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THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HIMALAYAN ANTHROPOLOGY

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ABSTRACT Anthropological scholarship has been slow to develop in the Himalaya, compared to the Andes, because for millennia the Himalaya have been regarded as a political, economic, and cultural backwater by the Chinese, Indian, and, later, European Empires which surrounded them. By contrast, control of the Andes was the key to conquest of the rest of South America. Briefly mentioned in ancient sources, the Himalaya from the seventeenth until the early twentieth century saw an increase in accounts by diplomats, soldiers, merchants, and missionaries. But because of political isolation, most of the Himalaya were not accessible to anthropologists until the 1950s, when modern anthropological research began. By the 1970s a large number of students from many countries were at work, including for the first time a significant number of indigenous scholars.

RÉSUMÉ L'évolution historique de l'anthropologie himalayenne. Les recherches anthropologiques concernant l'Himalaya se sont développées plus lentement que celles portant sur les Andes, car pendant des millénaires l'Himalaya a été considéré comme une région stagnante du point de vue politique, économique, et culturel par les empires avoisinants: Chinois, Indien, puis Européen. A l'opposé, la maîtrise des Andes fut la clef de la conquête du reste de l'Amérique du Sud. Mentionnée brièvement dans les textes anciens, la région de l'Himalaya a de plus en plus attiré l'attention des diplomates, militaires, commerçants, et missionnaires, du dix-septième jusqu'au début du vingtième siècle. Mais, à cause de son isolation politique, la plus grande partie de l'Himalaya n'est devenue accessible aux anthropologues qu'à l'orée des années 50, c'est à dire au début de la recherche anthropologique moderne. Au cours des années 70, un grand nombre d'étudiants de provenances diverses y travaillaient, y compris, pour la première fois, un nombre important de chercheurs locaux.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG Die geschichtliche Entwicklung der Anthropologie im Himalaya. Anthropologische Untersuchungen im Himalaya, verglichen zu denen der Anden, haben sich langsam entwickelt. Für Jahrtausende wurde der Himalaya von den umgebenden chinesischen, indischen und später den europäischen Mächten als politisch, ökonomisch und kulturell rückständig angesehen. Die Beherrschung der Anden dagegen galt als Schlüssel zur Eroberung des übrigen Südamerikas. In alten Quellen wurde der Himalaya nur kurz erwähnt; vom 17. bis ins frühe 20. Jahrhundert stieg die Zahl der von Diplomaten, Soldaten, Händlern und Missionaren gegebenen Berichte. Bis 1950 blieb der größte Teil des Himalaya wegen seiner politischen Isolation den Anthropologen unzugänglich, erst danach begann moderne anthropologische Forschung. In den 70er Jahren machten sich viele Forscher aus allen Ländern an die Arbeit, und zum ersten Mal war auch eine große Zahl einheimischer Gelehrten unter ihnen.

RESUMEN El desarrollo histórico de la antropología en el Himalaya. El estudio antropológico en el Himalaya se ha desarrollado lentamente en comparación al caso andino porque la región ha sido considerado de poca importancia por los imperios chino, indio y europeo que lo rodearon. En cambio, el control de los Andes fue una clave en la conquista del continente sudamericano. Aunque el Himalaya solo fue mencionado brevemente en los textos antiguos, desde el siglo 17 hasta principios del siglo 20 fue descrito con mas frecuencia por soldados, diplomáticos, misioneros y comerciantes. Pero su aislamiento político impidió el acceso de antropólogos a grandes zonas del Himalaya hasta los años 1950, cuando empezaron las investigaciones antropológicas modernas. A partir del año 1970, una gran cantidad de especialistas de diversos países han estudiado el Himalaya, incluyendo, por primera vez, un número significativo de intelectuales himalayanos.

In 1774 when Warren Hastings noted similarities between the Andes and the Himalaya, he was able to draw on a wealth of information already known about the people of the Andes. But almost two centuries would elapse before the essentially blank ethnographic map of the Himalaya¹

began to be filled in. This is exactly the opposite of what one might conventionally expect, since the pre-Columbian Andean peoples never acquired literacy in which descriptions might have been recorded, whereas the Himalaya were for eons either inhabited by, or governed by, peoples

¹There appears to be no uniform definition of "Himalaya"; in this paper it is used to refer to the hilly and mountainous areas north of the Indian plains, south of the Pamirs and the great deserts of central Asia, west of the Brahmaputra, and east of the Hindu Kush. Note that this definition includes an area several times larger than that considered in the papers of Schroeder and English (this issue, pages 31-44 and 61-78).

whose literate traditions are the most ancient in Asia. The resolution of this paradox of the literate but unknown Himalaya versus the illiterate but known Andes lies in the fact that from the point of view of the dominant civilizations which have surrounded the Himalaya for millenia, they were a political, economic, and cultural backwater not worth bothering with. As the home of deities, the Himalaya have always been sprinkled with popular pilgrimage sites; the ethnography of gods was rich, but that of people was not. Furthermore, the Himalaya were viewed by the Chinese, Indian, and, later, European empires which surrounded them primarily as a buffer and barrier from each other—what Lord Curzon called “a frontier in depth”. The great geopolitical importance of the Himalaya is still recognized, but they are not thought to have much to offer otherwise.

Although the various satrapies, fiefdoms, and kingdoms that rose and fell in the Himalaya were literate in one or another of several languages (first Sanskrit, and later Newari, Nepali, Tibetan, Kirata and Urdu, among others), from at least the fourth century A.D., the only records that have survived are a wealth of chronicles, inscriptions, dynastic lists, and royal edicts. Apart from com-

mentary in the Lichhavi records and Kautilya's Arthashastra, these sources reveal little of ethnographic interest. Indeed, even the existence of the three principal towns of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal is not mentioned in the records until the eleventh century (Regmi, 1969: 7). Local census records, court records, and tax records (*Lagal Phant*) begin in the nineteenth century in Nepal, but these rudimentary documents have not received the kind of scholarly attention accorded similar records in the Andes. Monastic records scattered from Ladakh to Bhutan, and Tibetan chronicles dating to the tenth century provide only fragments of cultural information. More recent census and court records in Tibet are being catalogued now by the Chinese and are not expected to be available for another ten to fifteen years. One notable exception to this paucity of local source materials (others are named below) is the National Code (*Muluki Ain*) of Nepal, which exists in several historically evolving editions over the last 200 years. As official law governing such matters as caste hierarchy and inter-caste relations, it does not necessarily record what really happened, but it certainly indicates the Nepalese government's strict Hindu hopes for its people.

THE ANCIENT PERIOD

The Himalayan peoples did not escape entirely unnoticed in ancient times. The Kirata and Khas tribes are mentioned by Manu, the Law Giver, in the second century B.C. The Kirata tribes are also mentioned in the two monumental Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, at least two thousand years ago and even before that in the *Rig Veda*, the oldest extant Sanskrit text. These epic references are useful mainly as annals of mythical military history, although information on life-styles occasionally intrudes between battles. In the *Ramayana* the Kiratas are described as simple people, living on fruits and roots and dressing in the skins of animals (Levi, 1905). Most of what can be reconstructed concerning ancient Himalayan life concerns forms of land measurement, deities worshipped, types of currency used, forms of administration, and details of diplomatic treaties.

On the western front, the Himalaya were mentioned by Pliny, Megasthenes, and Herodotus. Unfortunately, the high standards Herodotus applied elsewhere were apparently set aside when he wrote about the Himalaya—in fact his account is disappointing. He made what was probably Europe's first reference to Tibet when he mentioned a desert north of India where “great ants in size somewhat less than dogs, but bigger than foxes throw up

sand heaps full of gold as they burrow. A warlike tribe north of all other Indians tries to steal it by filling their bags with the sand and riding away at their best speed. Then the ants”, says Herodotus, “rush forth in pursuit”. Herodotus concludes that “if it were not that the Indians get a start while the ants are mustering, not a single gold-gatherer would escape” (MacGregor, 1970: 259). If the reliable Herodotus reports all this as fact, what confidence can be placed in less distinguished observers.

Whatever its quality, information on Himalayan peoples from this period comes largely from external sources. The seventh century Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang was the first foreigner to mention Nepal specifically, even though it is doubtful that he himself ever set foot there. Hiuen Tsang wrote about the practice of Buddhism in Nepal, but he also had some uncomplimentary comments about the Nepalese people: “The climate is cold, the people are rude and deceitful and naturally unsociable. They do not know the value of time and justice, and have no learning, but they are much skilled in arts. Their body is awkward, and their appearance is ignoble” (Regmi, 1969: 290). This kind of unflattering remark continues through the centuries up to the present as lowland observers look down, ironically, on their highland neighbours.

THE PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD: THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

To move beyond either this level of description, or the mere reconstruction of historical sequences, one has, as in the Andes, to await the arrival of Europeans. Here again, however, there are profound differences in the importance Europeans attached to these two mountain systems. In the

Andes, the Inca Empire, a powerful, unified state system extending almost the entire length of the continent, was clearly the paramount obstacle to overcome if the Spaniards were going to hold sway in South America. They therefore invested considerable resources not only to conquer

and administer but also, perforce, to understand the Inca Empire, compared to the relatively primitive lowlands which surrounded it.

In the Himalaya the reverse was the case: the great Asian hydraulic civilizations and agri-states were anchored in the riverine lowlands of India and China, not in the interstitial uplands between them. The key to conquest, or, more realistically, administrative supremacy, lay in controlling Chinese and Indian empires, or various kingdoms, principalities, and warlords in their spheres, not in futile attempts to penetrate those inhospitable and, above all, unprofitable mountains. The Himalaya, unlike the Andes, never even came close to being either politically or culturally unified. That 900-kilometre strip of the Himalaya called Nepal, politically unified for over 200 years, contains ethnic groups speaking literally dozens of mutually unintelligible languages, following a wide variety of religious beliefs and rituals, with different kinship and marriage systems, and dramatically contrasting ecological adaptations. Rather than political unity, a series of petty kingdoms and locally autonomous tribal groups have waxed and waned over the centuries, usually independent from the Chinese and Indian empires below them, but sometimes connected to these empires by loose suzerain ties.

Although benign ethnological neglect largely continued

after the advent of the Europeans, some initial light began to break through the cloud of ignorance that had hovered over the Himalaya for so long. Perhaps because Tibetan religion seemed so powerful, and even Catholic in its elaborate ritual, Jesuit and Capuchin orders established small missions in Tibet from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards. Unlike their counterparts in the Andes, however, they never wielded ecclesiastical power and made few, if any, converts. They were evicted in 1745, never to return. Similarly, Capuchins were in Kathmandu at about the same time but were expelled in 1768, when the militant Hindu Prithwi Narayan Shah conquered the Kathmandu Valley and unified the country in roughly its present form. These missions never provided much information of anthropological value, either because they were not there long enough, or because, as in the case of Grueber, they never published what they knew (MacGregor, 1970: 58). Sometimes they did not understand what they saw, as was the case with Desideri who, although a sympathetic observer, never fully realized that the Lamaism he was studying was a form of Buddhism (MacGregor, 1970: 60). By contrast, British explorers, such as the East India Company officer Bogle, have given us much more useful descriptions of Tibetan society.

THE COLONIAL PERIOD: LATE EIGHTEENTH, NINETEENTH, AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

It was only with the arrival of officers of the East India Company and, later, servants of the Empire itself, that genuine precursors of ethnologists entered the Himalaya, or near enough to them to describe them.

Colonel William Kirkpatrick visited Nepal in 1793 to help negotiate the withdrawal of Chinese who had reached uncomfortably close to Kathmandu during the Tibeto-Nepal war of 1792. By the time he arrived, however, the "Goorkhali" king had already reached an agreement with the Chinese, so Kirkpatrick spent his time making note of everything he could: geography, metals and minerals, crops, weights and measures and, more importantly for anthropologists, religious festivals and which tribes spoke what languages. Markham (1879: xi) observed a few years later that "All really efficient administrators of the first order are geographers by instinct."

Kirkpatrick's account was followed by others, as a series of British diplomats and officials visited Nepal. Hamilton's book, which appeared in 1819, was similarly encyclopaedic in its coverage, and provided many details on various castes and tribes. This style of ethnological precursor reached its zenith in the writings of Brian Hodgson. Partly because he stayed a much longer time in Nepal than his predecessors — nineteen years — and partly because he was by training and temperament a scholar, his collection of articles called *Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet Together with Further Papers on the Geography, Ethnology and Commerce of those Countries*, which appeared in 1874, still warrants examination today. Many of Hodgson's voluminous writings have never been published, and they lie largely unconsulted in the India Office Library in London.

Kirkpatrick's work and that of other British writers, including Oldfield (1880) and Landon (1928), have, in retrospect, the random, hodge-podge quality of a pot-pourri, but they are great achievements when the restraints under which they were written are recognized. The Nepal Government grudgingly allowed the British a small resident mission in Kathmandu after the abortive Nepali-British 1814–1816 war, but British residents were free to wander only within the confines of the Kathmandu Valley. Therefore, all the information uncovered by these men about the rest of the country had to be gleaned second- and third-hand from informants. By contrast, it is not hard to imagine how Spanish reporting in South America would have been affected if the Conquistadores and their successors had been confined to Cuzco until the 1950s.

Meanwhile, after the 1792 war with Nepal, Tibet closed its boundaries and became truly the fabled "forbidden land" and remained so until the 1970s. Hardly any foreigners, let alone scholars, entered the country for well over a century. Instead, the British trained a series of remarkable Indians and ethnic Tibetans to carry out clandestine exploration in Tibet as part of the international struggle with Russia, which Kipling called the "Great Game". These men, disguised as pilgrims and resorting to such techniques as counting every step they took over the course of several years so that they could accurately measure distances, provide one of the most exciting tales of exploration and international intrigue ever told. The information they gathered was mainly geographical, but a few of these individuals, of whom the legendary Sarat Chandra Das was the greatest, provided many details of social life as well (1881; 1882).

It was only after the Younghusband expedition fought its way to Lhasa in 1904 that a British presence was established in Tibet. Sir Charles Bell, stationed in Lhasa for almost twenty years in the early twentieth century, produced an excellent trilogy of books dealing with Tibetan history, people, and religion respectively. The second of these books, *The People of Tibet* (1928), is a rich source of ethnographic information. Announcing that it was "an attempt to speak about the life of the people in their own homes", Bell modestly added that he "should not dream of attempting a complete study of Tibetan domestic life. A miscellany of facts, and occasional ideas to clothe those facts, are all that I can offer". His book provides ample facts and ideas, including chapters on the different economic classes (herdsman, peasants, nobility, traders, beggars, robbers) as well as on marriage, children, the position of women, and even separate chapters on food and on drinking and smoking. The work of Bell (1978) and of Waddell (1895), who actually purchased a Buddhist temple the better to study it, is in contrast to that of other writers on Tibet, such as David-Neel (1966), who occasionally succumbs to a breathless, wide-eyed wonder at the mysteries of Lamaist wisdom. Some pre-anthropological writers were more anthropological than others.

But it was in India, in the person of Edwin T. Atkinson, that the administrator-cum-ethnologist assumed the most developed and accomplished form. Unlike Nepal or Tibet, neither of which had ever been incorporated into the British Empire, the Indian Himalaya, from Kumaun to Kashmir, were part of the British Raj. The British could therefore travel in the mountains wherever they liked, and reside as long as they wished. Atkinson was able to produce his massive, three-volume *Himalayan Gazetteer* (as it is called in its reprinted form today) by working on it in his "leisure time" (1882: v). In keeping with the purpose of the *Gazetteer* (and indeed all such *Gazetteers* published for provinces in the British Raj), Atkinson's treatment is largely encyclopaedic, and contains sections on everything from geology, botany, and zoology to history and religion. There is not as much on ethnology as one would like, but the sections on religion are unusually detailed, and include numerous sub-sections on topics such as Demonism, Buddhism, Caste, Tantras, Bonpas, Siva, Pashupati, and Sorcerers, and also descriptions of various deities and festivals.

Atkinson's ethnological sections read much like the kind of trait-list that American anthropologists were to develop

a few decades later. But Atkinson already had noticed that in religion "there is an esoteric school and an exoteric school: to the former too much attention has been paid, to the great neglect of the living beliefs which influence the masses of the people" (1882: 699). One can only admire the prodigious industry with which Atkinson went about his spare-time work. He reports on the results of an examination of the teaching in 350 temples in Kumaun, in about 550 temples in Garhwal and in about 100 in Dehra Dun and Jaunsar-Bawar. The locality of the 900 temples in Kumaun and Garhwal is known, the names of the deity worshipped, the broad division to which the deity belongs, the class of people who frequent the temple and the principal festivals observed (Atkinson, 1882: 701). Considering that religion was only one of many subjects on which he reported and that it comprised less than half of one of the three volumes he wrote, one has to admit that his was an extraordinary achievement, and one easily forgotten as modern scholars build whole research careers around the intensive study of a couple of small communities of people.

That the quality of the *Himalayan Gazetteer* is due to Atkinson's skill and industry can be shown by comparing it to the *Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladak* (1890). That thousand-page volume carries encyclopaedism to its logical conclusion, consisting entirely of lists of geographical place names, arranged in alphabetical order. Except for some brief introductory comments entitled "Geography and Topography", this *Gazetteer* is ethnologically useless.

One other source of information on Nepalese ethnology is that of the British officers who wrote about the hill tribes they recruited into the so-called Gurkha regiments which fought with such distinction in both World Wars and who continue to serve in the British and Indian armies today. Several books and pamphlets have been published, of which *The Gurkhas* (Northey and Morris, 1928) is typical. This book was written, as were the books by the British residents in Kathmandu, with little recourse to actual observation in the hills of Nepal. But Northey and Morris do pay more attention to the hill tribes, rather than dwell primarily on the Kathmandu Valley. Their work, and that of other writers in the first half of this century, suffered from two deficiencies: one is that they had no contact, direct or indirect, with the developing discipline of anthropology; second, they lacked what almost all pre-1950 observers lacked—direct, political, hands-on access to the mountains themselves.

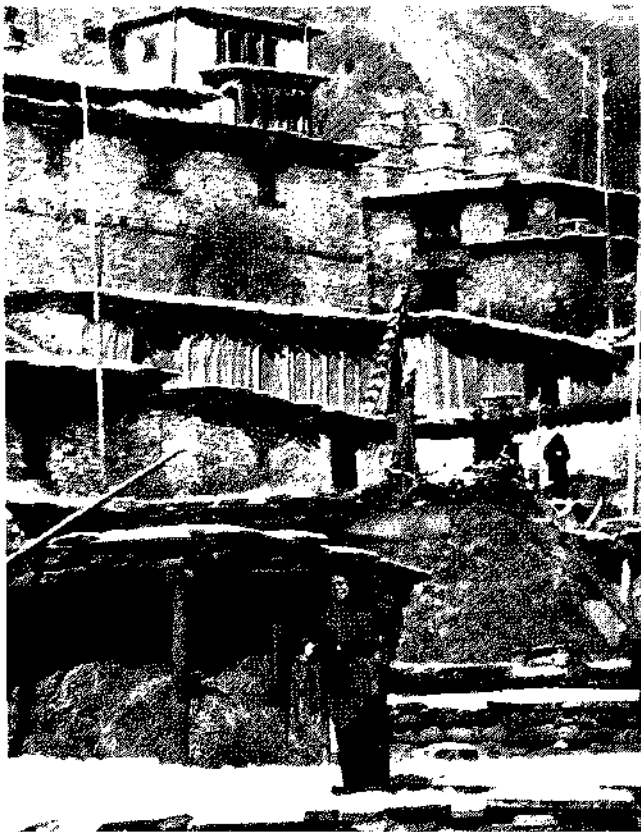
THE MODERN PERIOD: PRE-1950

Anthropology in the modern sense of prolonged intensive field study by academically trained observers, could not be said to exist at all in the main Himalayan ranges before the 1950s (except for Gorer's ethnography of the Lepchas of Sikkim [1938]), although by the 1940s some skilled precursors of ethnology had begun publishing

important information. In addition to the Swedish explorer Hedin, the Tibetologist Tucci had been visiting Tibet since the 1930s, Ekvall later wrote accounts (1968) of his observations as a missionary in Tibetan marches in the late 1920s and 1930s, and the mountaineer Harrer's (1953) rich descriptions of life gathered during his seven years in Tibet



Harvesting millet with locally made hand-held serrated sickle. Marijuana and amaranth are planted in the millet fields. All photographs in this paper are from the monograph *Trans-Himalayan Traders* by James Fisher, University of California Press.



Tarangpur houses built one on top of another against hillside. The girl standing on a rooftop with her baby brother on her back is about to throw a snowball.



Mother and daughter pose to display the changes of dress fashions over the past 40 years. Note cloth patterns, size of waistband, and size of earrings.

appeared soon after he was forced to flee Lhasa with the Dalai Lama in 1950. In addition, Pant's account of social economy in the Indian Himalaya was a landmark (1935).

The study of Himalayan anthropology¹ started slowly partly because anthropology in Asia had generally eschewed the study of peasants and the high civilizations they supported, in favour of more primitive, pre-literate peoples. American and European anthropologists had tended to work in areas closer to home: Americans among Indians of either continent, and the British among the subjects of Empire, for which Africans and Pacific people served as handy examples. Anthropologists who did go to

India, such as Fürer-Haimendorf, Mandelbaum, and Elwin, all studied tribals, mostly in the more accessible areas deep within the South Asian sub-continent. Perhaps anthropologists would have eventually drifted north to the Indian Himalaya (Nepal and Tibet still being strictly off-limits) had not World War II intervened to bring anthropology everywhere (except, as in the Pacific, where it related to the war effort) to a sudden and destructive halt. After the war China became a closed territory and anthropologists returned to India with a renewed interest, under Redfield's influence, in peasant society and caste in the heart of India.

THE MODERN PERIOD: POST-1950

It was not until the early 1950s that the modern, sustained anthropological study of the Himalaya began, initiated by Fredrik Barth in Swat, Pakistan, and Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf in Nepal. Fürer-Haimendorf had studied Indian tribals intensively for two decades and had published two books (1955, 1962) on hitherto unknown tribal societies located in the extreme eastern Himalaya, in the North East Frontier Agency (now Arunachal Pradesh) of India. But these populations were so isolated and self-sufficient that their cultures bore few affinities to the civilizations of Tibet, Nepal, or other Himalayan groups influenced by India. Therefore, despite the long standing accounts of diplomats, missionaries, merchants, army officers, and explorers in 1953, Fürer-Haimendorf's researches among the Newars, high Hindu castes, Tamangs, and Sherpas were, however preliminary, clearly ground-breaking anthropological activities.

Fürer-Haimendorf's work was, and continues to be, wide-ranging. He published only one full-scale ethnography (1964), but a continuing spate of books and articles deal with religion, monastic organization, caste hierarchy, kinship and marriage, social structure, land tenure, economy, and concepts of morality. Aside perhaps from more recent symbolic, cognitive, and psychological concerns, his work has run the entire gamut of contemporary anthropological problems and interests.

By the end of the 1950s Berreman was studying Hindus in the Indian Himalaya (1963), and shortly thereafter Madan was analysing people of his home state of Kashmir (1965). By the 1960s Hitchcock (1966) had moved his interests from the Gangetic Plain of India to the Nepal Himalaya, where Kawakita (1974) was studying the

Gurungs and Magars respectively, and Nepali (1965) was working on Newars.

While Nepal and the Indian Himalaya were opening up, Tibet became even more sealed to foreigners, if that is possible, as the Chinese began to exert increasing control over the country after 1950. Bhutan, too, remained out of bounds, but in the 1950s a small coterie of scholars was able to study Tibetans in and around Sikkim and Darjeeling. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956) described and analysed Tibetan religion and art, Beatrice Miller (1978) pursued personality-and-culture studies with TAT tests, and Chie Nakane (1966) wrote on inter-ethnic relations in Sikkim. The only modern information of any anthropological relevance on Tibet itself, which remains to this day closed to scholars, is Bista's record (1979) of his experiences as the Royal Nepalese Consul General in Lhasa, 1972-1975. For information on Tibetans one has to continue to rely on reconstructions of Tibetan life from refugee accounts (Aziz, 1978; Goldstein, 1978), the study of Tibetan-speaking groups in Nepal (Levine, 1976; Goldstein, 1981) or scholarship not based on first-hand fieldwork (Carrasco, 1959). It is ironic that as much of traditional life in Tibet has been radically altered, especially as a result of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the quality of information about life there has dramatically improved with access to some 100,000 Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal.

By the 1970s it was clear that pride of place in Himalayan anthropology belonged to Nepal. The anthropological research there that had been hardly a trickle in the 1950s and a mere stream in the 1960s now appeared to be a roaring river threatening to overflow its banks. To some extent this was a natural reflection of the gathering intellectual momentum of the times, as opportunities to explore a new part of the world became available. But a contributing factor to Nepal's anthropological prominence was the deterioration of United States of America-India diplomatic relations after the American "tilt" toward Pakistan during the Pakistan-Bangladesh war in 1972, and the subsequent ban on American research anywhere in India. In any case the Indian Himalaya had been essentially off-limits to foreigners since the 1962 Indo-Chinese border skirmish. Pakistan similarly restricted its Northern Areas (even to Pakistan anthropologists) after the 1965 war with India until 1974. Thus, with Tibet, Sikkim, and

¹The term here refers to cultural and social anthropology and excludes, for reasons of space, archaeology, physical anthropology, and linguistics; it omits discussion of work by the Summer Institutes of Linguistics in Nepal, 1968-1978, and that of non-anthropologists although it may be relevant—such as the writings of archaeologist-historian Prayag Raj Sharma, geographers Harka B. Gurung and P. P. Karan, linguists Austin Hale and Subhadra Subbha, sociologists Joe Elder and Chaitanya Misra, and Lynn Bennett and J. Gabriel Campbell who studied Comparative Religion. For further reading please consult more thorough bibliographies, such as those on Nepal by Boulnois and Millot (1969) and the Royal Nepal Academy (1975).

Bhutan still sealed from the rest of the world, many anthropologists with South Asian interests set out to Nepal. Its open, positive, and encouraging support of research attracted many scholars, including an entire new generation of graduate students.

One result of all this new anthropological energy was an unprecedented quantum leap during the 1970s in the amount of anthropological research in Nepal. An example from religion suffices to illustrate the scale: the book by Hitchcock and Jones (1976) on spirit possession in Nepal contains articles by no less than sixteen anthropologists, who report on the Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar, Sherpas, Magars, Gurungs, Raji, and Tibetans, as well as the place of sorcery in the *Muluki Ain* of 1854.

As a result of this explosion of anthropological interest in Nepal this almost completely unknown country and its Himalayan inhabitants have become better known and understood by the 1980s than their counterparts in India and Pakistan. Fortunately, India-trained anthropologists began to undertake more research, as field-work was carried out by Srivastava (1958), Sanwal (1976), and Raha (1978). Akbar S. Ahmad did the same in Pakistan, con-

tributing a radical new interpretation of Swat, which differed considerably from Barth's earlier analysis.

However, the anthropological coverage of Nepal has never been even. Anthropologists have displayed a marked predilection to study remote, high Himalayan people, such as the Sherpas, whenever possible and hill people, including small groups such as Muslims (Gaborieau, 1966) or remnants of what were called "broken tribes" in the nineteenth century, on the verge of extinction (Reinhard, 1969, 1974). This common and frequently romantic anthropological fascination with the distant and exotic implies its corollary: that the most politically and geographically accessible group in the Himalaya, the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, has been the last to attract anthropological interest. In the 1970s the Newars were also included in research studies; Allen (1975), Greenwold (1978), Stablein (1978), Schmidt (1978), Ishii (1978), and Toffin (1978) have built on the earlier work of Fürer-Haimendorf (1956), Bajracharya (1959), Nepali (1965), and Rosser (1966) to untangle this perhaps most complicated of all Himalayan ethnic groups.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

Theoretical orientations have been conventional and eclectic rather than original and ground-breaking. Though many excellent studies have been done, it is fair to say that to date no anthropological work on the Himalaya has made much of an imprint on the international anthropological community. The Himalaya have yet to produce their Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, or Lévi-Strauss.

There is a slight tendency to follow national trends. Some British anthropologists, such as the Caplans (1970, 1972, 1975), have evinced strong interests in the traditional concerns of social anthropology: land tenure, social structure, and politics. Americans have pursued theoretical slants ranging from the symbolic (Ortner, 1978) and psychological (Paul, 1982) to the ecological and economic (Fisher, 1985). Germans have shown strong interests in cultural history (Oppitz, 1968) and material culture (Schmidt-Thome, *et al.*, 1975), while the French have tended towards detailed ethnographic accounts (Jest, 1975) almost as atheoretical as anything the Boasians ever produced. But these are merely vague trends, and it would be exceedingly difficult to identify the national origin of any scholar from his or her written works alone.

Where national traditions differ more clearly is in the social organization of research itself. Whereas Americans proceed individually, with each scholar securing his or her own funding from a variety of different public and private sources, many French and Germans are part of large national research teams headed by hierarchies of bureaucrat-scholars. If one is on good terms with the national scholarly establishment, it is much easier for Europeans to acquire the necessary financial support for research. On the other hand, for the maverick not tied into the national bureaucracies, it is very difficult to obtain research funds.

With its position finally secured and firmly established

in the Himalaya, what directions has anthropology followed? The short answer is: all directions. For the last decade or so Himalayan anthropology—at least in the Nepal Himalaya—has flourished. As a result, knowledge of nearly every branch of anthropology in the Himalaya—linguistics, social structure, kinship, demography, ecology, religion, mythology, psychology, gender roles, child-rearing, local politics—has expanded exponentially. In brief, the concerns of Himalayan anthropologists reflect the wide spectrum of interests that characterize anthropology anywhere else in the world. Nevertheless, there has often been a tendency to concentrate on those aspects of life which seem to be particularly conspicuous or well-developed, which are unique to the area, or which are, from the western point of view, unusually exotic.

Some selected examples would include:

1. *Religion*: With its shamans and mystics, sadhus and incarnate lamas, Himalayan religion has often captured western anthropological attention. Furthermore, Tibet was, until 1959, the world's oldest surviving theocracy, and Nepal is still the only Hindu kingdom in the world. All this is in marked contrast to the state of religion in the Andes, where "Great Traditions" have long ago been snuffed out.

A persistent perspective has been that of religious syncretism. Is a certain tribe Hindu or Buddhist? or does it have its own indigenous beliefs and rituals? or is its religion some combination of all the above (Höfer, 1971)? Syncretism is a complicated notion. It may refer to the syncretism between Hinduism and Buddhism; indeed, the great French Sanskritist Lévi said that it is "sheer nonsense" to describe any deity or symbol in Nepal by exclusive reference to either Hinduism or Buddhism. Syncretism may also refer to the Great and Little Traditions within these re-



Threshing grain on rooftops, where much Tarangpur social life takes place.

ligions, and between either of the so-called world religions of Hinduism and Buddhism, on the one hand, and tribal religion on the other.

Religion was described in a more or less standard structural-functional way in the 1950s and 1960s. But sharply focused studies in the last ten or fifteen years have yielded richly detailed accounts, as anthropologists attempt to see a whole society through a religious lens, rather than as a mere facet of general ethnography. Two examples of such approaches are to understand religion in its own terms, as a set of symbols and meanings (Ortner, 1978), or to analyse religion for the entree it provides into the psychological fabric of the society (Paul, 1982).

2. *Social structure*: The institution of caste, and its relation to tribe, continues to fascinate anthropologists, probably excessively. That is, the preoccupation with caste and hierarchy, or its absence, is a result of using Indian models instead of indigenous ones, which have been difficult to formulate.

Polyandry, so rare elsewhere in the world but relatively common in the Himalaya, is a perennially popular topic. Tibetan polyandry was described in a massive book by Prince Peter (1963), and the word "polyandry" occurs in the title of three books concerned with the non-Tibetan people of the central Indian Himalaya (Saksena, 1956; Majumdar, 1962; Parmar, 1975). Berreman, who has written about polyandry at some length, eventually formulated his Law of Polyandry (1978) which states that "the occurrence of polyandry drives all other forms of marriage from the minds of anthropological observers".

3. *Ecology*: The close relationship between humans and their physical environment has been frequently described as strong, or even overpowering, ever since Barth's pioneering studies in Pakistan (1956). Certainly in Nepal such

research as that on the social implications of state land policy (Caplan, 1970), the migration movements that result from a rapidly diminishing man-land ratio (Dahal *et al.*, 1977), and the infrastructural basis of village life (McDougal, 1968) is common.

4. *Village studies*: Especially in Nepal, most anthropologists have assumed, without seriously questioning the assumption, that the relevant units for study are either tribes or villages, both of which are conceived of as separate, independent, fragmented entities. Ties to larger, more comprehensive (for example, regional or national) networks have been relatively ignored. Bista (1982) tries to correct this imbalance by arguing that the time has come to tackle the neglected phenomenon of integration among peoples of different ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. Another departure from the traditional ethnographic approach is represented by attempts to synthesize material from different village or ethnic groups. Furer-Haimendorf's comparative study of trading economies along the northern border is one example; Allen's (1978) comparisons of clan hierarchies in Tibeto-Burman speaking populations is another.

5. *Development*: Since the 1970s, a different theme has emerged and progressively strengthened: that of "development", whether economic, social, or cultural. This perspective has appeared in work throughout the Himalaya, including India (Rahul, ca. 1969) and Nepal, where developmental implications of demography (Goldstein, 1981; Goldstein and Beall, 1981), the population problem, resource depletion (MacFarlane, 1976), economic organization (Messerschmidt, 1981), and tourism (Sacherer, 1977), have all been studied. The burgeoning field of "medical anthropology" is but the latest variant of "development anthropology", and field-workers in Nepal are increasingly



Painting inside *chorten* showing King Mahendra among Buddhist deities.



Patum beating drum during annual month-long winter ritual.



Chorten at the entrance of Tarangpur.

concerned with health problems (Stone, 1976; Justice, 1981).

In Nepal, most development-oriented anthropology fits comfortably into the programmes and plans of His Majesty's Government. A small minority of sociologists has pursued Marxist approaches to the problem of poverty (Seddon, Blaikie, and Cameron, 1979). But there has been no disagreement or debate among anthropologists, as there has been in Andean countries, over whether rural groups should be labelled "peasants" or "tribals", or whether development should follow "Marxist" or "bourgeois capitalist" lines. In India there has been more debate over whether "development" has helped or hurt Himalayan people, and Berreman (1983) has documented local resistance (the "Chipko" movement) to commercial lumbering interests. Unlike the Andes, where an immense literature has emerged from anthropologists studying the effects of their own intervention, anthropologists in the Himalaya have had to study whatever happens to be there.

6. *Women*: One other growing research interest, in the Himalaya and elsewhere, is the symbols and status associated with women. Jones and Jones (1976) and Andors (1976) are the first examples of work in this new research field, but other studies have been undertaken on women in politics (Molnar, 1982), in religion (Holmberg, 1982), and in the social construction of gender (March, 1982).

The above list demonstrates that anthropological foci in the Himalaya are partly a result of the attraction offered by specific features of life there, and partly a function of whatever is of current interest in the larger anthropological world in general.

Cross-cutting all of these concerns has been the issue of centre versus periphery. Himalayanists have developed a sometimes fierce loyalty about their corner of the world in reaction to the assumed centrality of lowland India or China to the north. While syncretism is a constant element in anthropological studies that try to find a way between these two cultural poles (Fisher, 1978), one should be apprehensive of chauvinism in both directions and prefer to regard the Himalaya as a cultural area (even if the borders are not firmly demarcated) full of internal complexity and sophistication and possessing an integrity not dependent on India or China for its understanding.

The overwhelming bulk of anthropological literature produced so far has been the work of westerners and Japanese, but the notion that legitimate, solid, serious scholarship has always been of foreign origin is spurious. Virtually all studies by foreign scholars have been produced with the invaluable and frequently inadequately acknowledged assistance of indigenous intellectuals. The current concern over whether Mary Slusser properly credited the contributions of Nepalese scholars to her *Nepal Mandala* (1982) is only the most recent, and certainly the most publicized, example of this problem.

The phenomenon of local scholarship is not new. One thinks of Sarat Chandra Das and his heroic, secret forays as far as Lhasa in the late nineteenth century, and of Lama Anagarika Govinda's writings on Buddhism. More recent examples include autobiographies such as those translated

by Snellgrove (1967), a Tamang's view of society and religion (MacDonald, 1975), geographic guidebooks such as that translated by Wylie (1970), and even a Lama's view of mountaineers attempting to climb Mt. Everest (MacDonald, 1973).

More local studies might have been undertaken if there were more Himalayan educational institutions. Within Nepal, education at almost any level could hardly be said to exist, outside of monasteries, until the 1950s. Certainly anthropological scholarship in the western sense had no local practitioners until the 1960s. Dor Bahadur Bista, research assistant for Fürer-Haimendorf in 1957, later studied anthropology in London and Wisconsin and eventually wrote several publications including the influential and classic *People of Nepal* (1967). This forthright book title conceals a minor controversy which simmers in Nepal up to the present. While anthropology has in general been hospitably welcomed in Nepal, some Nepalese officials view it as divisive because it emphasizes ethnic distinctions and separations during a time when the government is trying to promote national unity. It was thus important that the title of Bista's book reflect its central concern: the "People" of Nepal rather than the "Peoples" of Nepal. Other Nepalese anthropologists, trained in the 1970s and 1980s, will have to devise their own solutions to this and other problems arising from the confrontation of political and academic interests. One solution already emerging is to concentrate more attention on processes of integration into the larger society than on cleavages between communities (Bista, 1982).

Foreign scholars have rarely consulted local scholarship, to their detriment, for two reasons. One is that very few foreign anthropologists read vernaculars such as Nepali, Tibetan, or Kashmiri well enough to understand whatever literature exists in those languages. Instead they read and quote each other so much that two separate but parallel scholarly traditions have evolved. Thus, classic works such as Shrestha's (1972) study of the Thakuris of western Nepal, and the study of Dhimal folk life by Diwas *et al.* (1973) do not receive the recognition of the west that they deserve.

A second reason for western ignorance of indigenous scholarship is that local writings are frequently published in extremely scattered, ephemeral, and difficult-to-find publications. Thakali's mimeographed essay (1968) on Dolpo District, for example, was the best general introduction to that area at the time it was written, but because of its cyclostyled format its existence was generally unnoted and unknown.

In the 1970s and early 1980s many dissertations have been written by a new generation of indigenous scholars whose origins range from Nepal in the east, through India and Pakistan, to Afghanistan in the west. These young anthropologists bring not only fresh energy but also unrivalled linguistic skills and indigenous intuitions and insights to the traditional store of anthropological theory and method. Even now, exciting developments are beginning which bode well for future progress. An informal conference was organized in 1984 in Kathmandu in which several Thakali social scientists met with western scholars of the

Thakali to discuss their research results. As more and more indigenous scholars are trained, the more such dialogues can take place, to the mutual benefit of all.

While there is much new energy and enthusiasm among young anthropologists and sociologists in Nepal, the institutional support for them is sporadic. The Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, founded in 1972, and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, founded in 1980, both affiliated with Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, are flourishing institutions composed of dynamic groups of scholars. Opportunities for publishing are available through specialized university publications as well as in journals such as *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, *Kailash*, and *Himalayan Culture*. On the other hand, access to the larger international anthropological community is limited. Tribhuvan

University Library does not yet subscribe to such journals as *Eastern Anthropologist*, *Man*, *American Anthropologist*, *Current Anthropology*, *The Journal of Anthropological Research*, *Ethnology*, and *Ethos*.

Universities in India also have anthropology departments which further research and teaching on the Himalaya. However, there is only one anthropology department in Pakistan, located at the university in Islamabad, and it has no research programme in the Himalaya. However, in 1983 the Smithsonian Institution began funding a major multi-disciplinary research programme in Chitral, and the South Asia Institute at the University of Heidelberg has conducted research in Pakistan's Northern Areas since 1979, in collaboration with Quaid-i-Azam University and the Institute of Folk Heritage.

CONCLUSIONS

In comparison with the Andes, there is very little evidence of any clear-cut onward-and-upward trend in the historical trajectory of Himalayan anthropology. The Himalaya are too vast, culturally complicated, and until very recently, too inconsistently and poorly researched to have developed the kinds of overarching themes and perspectives that have evolved in the Andes over several centuries. The early explorers, military men, missionaries, merchants, and diplomats tended to write about subjects appropriate to their professional missions. Some of them did much more, and the best of them collected ethnological information on all available subjects. But overall, accumulated anthropological knowledge on the Himalaya has been, until extremely recently, vague, uneven, and miscellaneous.

Today there is an increasing concern with more conventional anthropological issues, but nevertheless there has been a strong tendency to dwell on topics that seem either unique or specially well-developed in the Himalaya, such as religion, and idiosyncratic forms of social structure, such as polyandry.

There has continued, among antiquarians and modern scholars, an enduring interest in culture history, in the origins of the many different tribes and castes and ethnic groups which inhabit the Himalaya. This historical interest has centred on the degree of affinity of various groups with either the Hindu heartland (India) or the Buddhist heartland (Tibet).

Another perdurable characteristic of Himalayan anthropology has been concern with the difference between the Great and Little Traditions—the difference between the literate, reflective specialist, and the practices and beliefs of the illiterate, lay villager. In general, anthropologists have sympathized with Atkinson's view expressed more than a hundred years ago that the former receives adequate

attention from textual scholars, and have therefore pursued the latter.

At present the concern with the pressing problems of development consumes a large portion of anthropological energy, of both foreigners and indigenous scholars. Increasingly, applications for research visas are more favoured if the stated intent is to study practical matters. No anthropologist has yet received permission to work in Tibet, but even there permission has been given to geographers willing to conduct "disaster research", such as studies that help forecast landslides, floods, and avalanches.

The Himalayan boundaries were closed for so long, and were so unself-reflective during that time, that in many ways, despite the recent surge of research, anthropology is still just getting under way there. Even as more is learned about the people of a country such as Nepal, internal divisions within the country, and the political inaccessibility of the northern border area have resulted in uneven development of knowledge, in Nepal and in lesser known Himalayan lands. Unlike in the Andes, neither wealth nor information have come forth readily from the Himalaya. Only now, as indigenous anthropology begins to develop in concert with hitherto largely foreign scholarship, is Himalayan anthropology likely to take the quantum leap to mature scientific investigation.

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