

## SHORT REVIEWS

THE SHERPAS OF THE SOLU DISTRICT. A Preliminary Report on Ethnological Field Research in the Solu District of North-Eastern Nepal. By Hans Guldberg Axelsen. 71 pp. Hist. Filos. Medd. Dan. Vid. Selsk. 47,7, Copenhagen 1977. Price: D.kr. 70.—

The author has spent some four months in 1972-73 in the Solu district. An ethnological study of the Sherpas of Solu would have been most welcome. The present work, however, is a disappointment. In some 55 pages of text, the author attempts to touch on all aspects of Sherpa culture in Solu—monastic life, religious festivals, archaeological remains, social structure, material culture and economic development, to mention but a few of the major topics. The result is that nothing is achieved, the information provided being much too fragmentary, brief and incidental to be of any real value. There are hardly any references to existing literature on the Sherpas. Although expressly stated to be "preliminary", this report would rather seem to be premature. The price, approximately US \$ 12.—, is entirely out of proportion with the dimensions of the book.

P. K.

ORDERED SPACE, CONCEPTS AND FUNCTIONS IN A TOWN OF NEPAL. By N. Gutschow and B. Kölver, 59 pages, 16 plates and 3 maps. Published by Kommissionverlag F. Steiner GMBH, Wiesbaden, 1975. Price: N. Rs. 50.

This study appeared after a previous book by Auer and Gutschow about Bhaktapur (*Bhaktapur. Gestalt, Funktionen und religiöse Symbolik einer Nepalischen Stadt im vorindustriellen Entwicklungsstadium*, Technische Hochschule, Darmstadt, 1974) which was a general presentation of the town. One particular aspect of the town is studied more deeply in this latest work: the spatial organisation and the present function of the religious buildings are compared to abstract concepts concerning a Hindu town. We should perhaps remind readers that from 1971 onwards part of Bhaktapur has been restored in the framework of a German-Nepalese project: several maps and plans of the town and of its monuments and buildings have been drawn up on this occasion and this has made possible the study of the town's religious organisation. Gutschow was one of those responsible for the restoration of the Pujari Math and he published an article on the subject ("Pujari Math in Bhaktapur", *Deutsche Kunst and Denkmalpflege*, Deutscher Kunstverlag, München, 1972, p. 103-118).

In the first part of this most recent publication, after an introduction concerning the economic situation of the town, which is described as "pre-industrial", the authors discuss the "concept of a town" in the Newar context. In their view, the implications of the concept are determined by the religious organization of such towns. The main difference between Patan and Bhaktapur is that from its foundation the former town was planned and its space organised in a certain manner whereas at Bhaktapur the territorial limits were grafted on a pre-existing structure: "While we have evidence

to believe that ritual delimitation was an essential feature of Patan from its very beginning. analogous delimitations have in Bhaktapur been imposed onto a structure that already existed" (p. 21). The 'Eight Mothers' shrines, which occupy positions around the town, aimed 'to raise the status of what came to be a royal settlement, raise it to the level of other royal cities" (p. 21). Perhaps it should be stressed that this religious organisation of the town corresponded to a certain administrative and political organisation. The authors note: "We think it is the very point of Hindu notions about towns that the distinctions between the religious and political history—or more generally between the religious and secular interpretation of one and the same set of facts—is irrelevant. In the Hindu system of Bhaktapur, political history is, as it were, expressed in terms of religion and ritual" (p. 22).

In the second part of their work, entitled "Ordered Space", they analyse the links between the social and the religious organisation of the southern part of the town, that is to say, the part lying between Taumadhi Square and the Masan Ghat area. This approach is an innovation, for up till now researchers had described the monuments without taking into account their religious function. Moreover the authors show that Newar houses are situated in function of their position in the social hierarchy: "the social status of inhabitants is expressed by their greater or lesser proximity to the centre of the city" (p. 34). This is true not only for Bhaktapur but also of Kathmandu and Patan where untouchables previously lived outside the town limits. It is particularly impossible to study the social organisation of Newars, particularly those who dwell in towns, if one does not take account of their religious buildings and their religious organisation. Our hope is that studies similar to this one will be undertaken in other Newar localities and thus enable comparisons to be drawn with Bhaktapur and so lead to a better understanding of Newar civilisation as a whole.

Anne Vergati-Stahl

THE HIMALAYAN WOMAN. A study of Limbu women in marriage and divorce. By Rex L. Jones and Shirley Kurz Jones. 155 pp., photos, glossary, index. Published by Mayfield Publishing Co. Palo Alto, California, 1976. Price: \$ 3.95

The authors want this little book to be a contribution to the current discussion on the status of women. It is about the place women occupy in a society dominated by men. But they intentionally keep the debate free from passion. The book aims mainly at insisting on the diversity of the feminine condition in South Asia: to show, based on material collected from the Limbus of the Terhathum region, that women in Eastern Nepal are not as submissive as might be supposed.

A method derives from this initial project. Describing kinship and marriage does not serve to explain social mechanisms; nor is the intention to show that a woman's marriage helps to cement the bonds between groups of men. The question is to know

if the Limbu woman has the possibility to make for herself the fundamental choices of her life: to choose her husband; to break up a union that does not suit her; in other words, is she capable of deciding her own destiny ?

Certainly, this is a very Western way to tackle the problem. Indirectly the authors justify the soundness of their approach. In presenting the Limbu, they show how the fight for more land increases in importance, how Limbus migrate in search of money and how the economy is expanding. All these factors modify the local outlook profoundly. The individualism typical of the Western world is taking hold in Asia.

Shirley and Rex Jones start out from the initial observation that divorce among the Limbu is frequent: 20% for all marriages they studied. At first sight, then, Limbu marriages seem unstable, but these statistics are not very helpful if one wants to find out whether the women are satisfied with their fate. But it is to the authors' credit that they do not stop at statistics and that they reason that one must look much more closely if one wants to capture social realities.

The social institutions as described are not much more encouraging either. The authors study successively the rules of inheritance, particularly in real properties; the definition of lineage and of clans; the predominant place of the homestead in the ritual and the three types of Limbu marriages: by arrangement (*magi biha*), by choice (*chori biha*), and the marriage that results from adultery (*jari*). Every one of these institutions is marked by male dominance: patrilinear succession, patrilocal residence, and the importance of male initiative and decision-making.

At first a very positive point in favour of the position of women becomes apparent with the study of the dances (*dhan nac*). Thanks to these dances, the young girl has the opportunity, in her village and outside far away from adults, to meet many boys whom she could possibly marry. Contrary to what other Nepalese often believe, these dances do not imply sexual liberty. But it is true that they are all oriented to exalt amorous sentiments. Long before her marriage, the Limbu girl may have a boy-friend in every hamlet of her valley. This institution allows the girl to choose her mate.

In their study of marriage, Shirley and Rex Jones show that even here customs are marked by the pre-eminence of men. The Limbus of Terhathum, contrary to their brothers who live farther north, mostly practice marriage by arrangement. The young girl is consulted regarding the choice of her husband, but the initiative remains with the boy. The marriage itself is not easily faced by the young girl. It means a time of psychological tension which the ritual tries to overcome with symbols. And later on the condition of the married woman turns out to be a traditional one. The authors try to prove this with their description of pregnancy, childbirth, the care of the baby and the part the woman has in the child's education. The role and the functions of the mother are enhanced in importance.

Nevertheless, before this comes about, there is the problem of studying where the young bride will live after the first months and sometimes even years after her

marriage. The answer is sometimes with her husband, sometimes with her father. This particular study makes a second point in favour of the condition of woman. The social rules authorize the young Limbuni to return home if she does not want to stay with her husband. There is a kind of fluctuating period the length of which the woman can determine at will and during which she can alternate between two possible choices. She will decide according to her own preference whether to choose the residence of her husband—if she is satisfied with him—or that of her father, if she is not. This transition period may in some critical cases last several years. Once back in her home village the young girl has all the leisure to participate again in the dances and to pick up with her former boy – friends. If this continues, she may go off with another young man.

The authors insist on their observation that the Limbu marriage is a trial marriage; the young bride remains the mistress of her choice and of her decisions.

Thus Shirley and Rex Jones have new elements at their disposal in explaining the divorce question: it is frequent but it is not a real divorce in the sense that we understand it. It takes place during the first years, or even the first months, of a trial marriage. The couple does not have any children: the marriage may not have been consummated. This is the third point in favour of the condition of women among the Limbus. Though the men take the initiative in the marriage, the women have all the latitude to accept or not to accept this initiative. True divorces after several years and after several children are rare. The Limbu marriage is therefore much more stable than it would appear at first glance. And it is this stable marriage that is once again the woman's choice.

Shirley and Rex Jones depict very sympathetically one of the most original and often misunderstood features of Limbu culture. At the same time they furnish much hitherto unknown information concerning Eastern Nepal.

Philippe Sagant

TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE KATHMANDU VALLEY. By Wolfgang Korn. *xix, 121, 61 line drawings, 12 sketches, one photo.* Bibliotheca Himalayica, Series III, Volume 11. Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu, 1976. N. Rs. 110.

Any sensitive westerner arriving in Kathmandu Valley is sure to be overwhelmed by the richness, exuberance and exoticism of its traditional architecture. Previous experience of mediaeval Europe prepares the visitor for the human scale, the picturesque street vistas, the crowded bazaars and the varied spatial qualities of its public open spaces. But nothing in the background of a normally acculturated westerner is likely to give such a visitor any anticipation of the first hand impact of the architectural forms themselves, the elements from which urban spaces are built up. An observer who is also a western trained architect is particularly prone to suffer a specific kind of 'culture shock' after the first exhilaration of a stroll through one of the Darbar squares. This culture

shock is most intense with respect to 'the pagoda form' and it resolves itself into an urgent need to find the answer to the questions posed by its pervasive presence, namely, why? whence? how? and so on.

As in all traditional cultures, the 'highest' or most developed art forms are reserved for the service of the gods, the second class for the aristocracy and the third for the common people. Any architect can observe in Kathmandu the relationship between the Newari house and a palace such as the Hanuman Dhoka. It is equally obvious that some secular features of such a palace as the Vasantapur Tower, are idealized in the typical 'pagoda style' temple.

An architect may guess that features of functional origin such as widely overhanging roofs to protect walls below from monsoon rains (walls of weak brick and mud mortar) are taken over into an architectural language and used rhetorically as a means of expression. The piling up of such roofs in the pagoda form is already anticipated however, in the four storey Newari house where a projecting eaves occurs at the third floor. In fact such umbrella-like functions of roofs and projecting canopies are clearly the corollary of the wood lattice windows (which never framed glass). Large bay windows of this type tilted outwards and covered are a logical response to the need for good ventilation, view and rain protection. The above mentioned Vasantapur Tower wraps such a feature all around each storey to become a 'pagoda' of a sort but one in which the delightful quality of the *interior* spaces leaves no doubt as to the meaning of the *exterior* form that results.

It is not so in the temples. Here the stacked roofs are symbolic only and as Wolfgang Korn points out in his book *The Traditional Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley* the spaces behind these temple roofs are usually not used and contain no floors.

The beautifully precise measured drawings which are by far the most valuable feature of this book confirm and reinforce most of the points made above. Architects as well as art historians and other scholars will welcome a book on 'high culture' traditional Nepali architecture written and drawn for professionals. Until now their only resource has been to the guide books which rarely include any building plans and never any sections. Herr Korn's section drawings alone are worth the price of the book and a masterpiece such as Kasthamandap cannot be explained or understood without such a drawing.

The book is organized into chapters on the main building types and the general descriptions of these types provide an adequate background to any serious student who wishes to visit the valley's cities fore-armed with a basic understanding of what will be seen.

When it comes to particular monuments however, the same student will encounter a problem. The book is not nearly clear enough in *locating* the buildings it discusses on the city map. There are good plans of the Darbar squares but even they are not clearly keyed to the text and other drawings and are marred by misprints

(e. g. the Vasantapur Tower is wrongly keyed on the Kathmandu Darbar square map). Printers errors in the text also occur with regrettable frequency throughout. The graphic and written information in the book is valuable enough to be presented to the community of scholars in a second edition which is properly proof-read and includes some clear system of reference keying the buildings it describes to their locations.

No pioneer work in any field can be expected to answer every question. But this reviewer regrets that one simple construction detail is not included by the author. In the last chapter a detail is shown (p. 105) of a long peg which connects column, bracket and beam. This is clearly not a moment type of joint and must depend on other elements in the building to stabilize it against horizontal forces such as wind. Yet there are some structures where these elements are absent and the posts must necessarily develop bending moment. The clearest examples of these are the Mandaps on pages 92 and 93. One cannot help but ask: how can these buildings stand up ?

David Dobreiner

LE PAYSAN LIMBU: SA MAISON ET SES CHAMPS. By Philippe Sagant.  
404 pages. Published by Mouton, Paris/La Haye, 1976. Price: n.a.

For some time, anthropology has tried to escape from the static or synchronic view of its own task. This had been a vision to which it was once led by the need to escape from the excessively abstract 19th century evolutionary schemata. These, by being overconcerned with the total history of the human race, had been far too removed from the immediate and real factors which affect the concrete lives of men. Real, on-the-ground changes, or stabilities for that matter, cannot be explained by pinning a society to some point or other of the global evolutionary ladder (even if we knew how to identify and rank the rungs on that ladder). But the shift to the concrete was (by means of a fallacious though natural reasoning) associated with a tendency to see societies as *stable*. The tacit assumption used to be—if you were no longer an evolutionist you had to be some kind of functionalist. Given that the stability assumption is false for very many, perhaps for most societies, this increasingly led to a feeling of unease amongst anthropologists.

Some of those ill-at-ease with the stability assumption deliberately turned to conspicuous and dramatic cases of social change, such as Cargo Cults. It will be ironic if the real death-blow to the static vision will come not from studies which turned to the superficially most spectacular cases of change, but those which looked at very profound, but less immediately visible, changes amongst Asiatic peasants—or those who have recently become Asiatic peasants and who now conform to the stereotype of the rice-growing peasant.

This is the general context of Monsieur Philippe Sagant's extremely interesting and valuable study of the Limbus. The bulk of it is, indeed, as the title implies, taken up with an impressively detailed and painstaking account of Limbu agricultural practices, calendar and habitat. But the material is organised in a manner which is inspired by an over-all question—just when, how and why was Limbu ecology transformed so radically? There is no doubt whatever in the author's mind—and his case is convincing—that a very fundamental change indeed has occurred in Limbu-land in the past two centuries, and that this change is part of an uneven process encompassing the rest of Nepal and the Himalayas. The work is thus highly comparable to Dr Macfarlane's recent study of Gurung demography and ecology, with which it has many points of similarity. The central theme is *change* in each case. Interestingly, studies such as these—to which one could add the work of Dr David Seddon and his colleagues around Pokhara and along the British-built road in the Terai—inspire in turn some very general questions, which are themselves rather global-evolutionary in character. If these authors are right in their fear that recent agricultural development has been pushed close to, or beyond, the point of acute danger, is it just a coincidence that this perilous culmination of the agricultural evolution has almost coincided with the industrial revolution? One has the impression that Nepal is not the only place in the world where this is so.

Monsieur Sagant does of course have to face the methodological problems inherent in the diachronic study of a society which, through not illiterate, is poor in historic documentation. ('Static' anthropologists liked to invoke these problems and their great difficulty—as if, because it is hard to know the past, it followed that it was probably similar to the present!) Curiously enough, he says he prefers to solve the problems by the functionalist method:

.... pour décrire l'ancien genre de vie, nous nous sommes heurté à l'absence de documents détaillés.... pour suppléer à ce manque d'informations, il eut été possible de recourir aux données disponibles sur d'autres essartants proches.... Nous avons répugné à un tel procédé.... une autre voie était ouverte. Celle qui consistait, au détriment d'ailleurs de l'équilibre de l'ensemble de l'étude, à détailler le plus possible les techniques d'aujourd'hui. Ce faisant, il était facile, alors, de mettre en lumière les implications socio-économiques qui leur sont liées.

I am puzzled by this argument. No doubt Monsieur Sagant is right to say that one cannot reliably argue *from* the social condition of neighbours of the Limbus, even if their techniques resemble those of which in his view were employed by the Limbus in the past, *to* the past social condition of the Limbus themselves. No doubt, an inference would have to be tentative, and require additional corroboration before being accepted. But why does he think that the (admirably detailed) account of the present techniques of the Limbus allows one to trace the interdependence between them

and the rest of Limbu society to the point of thereby understanding the Limbu past ? We know what now co-exists, but this does not immediately tell us what is inter-dependent. Why does he assume 'functionalist' interdependence in one case (present conditions of the Limbus) but not in the other (present or recent condition of the neighbours)? It is true that amongst contemporary Limbus we can, by observation, note all the aspects of social life; but it is not so obvious that this always tells us of the mutual links. To give a simple example: I am quite prepared to believe that houses on stilts went out at the same time as terracing came in. It sounds plausible. But *must* it be so ? Could not a population which does not build terraces, nevertheless take the trouble to find or to set up flat bases for their houses ?

So, when the author says

Nous avons cru qu'en développant ainsi, largement, le tableau du genre de vie actuel, nous parviendrions à surmonter les problèmes qui s'élevaient à l'évocation du genre de vie ancien.

I find it hard to be convinced by this. The detailed account of the contemporary mode of life is well worth having for its own sake, and its present inter-connections must contain many clues to the past. If feature A is visibly linked to B, and we know that A was new in the 19th century, we may at least suspect that B was also absent in the 18th, and then look for confirming evidence. But the accurate account of the present does not on its own solve the problem of reconstructing the past, and whatever solutions this problem may have can only benefit from that comparative method Sagant seems to dismiss. The earlier functionalists said: observe present connections, and do not speculate about the past. Sagant seems here to be saying: observe present connections *in order to* reconstruct the past.

As he himself observes in the passage quoted, this also leads him to devote a very large part of the study to description of contemporary Limbus' agricultural and architectural techniques. This of course is very much worth having, and his thoroughness compels admiration. In this field, clearly his knowledge is so great that a reviewer who has not even visited Limbu-land can make no comment. But the commentator faces a further difficulty: the author tells us that this is only part of a much larger work in progress.

....cette étude socio-historique de l'intégration des Limbu à la jeune nation népalaise, plus tard, nous espérons la mener à bien.

Happily, in a truly fascinating final chapter, Monsieur Sagant gives us a tantalising foretaste of what that completed study may say.

The changes in Nepal in the last two centuries have no doubt been staggering. They have occurred in the areas of ecology, demography, culture, politics and religion. Mobile, not so populous and relatively self-contained tribal populations have been replaced by a sedentary, intensive rice-growing peasantry, populous enough to



be pushing the use of resources to the available limits; and an ethnic-linguistic patchwork is combined with the imposition of a relative cultural homogeneity and political centralisation. Is agriculture the consequence of stability and political centralisation, or is the Nepalese state the reflection, the superstructure of the ecological revolution?

No doubt it is too early for a clear answer. There is an interesting difference in stress between Monsieur Sagant and his predecessor in this area, Lionel Caplan. Where Sagant stresses the profound nature of the change, Caplan did not consider it so radical:

....Hindu invaders introduced relatively little innovation into the areas they came to dominate. (They) may have brought more sophisticated techniques . . . but there was no mystery about these techniques and the Limbus apparently adopted them without difficulty . . . both communities have enjoyed access to the same material standard of living . . . the difference has been confined to magnitude and not kind.

(*Land and Social Change in East Nepal*, London, 1970. p. 202)

Perhaps the difference between the two authors springs mainly from the fact that Kaplan explicitly takes as his standard of comparison the impact of European colonial conquest, especially in areas where there was a 'total failure even to comprehend the white economy', which then was liable to lead to violent, millenarian reactions. There was nothing of the kind in the case of the Gurkha conquest.

Monsieur Sagant's provisional conclusions are that the transformation of the Limbus has been so complete that one can no longer speak of a distinctive Limbu way of life. Like Macfarlane, he singles out demographic pressure (adding economic constraint) as the major factor in this. He also singles out the Newars and Bhotias as the only local groups which succeeded in maintaining their idiosyncrasy.

Dans les collines du Népal Oriental, toutes les populations (quelles que soient leurs origines, pratiquent la même agriculture . . . à l'exclusion (des) . . . Newar et Bhotiya (et) construisent leurs habitations à peu près de la même façon.

This centralisation (whether by demography-economy or by polity) has led to a multi-ethnic society with a tendency towards class formation. These new classes are, says the author, loosely attached to the ancient caste hierarchy. (But is the caste hierarchy ancient *for the Limbus?*—or is its importation, if imported it was, part of the transformation?) Unlike the Gurungs, the Limbus do not appear to have any internal caste stratification to preoccupy them. At the same time, customary Limbu institutions seem intact, says Sagant. But this is a deceptive cultural facade:

Nous nous trouvons devant une forme d'organisation sociale intacte, intéressante, préservée mieux qu'ailleurs; mais rongée de l'intérieur: vidée d'une partie de son sens . . . Il ne faut pas accorder une importance absolue à la façade, belle, mais trompeuse pour l'ethnologue . .

So the Limbu culture which *does* persist is a kind of deceptive survival. But if such functionless or even dysfunctional survivals are possible, what happens to that functionalist interdependence of institutions which were for Sagant to be the basis for understanding the present, *and* the past, and the transformations which have led from one to the other? (In practice, Monsieur Sagant, when reconstructing the past, does rely on traveller's reports and similar sources, rather than simply argue on the lines he promised; and he also reluctantly looks over his shoulder at other groups, disclaimers notwithstanding. This tension between precept and practice is interesting.)

No doubt there are good answers to these questions. Perhaps they are connected with the author's interesting distinction between 'crystallised' institutions and others, i. e. those which are fully conceptualised and acknowledged and those which have not yet reached that status (if ever they will). Apparently the Limbus have clung to their own tribal *pays légal* whilst adapting to a new ecological and politically centralised *pays réel* which dominates their effective lives. The *pays légal* responds to anthropological methods—which are therefore deceptive—whilst the *pays réel* is articulated by Sagant in somewhat Marxist language. Perhaps indeed this is how things are. One can only look forward with very great impatience to the continuation of Monsieur Sagant's work, in which book the methodological and the substantive argument will be carried further.

Ernest Gellner

THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF LADAKH. By David L. Snellgrove and Tadeusz Skorupski, 144 pp; 147 photographs, 20 colour plates, maps and diagrams. Published by Aris and Phillips Ltd. Warminster, 1977. price: n.a.

Ladakh was an independent Tibetan kingdom until 1884, when it was taken over by the rulers of Jammu and Kashmir. Thus it eventually became a part of modern India; however, strategically situated between Pakistan and China, it remained for security reasons an area virtually inaccessible to foreigners until 1974. In that year the ban on travel was suddenly lifted, and Professor Snellgrove and Tadeusz Skorupski, already on their way to India and intending to work in Nepal, quickly changed their plans and went to Ladakh as the first Western scholars to visit that country since India's independence.

It is hardly necessary to point out the unique interest of Ladakh. With the radical changes of traditional society in Tibet itself, Ladakh remains, together with Bhutan, the only sizeable area in which Tibetan culture still flourishes in an indigenous setting. In spite of the frequent ravages of invasions by Mongol or Muslim armies, and by the Western Tibetan rulers, Ladakh has preserved an impressive artistic and architectural heritage, first and foremost, of course, in the form of numerous temples and monasteries. This extremely rich cultural heritage has hardly been explored since

A. H. Francke published his *Antiquities of Indian Tibet* (2 vols, Calcutta, 1914 and 1926) and the later travelogue of Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas* (London 1939). Guiseppe Tucci's monumental *Indo-Tibetica* (Vols. I-IV, Rome, 1932-1940) is, of course, invaluable for the history of Buddhist art in Tibet and of Western Tibet generally, but does not, strictly speaking, deal with Ladakh. Thus the present volume is the first major study of the culture of Ladakh to have appeared for almost forty years; it contains much important new material and is profusely illustrated.

Professor Snellgrove and Tadeusz Skorupski stayed in Ladakh during the winter months of 1974/75. Although the winter in Ladakh is bitterly cold, and the road from Leh to Srinagar is blocked by snow, this does have the advantage of rendering mass tourism impracticable. At the same time, this is the season during which most of the great monastic feasts and mask dances take place, and as people have more leisure in winter, they are more accessible to enquiries.

The book is organised in three major sections, in which the main artistic and architectonic monuments are grouped according to historical criteria. The first and most important section, constituting almost one half of the book, is the one dealing with "Early Monasteries of the Time of Rin-chen bzang-po" (pp. 19-80). There are a number of remains of monasteries and temples said to be founded by Rin-chen bzang-po, hence dated round 1000 A.D. But in addition, there is at Alchi a complete temple compound, consisting of several buildings, partly in a rather tumble-down state but still intact, the oldest parts of which may be, as Professor Snellgrove demonstrates, confidently dated to the 11th-12th century. "We have dated all the earlier work noted in the 'Du-khang, on the walls and alcoves on the groundfloor of the Sun-tsek, and in the entrance-chotens, as 11th-12th century. The Lotsawa and the Mañjuśrī temples were probably early additions and may be safely dated to the 12th century. The Lhakhang Soma was added later, as its name the 'new temple' suggests, but its iconography can scarcely suggest a date later than the 13th century. We consider that none of this earlier work has been touched through the centuries" (p. 79).

The importance of this can hardly be overrated, and Professor Snellgrove is entirely justified in stating that "Preserved as it is, Alchi Chos-'khor is a fantastic chance survival from the past, and as such truly one of the wonders of the Buddhist world" (p. 80). The greater part of this section of the book is devoted to a detailed description of the lay-out, the statues and murals of this truly unique cultural monument. This excellent description provides invaluable material for the history of Buddhist art, and is by itself amply sufficient to secure for this book a very wide circle of readers.

The second section is devoted to "Citadels and Royal Residences", (pp. 81-104), which date from the period of Ladakhi royal power, i.e. from the 15th to the 18th centuries "after which the rulers of Ladakh finally begin to lose control over their own destiny, and no more great works can be undertaken on their initiative" (p. 82).

A third section deals with "The Later Monasteries" (pp. 105-133), i. e. "those

monasteries which have come into existence or which have been revived since the 15th century” (p. 105). These monasteries provide the focal point of present-day religious life, but on the whole do not offer as much of interest to the historian as the earlier establishments.

Finally, a chapter discusses the problems and prospects of “Present-day Ladakh” (pp. 135-14). This chapter is short, but exceedingly penetrating and thought-provoking. As an economic unit, present-day Ladakh is entirely dependent on the presence of the Indian army and the financial aid provided by the Indian civil administration. The trade routes from Central Asia and Tibet, which were formerly the basis of the relative prosperity of Ladakh, are now completely closed. What will happen if international tension in the area eases and Indian interest in Ladakh correspondingly diminishes? Perhaps it is true that “The only hope for Ladakh rests with the possibility of a relaxation of the present Chinese hold on Tibet and Central Asia and the restoration of normal trading and cultural relations between neighbouring countries” (p. 138). But such a development is at best a thing of the distant future. The Chinese presence in Tibet may also have serious consequences for the cultural identity of Ladakh, effects which are already beginning to become manifest. Cut off from Tibet, of which Ladakh formed a cultural extension, and with the transformation of Tibetan culture in Tibet itself, Buddhism in Ladakh is faced with an uncertain future: the number of competent Ladakhi scholars and monastic heads is extremely limited, and the economic and cultural pressure from Ladakhi Muslims, and, backing them, a vast Muslim world, is unrelenting. Under such circumstances, oblivion and neglect, which previously preserved some of the early cultural monuments of Ladakh, and above all Alchi, may now become the cause of their rapid and total decay unless adequate steps to prevent this are taken.

Visiting the monastery of Hemis, Professor Snellgrove notes that “It seems to attract far more visitors than any monastery in Ladakh, and very few have any idea of what they are looking at” (p. 128). The present volume should be carefully studied by every prospective visitor to Ladakh. It is a pure pleasure to read—being detailed and scholarly, but never tedious, written, as are all works by Professor Snellgrove, in a free and easy, yet elegant style. Each monument is dealt with in turn, carefully described and placed in its proper historical context. Thus the book is both an impressive scholarly achievement and a convenient work of reference. The notes, index and in particular the critical bibliography (p. 143) add to its usefulness.

The authors have rendered Buddhist and Tibetan studies a great service in presenting, competently and sympathetically, a coherent and detailed study of the cultural heritage of Ladakh, and the publishers are to be congratulated on having brought out a truly scholarly and attractive volume in their Central Asian Studies series.