

## Announcements

### **A report on the 5<sup>th</sup> Himalayan Languages Symposium**

**Kathmandu, Nepal, September 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, 1999.**

#### **About the Symposium**

For the first time, the Himalayan Languages Symposium was held in Nepal, in the very heart of the Himalayas, the home of lesser-known indigenous languages which are in urgent need of documentation and linguistic analysis. This has been a unique opportunity for scholars from East and West to exchange their views and establish closer scholarly contacts for future research.

This year's symposium was held at the Kathmandu Guest House in the heart of Kathmandu's tourist area. The symposium was jointly sponsored by the Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University, the Royal Nepal Academy, and the Linguistic Society of Nepal.

The Permanent Secretariat for this annual Symposium is maintained at Leiden University in the Netherlands. Previously, the Himalayan Languages Symposium has been convened at Leiden, Noordwijkerhout; Santa Barbara, California; and Pune, India.

#### **The symposium programme**

A call for papers was sent out to over 160 scholars in various countries of the Americas, Europe and Asia who are engaged in research on subjects related to Himalayan languages and language communities. The 3-day symposium covered topics including the description of previously undescribed languages, historical and comparative studies, Himalayan languages in theoretical and typological perspective, sociolinguistics and ethnolinguistics, language planning, and the prehistory of Himalayan language communities. The symposium programme was published, and included information on the organization of academic sessions, the titles and subject areas of presentations, and the

participation of Nepalese and international scholars. The foreign scholars included those from the USA, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, China, India, Bhutan, Japan, South Korea, and Australia. The Nepalese scholars were represented by senior professors from various language departments of Tribhuvan University, journalists, writers and students. We are hopeful that the truly international character of this symposium will give new directions to future research on the languages and ethnic communities of the Himalayan region. Out of 68 papers submitted, 48 papers were presented at both the regular and parallel sessions.

#### **Outcomes of the Symposium**

This symposium has been widely acclaimed as very useful and stimulating. Its main outcomes can be summarized as follows :

1. The research scholars and linguists working on the languages of the Himalayas have greatly appreciated this forum for presentation of their findings from on-going projects and the opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas with other scholars.
2. The Himalayan region is an area of great cultural and linguistic diversity, and research into the minority languages and ethnic cultures of this region can serve to preserve and promote these languages and communities. The symposium has thus stressed the need for consistent research planning in the Himalayan belt, for coordination and collaboration in research activities, and for the training of more manpower for linguistic research.
3. The Organizing Committee decided to publish the proceedings of the 5th Himalayan Languages Symposium. The Chairman, Prof. Dr. Tej R. Kansakar announced this at the concluding session of the symposium and requested all the paper presenters to submit the final drafts of their papers before the end of 1999. He also gratefully acknowledged the generous financial assistance to be given by the Vice Chancellor of Tribhuvan University to meet the costs of this publication in the year 2000.

#### **Members of the Organizing Committee**

1. Dr Churamani Bandhu, Professor and Head, Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University;
2. Member, Department of Language and Literature, Royal Nepal Academy;
3. Dr Tej R. Kansakar, Chairman, Organizing Committee; President, Linguistic Society of Nepal;

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4. Dr Madhav P. Pokharel, Professor, Central Department of Linguistics;
5. Dr Yogendra P. Yadava, Professor, Central Department of Linguistics;
6. Mr Til Bikram Nembang (Bairagi Kainla), Kathmandu, Nepal;
7. Dr George van Driem, Director, Himalayan Languages Project, Leiden University, The Netherlands;
8. Dr Ballabh Mani Dahal, Professor, Central Department of Nepali and Central Department of Linguistics;
9. Mr Nirmal M. Tuladhar, Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University.

#### **Date and Venue of the 6th Himalayan Languages Symposium**

The 6th Himalayan Languages Symposium will be held on June 15, 16, and 17, 2000 in the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, USA.

## CONFERENCE ON THE BUDDHIST HERITAGE OF NEPĀL MAṆḌALA

1-5 November 1998.

In November of 1998, a substantial conference was held in Kathmandu bringing Newar and foreign scholars together to consider the heritage, present state, and future of Buddhism in Nepāl Maṇḍala. For five days, there were seminars, lectures, slide shows, and heated discussions. It was more than an academic conference, however, and the arts and ritual skills of the Valley's Buddhist communities were on show, attracting crowds of curious Nepalese and tourists alike. Outdoors, there were stages filled with Gyanmala troupes; indoors, there were performances of traditional Vajrayāna dance. Vajrācāryas constructed a complete Vagiśvarakīrti Vajradhātu Maṇḍala and performed the Saptavidhanottara Puja, and there were displays of sculpture, painting, and calligraphy.

*Here is the press release which preceded the conference.*

Nepal, the birthplace of Krakuchchanda, Kanakmuni and Shakyamuni Buddhas and the place of the origin of Swayambhu, is a country repletewith Buddhist ideals. Buddhism had spread in Nepal in the hoary past and Buddhist culture has been an integral part of the life of Nepalese people. Preservation as well as continuation of many Buddhist rituals and practices is indeed a loving tradition of Nepalese Buddhists, which is a unique feature of Nepalese culture on the whole.

Nepal Mandal, the present-day Kathmandu valley, comprised of the three cities popularly known as the ancient Buddhist cities of the world, is undoubtedly the principal seat of Newa Buddhists. Their society is based on the profound principles of Sravakayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana; and, thus, they have their own way of viewing the world. To them, the eyes of Swayambhunath are a symbol of the awareness of emptiness and the five wisdoms of five celestial Buddhas which dispel five principal delusions. They possess a unique culture and lifestyle rituals pertaining from birth to death. Hundreds of Viharas (small and big) were constructed in the Valley as Buddhist institutions. Innumerable Chaityas exist that exhibit their faith in Buddhism.

But, unfortunately, natural calamities, political disorders, foreign invasions, government policies that occurred in the valley from time to time and the slogans of modernization have debased the ancient values and practices. In order to preserve and promote Buddhist philosophy, religion, culture, art and architecture inherited by the Newa Buddhists of the valley by means of research and studies, Lotus Research Centre and other organizations jointly propose a conference with the theme "Buddhist Heritage of Nepal for A Better Life".

*As a result of the conference, the following statement was issued.*

Whereas there has been this past November 1-5 of 1998 a Conference on the Buddhist Heritage of Nepal Mandala, with a wide-ranging program of seminars, lectures, cultural exhibitions and rituals,

We who have taken part in this conference collectively make the following declarations:

**First:** Adi Buddha Shree Swayambhu Jyotirupa Dharmadhatu Vagisvara is the foundation of the Buddhist culture of Nepal Mandala: through the Conference, our knowledge about the Buddhist culture of Nepal Mandal has been increased and our faith and devotion to this culture has been reaffirmed. We thereby demand that there be greater attention of the concerned to the preservation and development of the Buddhist culture in and around the Kathmandu Valley, which has existed in an unbroken continuity for thousands of years.

**Second:** Given the special relation of Sakyamuni Buddha to the Buddhist culture of the Kathmandu Valley, the importance of his birthplace as a pilgrimage destination for all the Buddhists of the world, and its status as a World Heritage Site: we deplore the fact that although the master plan has been ready for several years, it has not yet been implemented; we are horrified to hear that precious antiquities have been lost from the site; and we demand that attention be focussed on this critical situation. Indeed, this is a cause for national embarrassment in the eyes of the world. Bearing in mind the reputation and dignity of the nation of Nepal, we challenge all local and national offices of the government to work for a prompt conclusion of the Lumbini project.

**Third:** The majority of Buddhists who live in the Kathmandu Valley or whose roots are here, whether they are young or old, women or men, lay people or priests, have no opportunity for the study or understanding of their own Buddhist culture. We therefore demand that schools and universities offer course in Buddhism and Buddhist culture. Moreover, we together feel that it is necessary to found a Buddhist university, and we demand that this be undertaken immediately.

**Fourth:** Just as we speak of Tibetan, Indian, Chinese or Japanese Buddhisms, so too here in the Kathmandu Valley there is an indigenous form of Buddhism which is well known as the Buddhism of Nepal Mandal. In order to better describe and identify this unique and ancient form of Buddhism we propose the establishment of a periodic seminar.

**Fifth:** Various universities and research centres around the world are undertaking study, teaching and research into Newar Buddhism. In Nepal itself, however, we lack a central reference point for such research. The Lotus Research Centre has gone some ways towards realising this by establishing an internet website; and we believe that a major information centre dedicated to the study of Newar Buddhism must be established.

**Sixth:** Those Buddhist Newars who live in Nepal outside the Kathmandu Valley have traditionally followed Newar Buddhism; but because of a lack of Vajracaryas, they are now compelled to abandon their traditional rituals. Understanding this, there is an immediate need for concerned people to teach the traditional rituals, so that those dwelling outside the Kathmandu Valley need not abandon their own Buddhist culture and identity.

**Seventh:** Newar Buddhist treasures are being stolen every year: divine images, illuminated manuscripts, caityas, and even the root deities of important monasteries. Yet these looted religious treasures are never found or retrieved although they occasionally surface in the international art market. We must guard this, our own material religious inheritance, while at the same time drawing world attention to the Nepalese government's apparent inability to protect our priceless heritage.

**Eighth:** The kingdom of Nepal is comprised of many religions, ethnic groups, languages, cultures, and political parties. Within this diversity, there is an abundance of co-operation, mutual respect, and affection. This co-operation, religious tolerance, mutual respect, and affection is the very foundation of the nation, and it is this relationship which sustains the nation. We believe

that it is the duty of the whole of Nepal to avoid damaging this relationship by caring for every member equally.

**Ninth:** Nepal Bhasha has been stated as a national language in the Nepalese constitution. We call for the execution of the constitution recognizing Nepal Bhasha as an official language in Newar majority regions.

**Tenth:** This five day conference, including various seminars, exhibitions, and cultural programs on the riches of classical Newar Buddhist culture is complete. May the merit developing from its performance be dedicated to the support and welfare of all beings.

May all beings be happy.

For further information, please consult [www.nepalonline.net/lrc](http://www.nepalonline.net/lrc).



The HARVARD ORIENTAL SERIES is pleased to announce the recent release, on Dec. 24, 1998, of volume 55:

*Nepalese Shaman Oral Texts*

compiled, edited, and translated by Gregory G. Maskarinec  
Cambridge, Mass. and London, England 1998

ISBN 0-674-60795-3

pp. xii, (Nepalese text) N 1-391, (Engl. transl.) 1-391; pp. 392-695  
(commentary, indexes) = total pp. xii+1085. price: \$ 90

Nepalese Shaman Oral Texts is a bilingual (Nepali and English) critical edition of three complete, representative repertoires of shaman texts collected over the past twenty years in Jajarkot District, Western Nepal. Throughout that area, shamans continue to fulfill important therapeutic roles, diagnosing problems, treating afflictions, and restoring order and balance to the lives of their clients and their communities. Each of these efforts incorporates extensive, meticulously memorized oral texts, materials that not only clarify symptoms and causes but also detail the proper ways to conduct rituals. These texts preserve the knowledge necessary to act as a shaman, and confirm a social world that demands continued intervention by shamans.

This volume, the first of its kind, includes both publicly chanted recitals and privately whispered spells of the area's three leading shamans, annotated with extensive notes. Containing over 250 texts totaling nearly 11,000 lines of material, this work endeavors to provide a comprehensive documentation of a non-Western healing system through the material that sustains and preserves that tradition, demonstrating that shaman texts remain thoroughly meaningful.

For information write to:  
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2 Divinity Avenue,  
Cambridge MA 02138, USA 617-495 3295;

The book can be ordered directly from Harvard Univ. Press.; see:  
<http://128.103.251.49/default.html> or email to: [cal@hup.harvard.edu](mailto:cal@hup.harvard.edu)

AN *IN FIERI* ARCHIVE OF  
VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE HIMALAYAS

Report by: Valerio Calisse and Martino Nicoletti

Since 1984, a group of Italian ethnologists has carried out various scientific expeditions to Nepal and north-east India (Himachal Pradesh).

At the same time, the project 'Sacred and Non-Sacred Space in Eurasia' (directed by Professor Romano Mastromattei—University of Roma II—'Tor Vergata') has produced a considerable number of videos in semi-professional format. Most of these documents have been edited in order to be shown at important ethnological film festivals and international scientific congresses.

Some of this data will be shown together with other documentaries filmed and edited by European anthropologists during a monographic session of the 'Visual Anthropology' course held by Dr. Martino Nicoletti (Academic Year 1998/99) at the University of Perugia.

List of videos

- A Shamanic Ritual in a Tamang Village*  
(A. Vincenzo, camera). 1988, 60 minutes.
- A Tamang Shamanic Ritual in Baudhnath*  
(M. Romanò, camera). 1989, 160 minutes.
- A Sherpa Shamanic Ritual in Helambu*  
(M. Romanò, camera). 1988 (edited 1990), 57 minutes.
- The Tamang: Life and Religious Features*  
(M. Nicoletti, camera). 1990 (edited 1991), 14 minutes.
- The Triten Norbutse Bon-po Monastery*  
(M. Nicoletti, camera). 1990 (edited 1992), 7 minutes.
- The Chepang: Life and Worship of a Little-Known Group in Nepal*  
(D. Riboli, camera). 1990 (edited 1991) 12 minutes.
- A Tamang Shamaness' Séance*  
(M. Nicoletti, R. Mastromattei). 1990 (edited 1994).
- A Shamanic Séance in Pratapur (Tarai)*  
(M. Nicoletti, camera 1; C. Sani, camera 2). 1990, 64 minutes.

In 1997/98, three further videos were edited:

**Along The Sacred River – The Bagmati In The Valley of Kathmandu – Nepal**  
(Lungo il fiume sacro – la Bagmati della valle di Kathmandu – Nepal)

Director: Caterina Bonapace, 1998, 36 minutes, Beta, colour, commentary: Italian

The Bagmati, the most sacred and important river in Nepal, runs through the valley of the capital, Kathmandu. There are numerous Hindu temples along the river banks, in which rituals are performed and where ascetic pilgrims can find a place to stay. Today, unfortunately, many areas are so polluted that the rituals can no longer possibly be performed and most of the temples are in a state of ruin and disrepair or are occupied by the homeless. Cultural stratification, differing needs, and the abandoning of sacred traditional values have caused a visible change and sense of loss even in places where religious feeling has been alive for centuries. This video journeys through the sacred and ritual nature of the river, providing a more complex analysis of its current situation.

**Pa-wo: A Tibetan Oracular Ritual**  
(Pa-wo: un rituale oracolare tibetano)

Director: Martino Nicoletti, 1998, 25 minutes. Betacam, colour, commentary: Italian.

Wangchuk, an old Tibetan, took refuge in Nepal after the Chinese occupation of Tibet. Here he continued to practise the profession of Pa-wo, or 'living oracle'. The occasion for the séance presented in the film, which took place in May 1993, was a consultation by those present relating to personal matters. The Pa-wo had to convince the mountain warrior divinity, Thang-lha, that the problem merited his interest and intervention. Despite the considerable age and physical frailty of Wangchuk, he was able to dance and play with great energy and vitality for most of the ritual. The documentary examines the link between spirit possession and the musical rhythm which both induces and maintains the trance.

**Sanu Kancha: Trance, Music, and Dance in Nepal**  
(Sanu Kancha: trance, musica e danza in Nepal)

Director: Valerio Calisse, 1998, 42 minutes, Betacam, colour, commentary: Italian.

At the age of 27, Sanu Kancha, a Nepalese farmer of Tamang descent, decided to become a Shaman (*bombo* in Tamang) in order to contribute to the welfare and protection of his people. The shamanic séance presented in this video was held for the purpose of conjuring up the spirit of a famous Tamang Shaman, Sete Rumba, who died in 1993. This ritual took place in November 1997, in a private house in the Makwanpur district. Music is a constant element in any shamanic séance. For the whole duration of the ritual, which continued from dusk to dawn, the rhythm of the drum, the chanting of evocatory formulas, the ringing of bells, and sounding of the bone-trumpet, characterized the various phases of the session, and assumed a fundamental role.

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HIMALAYAN PANELS AT THE 16TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON MODERN SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

(Edinburgh, Scotland, 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> September 2000)

### Himalayan life histories

Convenor: Michael Hutt

This panel has been inspired in part by the SOAS-based Centre of South Asian Studies' project on South Asian Life Histories. Various perspectives can and have been taken on processes of social, cultural, and political change in Africa and Asia, and these include several famous life histories (one thinks of Freeman's *Untouchable*, or Marjorie Shostak's *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*), but in the field of Himalayan studies as conducted by researchers from the Euro-American world there have been only a few attempts to view these processes through the prism of an individual life—examples include Snellgrove's *Four Lamas of Dolpo*, Fisher's *Living Martyrs*, a life history in Lynn Bennett's *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters*, an extended case study in Linda Stone's *Illness and Feeding the Dead in Hindu Nepal*; and an article by Mary Des Chene in the recent collected volume *Selves in Time and Place*. There is however no dearth of autobiographical and biographical material in published form, and anthropologists have often collected oral histories in the course of fieldwork in the Himalaya. As well as bringing examples of such material to light, it is intended that the panel will also address a variety of questions, such as: in what contexts and for what purposes are life histories told in the Himalaya? What light do such life histories shed on local concepts of selfhood and agency? What languages are selected for the telling of life histories, and are there generic styles or forms? Are these modelled on forms and genres found outside the immediate region? How does a life history help our understanding of local society? Are local conceptions of individual life courses changing and if so how? Can life histories be used to reconstruct history? And so on... Contributions which address these or related concerns and which bring little-known Himalayan life histories to light will be welcomed.

Please contact Michael Hutt on [mh8@soas.ac.uk](mailto:mh8@soas.ac.uk).

### Resistance and the state in Nepal

Convenor: David Gellner

Much recent anthropological research has been concerned with resistance, but resistance has often been understood in an unhelpfully diffuse way. Even under the Panchayat system political scientists wrote about the state apparatus in Nepal, but only a few scholars did so from bottom-up perspectives (e.g. Borgström, *The Patron and the Pancha*, Delhi: Vikas, 1980). It is certainly time to think about the presence of the state in the hills and plains of Nepal and to ask a variety of questions about its mode of operation. How did the state impinge on villagers' lives before 1990 and how has that changed since then? What are the factors that have led some to support the Maoist movement? What determines how active that support is? How far do the rights-based individualist and ethnic revivalist discourses of urban intellectuals penetrate to the villages, and when they do, how do villagers respond and/or make use of them? Does the issue of Nepal as a Hindu state concern people in remote areas? How far are the agencies of the state, as well as the numerous NGO and INGO agencies active in rural areas, acting together, and how far do they compete against each other? Do villagers perceive the state as monolithic and controlled by certain groups, as an amorphous series of parasitic gatekeepers, or in some other way? What are the effects of the rhetorics of empowerment and participation pushed by government and NGOs?

Contributions which address some of these or related concerns, and which provide both empirical material and analysis of the state and resistance, will be welcomed, especially those which advance our understanding of the Maoist movement.

Papers already promised include:

Anne de Sales 'Between Ethnic Claims and Maoism: The Case of the Magars of Western Nepal'

Philippe Ramirez 'Nostalgia for Order and Political Harmony in a Rural Area of West Nepal, 1986-90'

William Fisher title t.b.a.

Colin Millard 'Perceptions of the Maobadi in Dorpatan district, Nepal'

Please contact David Gellner: [david.gellner@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:david.gellner@brunel.ac.uk)

**Bhutan: socio-cultural parameters and changing times**

Convenor: Françoise Pommaret

The panel will focus on the traditional parameters and cultural markers of Bhutan, which are still operative in the framework of contemporary Bhutan. In the last forty years, Bhutan has undergone tremendous social and cultural changes. However, there has always been an emphasis on upholding 'traditional values'. The blending of these two apparently contradictory forces is one of the most interesting challenges that Bhutan faces today. This panel will present different aspects of these changes and the ways that traditional parameters and socio-cultural markers of Bhutanese society have adapted to them, but also how these changes have been influenced by traditional parameters. The papers presented will cover various fields, such as development, agriculture, architecture, history, religion, politics, languages, law, and the economy.

Please contact: *Fpommaret@aol.com***For further details about the conference please contact:***south.asia.conference@ed.ac.uk*Web page: *http://www.ed.ac.uk/sociol/sas/index.htm*

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