

## Book Review

Dixit, Hemang, ed., 1978. Medical Bibliography of Nepal. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University Institute of Medicine, Research and Review Division.

The Medical Bibliography of Nepal provides a comprehensive listing of books, articles and reports that cover a wide range of medical topics focussed on Nepal. The publication of this work comes at a very appropriate time, since an interest in Nepal's health problems and medical development has steadily increased in recent years.

The bibliography is clearly not confined to medical science alone, as the title might suggest, but also includes listings of works on topics ranging all the way from traditional medical beliefs to health care systems and health education. It appears that the editor/compiler took a great deal of time and work to collect and organize materials on any and all topics that might be relevant to the general subjects of health and medicine in Nepal. As a result, this work will be of use to individuals from a wide range of disciplines, including public health and medical anthropology, as well as to individuals working directly in the medical sciences in Nepal.

Entries are clearly organized and categorized. The bibliography is first divided into published books and booklets, unpublished articles, WHO assignment reports, and published articles. This is followed by a section of materials written in languages other than English and another section lists materials written in Nepal. The larger sections -- the WHO reports and the published articles -- are further divided by topic.

There are some minor shortcomings in the this work. For instance, it is not indexed and there is no indication as to where copies of some of the unpublished materials might be available.

These matters aside, the Medical Bibliography of Nepal will certainly become a very welcome resource work for a diversity of people and institutions. It is hoped that this valuable task of compiling and publishing a medical bibliography of Nepal will continue.

Linda Stone

Marc Gaborieau, Le Nepal et ses populations, Editions complexe, P.U.F. Bruxelles, 1978, pp. 312 maps, tables, photographs.

Over the past 12 years, Marc Gaborieau has contributed regularly and extensively to the accumulating literature of Himalayan ethnography. His various articles and books may be grouped into a definite, yet varied set of interests. First and foremost, he has acquainted us, with dedication and in detail, with the existence and the problems of a religious minority residing in the Kingdom of Nepal, that of the Muslims, who constitute approximately 3% of the total population.

Several essays -- like "Les Musulmans du Nepal" (in: Objets et Mondes 6, 2:1966); "Les Curate du Moyen Nepal" (in: L'Homme 6, 3:1966); "Muslims in the Hindu Kingdom of Nepal" (in: Contributions to Indian Sociology N.S. 6:1972) - have led to two books on the subject: Recit du'un voyageur musulman au Tibet, Paris, 1973, and Minorites musulmanes dans le royaume hindou du Nepal, Paris, 1977, the former being mainly a translation of a travel account made by an Urdu-speaking Moslem through the Himalaya in 1882-3, which thus provided a sort of historical forerunner - from the viewpoint of a concerned individual - to the present day study by a learned anthropologist. Second in rank and extension have been Gaborieau's interests in Himalayan folklore. The antiquated undertone of this rubrique may be forgotten, if one reads what has been accomplished under it: first, two musicological essays, written in collaboration with a renowned student in this field, Mireille Helffer: "Problemes poses par un chant de Tihar" (in: Ethnographie, 1968-69) and "A propos d'un tambour de Kumaon et de l'ouest du Nepal" (Emsheimer Festschrift, 1974, Studia instrumentorum Musicae popularis); and then, two studies dealing with popular songs performed by bards in Western Nepal, Garhwal and Kumaon areas, where Gaborieau also did some of his six years' field research: "Les recits chantes de l'Himalaya et le contexte ethnographique" (in: Furer-Haimendorf, Contributions to the Anthrolopogy of Nepal, London, 1974) and "Classification des recits chantes: La litterature orale des hindous de l'Himalaya" (in: Poetique 19:1974). These studies mark the author as acquainted with modern methodological trends, like the Russian morphological school and the French structural approach; his acquaintance with the latter can also be deduce from an early theoretical essay, entitled "Anthropologie structurale et histoire", (in: Esprit, 1963) and last but not least from his contribution to L'Homme, the House Journal of Structural Anthropology. His, apparently provisional, concentration on folklore studies was rounded up by an introduction to a reprint of Oakley's and Gairola's Himalayan Folklore, in the Kuloy series. Finally, the author under review has written on a number of subjects, which cannot be easily grouped under a single heading, but nevertheless testify to his scholarly inclinations: "Unite et diversite des populations du Nepal" (in: Revue francaise des Elites europeennes, 1968) - an antecedant to the present publication? -; "Note preliminaire sur le dieu Maṣṭa", (in: Objets et Mondes 9, 1:1969; English version in Hitchcock/Jones, Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas, London, 1976); "Les bayu du Nepal Central," (in: Puruṣārtha, 1975); "La transe rituelle dans l'Himalaya Central: folie, avatar, meditations", (in: Puruṣārtha, 1975); - these latter three articles forming one contingent group, concerned with religious matters; then, an introduction to the republication of Hamilton's account of 1819 - proof of Gaborieau's concern for former, now historical, reports -; and "Systemes traditionnels d'echange de services specialises contre renumeration dans une localite du Nepal Central", (in: Puruṣārtha, 1977); followed by "Le partage du pouvoir entre les lignages dans une localite du Nepal Central", (in: L'Homme, 1:1978). Of these, the article on the western Nepalese god Maṣṭa is the most frequently cited. In it he delineates the functions of the dhami, incarnate oracle of the deity, and demarcates the geographical extensions of the cult. One may add, in parenthesis, that the cult and its

shrines extend further to the east than suggested by the author, i.e. Jajarkot and Tibrikot: there is a remarkable shrine of Maṣṭa in Maikot, 5 days' walk east of the former, and the same time distance of the latter, in the territory of the Northern Magar.

The preceding enumerations of Gaborieau's works to the present may be summed up in one statement: Over the last decade he has established himself, with ethnographic zeal and philological acrobacy, as one of the most refined and prolific scholarly sources on Himalayan anthropology. This in mind, his new book, Le Nepal et ses populations, strikes as a real surprise. For, instead of being particularistic, fighting out all the hackwork details of specified ethnographic enquiry, the new book provides a holistic look at Nepal in its totality, in historical and actual anthropological and sociopolitical terms. It is a handbook on everything. Does this courageous enterprise pay?

The hand-or guidebook character of Le Nepal is accentuated primarily by its physical appearance. It looks like a tourist book: pockety in size, with boutiqueish typography, with interjected cut-ups to the current text in fat type and didactic hinting arrows, as well as a lot of empty space on the type face fringe, (maybe for hurried notes of the hurried cultural traveller), - it is a typical world consumer's companion, designed for the big sale. Such a make up Le Nepal has hardly deserved and it reflects, I suppose, less the author's intentions than that it follows the constraints, imposed by the modern impresarios of serial book editions - and Le Nepal is in such a series. I turn, therefore, to the content of the book and its arrangement.

It is divided into three major parts, each of which has various subsections. Part one deals with the geographical setting of the country and the changing histories that have taken place in it (pp. 11-74). Part two, the core of the book, deals with the diversity of populations that inhabit Nepal (pp. 77-233). Part three, (pp. 236-283), tackles the problems that a country of such diversity faces, when confronted with the political aims of national unification. At the end of the book are presented several appendices; some sketchmaps (on historical sites, the administrative division of the country, the local distribution of the populations, and the landscape patterns); a concise bibliography; and a rough index. The appendices are partly statistical, giving numerical impressions - slightly dated - on the demography of the country, its ethnic and religious groups and on aspects of the national economy; partly, and this is new and therefore useful, they confront the major festive calendars of the Indo-Nepali, the Newar and the Muslims with one another. The interspersed cut-ups throughout the book inform in encyclopedic brevity on mixed topics: drugs, hippies, mystics, education, press, radio, transportation, trance, the sacred, food taboos and table manners, death rites, the Bonpo, a local kingdom in the West, the abolition of the caste laws, literature, politics in the fifties, urbanisation, the Sikhs in Nepal, the British influence, - in this order.

The major section of the First Part of the book is dedicated to the history of the country and has been segmented into four blocks: Ancient History, Middle Ages, Foundation of the Kingdom of Nepal, and the Present Period. To these blocks correspond, *cum grano salis*, several successive dynasties, the Licchavi dynasty (ca. 250-750 A.D.) to the first; those of the Thakuri, subdivided into 3 localized dynasties (ca. 1000-1200 A.D.) and of the Malla, equally composed of three main dynastic streams (ca. 1200-1750 A.D.) to the second; the empire, founded by Prithvi Narayan, and that of his successors (1768-1846), as well as the reign of the Rana (1846-1951) to the third; and to the last block the Modern Kingdom and the institutional intermission of a constitutional monarchy (1951-60). Gaborieau's flight over Nepal's history is sketchy, narrated in the short-breathed present tense of the enumerator, a style which is underlined by an abundant use of colons and semicolons. But the strokes of the sketch are strong: One gets an impression of important cultural lines that guided the course of the country through time, above all the early Indian influence with a predominance of Hinduism over Buddhism (the author calls the depiction of Early Nepal as a Buddhist country a legend, p. 30); the early codification of caste division; and the two grand axes of Newar civilisation in the valley and, later, Khas or Indo-Nepali civilisation in the West, which penetrated slowly and irresistibly to the East, gaining not only territorial, but also ground in political power.

At the other end of the book, in Part Three, the finale, certain of the historical trends, dealt with in the First Part, are taken up again as being pertaining factors for either centripetal or centrifugal tendencies for national integration, the proclaimed goal of the present day monarchy. The predominance of the caste system, for instance, can be seen in this light as both an integrative factor for unification and as a source for possible clashes between social groups or classes. Its integrative force resides, according to Gaborieau, in the fact that every social or ethnic group, indeed every individual and not only the Hindus, are given a definite place by it. The caste system is the most generally applied and therefore accepted social frame of reference, even for those, like some of the hill tribes, who traditionally never referred to it themselves. On the other hand, it seems obvious, from the statistical data presented, that the higher castes occupy, in unproportional majority, also the higher ranks of decision-making, which, in turn, for a state in transition, may be a cause for political struggle in the future. However, the caste system, as in contradistinction to caste legislation, which was officially abolished in 1963, is alive to a degree that it can bear opposing movements among its own adherents: The Indo-Nepali populations of Nepal have not only won hegemony over those that were not followers of their system and belief, but also have outnumbered in importance those populations, which themselves are defined by it, like the Newar and the Hindus of the Plains. Other factors are more clearly definable as either integrative or centrifugal. Amongst the integrative ones the author mentions the propagation of national identity (to be a Nepali first, and only then a Tamang, a Gurung or a caste member) and the introduction of the Panchayat system as a unifying tool for a homogeneous administration. As potentially

disintegrative forces the author names regional differences, like those between the valley and the distant hill regions; ethnic differences; and religious differences, which are mainly restricted to those between Hindus and Moslems. In this final part of the book Gaborieau tries, once more in admirable condensation, to point out the main problems and trends of a highly diversified country on its irrevocable path to unification.

The main and most lengthy part of the book is the one in the centre, devoted to the many populations that inhabit this Himalayan state. It concerns not only the general reader, but also the anthropologist.

Each attempt to bring Nepal's phenomenological wealth in ethnic diversity into a meaningful order will begin with the formulation of some classificatory principles that help to place the many groups, previously identified as entities. In fact, the identification of a group as a group will itself rely on such classificatory criteria. One such tool has been a linguistic criterion: membership of a group to such and such language family or branch of a language family. A more recent and fashionable one has been an ecological criterion: what geographical setting or "eco-zone" does this or that group belong to. A third one has been to base the classification on religious criteria: which beliefs are professed here or there. There are more, like sociological or historical criteria, and none is invalid in itself. They may, however, be invalidated, if they are applied in isolation. All one can say about Gaborieau's classification is that he has avoided to use only one of the principles. He divides the populations of Nepal into 3 main units: the Tribes, the Tibetan Enclaves and the Caste People and it is obvious that such a division amalgamates inexpressedly various, if not all, criteria mentioned above. The first of these units he subdivides, *prima facie*, along a geographical line: Tribes of the Plains and Tribes of the Midlands. Amongst the Plains people he names and discusses the Tharu; the Tribes of the east like the Dhimal, Santal, Mech, Jhangar and Rajbanshi; and the Tribes of the Rivers, - in my view an elegantly simple way of grouping together the Majhi, the Kumal, the Danuwar and the Darai. The Tribes of the Midlands are grouped under the following headings: Dismembered Tribes, The Large Tribes, The Tribes of Tibetan Affinity. The first of these headings is employed for remainders of once larger ethnic groups, like the nomadic Kusunda and Raute and the sedentarized Raji, Chepang and Hayu. (The Hayu could also be grouped with the Kirant). The author claims to have borrowed the term "Dismembered Tribes" from Hodgson, who, indeed, studied several of them in the last century; but the British diplomat had, if I remember well, actually coined them "Broken Tribes." As Large Tribes appear the Magar and the Kirant, the former divided into Kham Magar (plus Chantel) and Hinduised Magar, the latter into Thami, Sunwar, Jirel, (actually three quite small groups, also to be found on the fringes of Sherpa country) and the Rai and Limbu. The two remaining large tribes of the hills, Tamang and Gurung, are placed by Gaborieau into the category of Tribes of Tibetan Affinity, on the ground that both had assumedly immigrated, not too many centuries ago,

from the north into Nepal; that both speak languages more closely related to Tibetan than to the Tibeto-Burman dialects of other hill tribes and that their religion is, at least in one dimension, Lamaist.

The Tibetan Enclaves or Bhotya, whose different groups certainly all are Lamaist or, in a few instances, Bonpo, and who live on the northern high altitude borders, constitute the next large unit in Gaborieau's classification. He mentions specifically the Byanshi, the populations of Humla, Mugu, Dolpo and Mustang, the Thakali and the Sherpa. Others like the Nar-, Nyishang-, Nubri-, Tsum-, Langtang-, Yolmo-, Walung-groups and the so-called Lhomi of the Upper Arun remain unmentioned. As a matter of fact, the whole chapter on the Bhotya appears rather grainy and the author excuses this with the dotty state of research.

On safer ground, the author fills in the last of the three major units of his classification, the Caste People, where the Hindus of the Plains, the Moslems (for they, too, contrary to their egalitarian religious background, have forged their view of society into the model of caste hierarchy), the Newar and the Khas or Indo-Nepali are presented. This part of the anthropological exposé appears as the most rewarding: it is the lengthiest in the book, secured by the author's own ethnographic studies, and the most wanted, for it helps to see with more clarity the parallel, yet differentiated, positions of those key populations for Nepal's present and future, who have guarded a two thousand year-old Indian heritage in localized transformations. The treatment of Nepal's populations is generally very concise, concentrated, if ethnographic knowledge is available, on religious practices, social organisation and rites of passage. The information given is largely reliable and familiar to those acquainted with the current literature, which they reflect. On occasion, this literature, indispensable for a task like Gaborieau's, has not been consulted, and the result is a blank, as in the case of the Dhimal, who were repeatedly studied by Nepali scholars -- cf. R.R. Regmi, "purbai nepalko dhimal" (in: Ancient Nepal, 17:1971) or D.B. Bista's People of Nepal (chapters Dhimal and Bodo) where, following a tradition recorded by Upreti, the Dhimal are mythologically connected with the Limbu; this approachment is also made with the Lohrung Rai). Occasionally, the degree of generalization is astounding, as for instance in the statement that in their life cycle the Kham or Northern Magar pay most attention to the funerary rites. I think this is correct, but how does, how can Gaborieau know? On occasion again, specification might have done better than generalization: The treatment of the Rai might have been more convincing, had the author laid more stress on the differences amongst the various Rai groups, whom he doesn't even name; that may also be said of the Bhotya. In fact, the ethnography of the book bends to the West and the South, North and East being slightly under-represented. This finds its expression in the adjoined selection of photographs, all of which, with one single exception, have been taken in locations west of the central valley. As the author says in his very first sentence: "Everyone chooses a bit his own Nepal." But this does not, I think, disturb the

balance of the book, reassured through firm judgements on nearly all topics.

It is good at times to raise the head from the table and look around; it is good for the ethnographer, once in a while, to forget His village and take others around in consideration. For what counts more: the differences in the similarities or the similarities in the differences? Gaborieau has looked around and his view of a totality is clear. The time for detailed comparative studies in Himalayan ethnography with a holistic vision, however, is still far ahead.

Michael Oppitz