we are modest this time—the volume is attenuated and the number cut down. But the contents we dare hope keep up to the standard, and will not fail to appeal."

This issue contains 10 articles on various subjects related to the history and culture of the peoples of North-Eastern India. Dr. S.K. Chaube writes on British rule and social transition in the North-Eastern Hills, Biloris Lyndem on Khasi and Jaintia education, W. Saiza on Cultural traits of the Manipuris, Miss V. M. Simon on Khasi birth rites, and so on. S. Biswas has compiled an extensive list of snakes of the area, and Mrs. L. R. Dingdoh has contributed an interesting article on tiger hunting techniques in the Khasi Hills.

H. K. K.

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