

dealing with Hinduization, Sanskritization, universalization vs. parochialization, inclusivism, dialogue etc.).

As in the preceding volume, the strength here lies in the ‘thick description’ and the combination of philological (Tibetological) and anthropological expertise. One should note that not all contributions are equally accessible to the non-expert reader: for instance, one paper is in Tibetan. Anne-Marie Blondeau’s introduction gives a good overview of the contributions, but there is no attempt to situate the papers within a larger theoretical framework, as was done by Gingrich in the previous volume. This would have been helpful, because the papers contain a number of issues which are of wider interest in anthropological theory, such as the tension between the local and the regional/national, or the problematic concepts of syncretism and hybridity. But, considering the richness of the material and the great variety of papers it was perhaps wise to leave such generalizations to the reader and future discussions. The book is illustrated by various photographs of good quality. The one on the cover epitomizes the complex issue: it shows a radiator grill of a car along with prayer flags offered to a territorial god.

### References

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- Forbes, Ann Armbrecht 1995. ‘The Boundary Keepers: The poetry and politics of land in northeastern Nepal’. (Unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard University).
- Samuel, Geoffrey 1993. *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan societies*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.

*Himalaya: Past and Present, Vol. IV 1993-94* edited by Maheshwar P. Joshi, Allen C. Fanger, Charles W. Brown. Almora: Shree Almora Book Depot, 2000. 243 pp.

Review by Daniela Berti

As in the earlier volumes in this series, the reason for gathering the contributions presented in this fourth volume is not thematic, but geographic. Seven of the ten contributions are dedicated to Uttarkhand/ Uttarakhand and are based on fieldwork as well as on archival research. Two contributions are on Nepal and one on Himachal Pradesh.

The first two papers deal with kinship in Kumaon, focusing on temporal and spa-

tial transformations respectively. Monika Kregel analyses the social and symbolic values transmitted by gifts exchanged among kin at the time of marriage. The introduction of new modern items in marriage transactions has provoked a diversification among providers of dowry. The affinal relatives of the bride's house provide mostly what the author calls the 'basic dowry'. This part of the dowry continues to maintain tradition: the prescribed gifts are the same as before and consist mainly of cloths and metal utensils. Along with these items of the basic dowry, close agnatic relatives and brothers of the bride's mother also provide an 'extended dowry' which is associated with modernity, as the relatives pool their resources in an effort to provide various items from the consumerist world: a television or a fridge, for example. This part of the dowry is not fixed but is "a matter of negotiation between the two marriage parties and means to demonstrate status and prestige" (p. 8). The author states that for the basic dowry the emphasis is more on who gives, and less on who gives what, because the items received are prescribed and do not depend on good or bad relationships between givers and receivers (as can be the case for the 'extended dowry'). If we compare this with the similar practices that can be observed in the nearby Kullu valley (Himachal Pradesh), this would perhaps call for some nuance, as it would be difficult to affirm in the latter case that in the 'basic dowry' the 'who gives what' is not important. Although the link between the 'who' and the 'what' reflects a presumed relationship, and not a spontaneous and individualized feeling, correspondences between gift and giver can be prescribed in a very detailed way. For example, the cloth which has to be given to the bride will be different in quality, size and number of decorative drawings, depending on the feeling the giver is supposed to share with the bride: full of love and without conflict for the patrilineal kin of the bride's mother, more ambiguous and mixed with jealousy for the paternal kin, and so on. As in Kumaon, these objects have to be registered at the moment of the marriage celebration by one of the bride's trusted family members. But it is said that the purpose of this practice is not only to facilitate reciprocity, but also to identify the provenance of the objects in case of a witchcraft attack, which may often be blamed on spells cast on dowry items.

Joanne Moller's contribution is also concerned with kinship, this time in relation to spatial and contextual variations. Rejecting a clear-cut profile of the Kumaoni kinship system, she shows how Kumaoni kinship includes apparently contradictory features, which have been usually referred to as distinguishing traits of north and south Indian systems. Through a minute analysis of kinship terminology, taking into account the role of indigenous concepts in structuring relations, she demonstrates how symmetry and asymmetry, isogamies or hypergamy can coexist and be called upon by villagers, according to different contexts and perspectives, depend-

ing on the social units that are taken into consideration. Even the distinction made between consanguinity and non-consanguinity appears to depend on different levels of discourse, i.e. whether it is at the level of individuals or of lineages.

Gérard Toffin's article on the Rajopadhyaya Brahmins of the Kathmandu Valley is a good demonstration of how the political history of a region can influence the transformation of a local caste hierarchy. It also shows the plurality of points of view adopted by different groups of Brahmins regarding their respective place in the caste hierarchy. The Rajopadhyaya Brahmins had once played an important role inside the Newar royal palace, but were downgraded to a very low position by the legal code in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after the Gorkhalis took control of the region. Being more Newarized than other Brahmin castes, they were indeed more subject to the Gorkhalis' general suspicion of the indigenous population. It is interesting, therefore, that attribution of indigeneity to their identity is nowadays firmly denied by the Rajopadhyaya themselves, who refuse to be considered as Newars and claim superiority by posing as outsiders.

William Sax's study of Tehri Garhwal begins with a critique of the theory, quite common in North Indian kinship studies, according to which a viri-patrilocal marriage leads to a woman becoming completely a member of her husband's kin group. This theory conforms to the Garhwali conception, according to which the bride, moving to a new place, is subjected to a physical transformation, following the local idea that "persons and the place they reside have a great deal of influence upon each other" (p. 80). But Sax reminds us that recent studies of Indian society have criticized this view as a male, high-caste perspective, and then shows that women's discourses are less radical and have a more 'gradualistic' perspective. Some ritual contexts indicate also "the continuing and substantial relationship of a married woman to her natal place" (p. 95). A woman's constant movement between places leads thus to a constant change in her nature, so that she does not become only a member of her husband's kin group.

Emma Mawdsley describes the important role women played in the recent creation of the new hill state of Uttarkhand. She suggests that, along with the many other problems with which the separatist movement was associated (migration, environmental degradation, economic deprivation, liquor consumption) the crucial reason for women to be involved in the movement was the protest against the reservation order for the Other Backward Classes passed in Uttar Pradesh in 1993, in a region inhabited mostly by high-caste people.

Marie Lecomte-Tilouine's article is a regional study of the geographical recurrence of a god's name which, in a multitude of different orthographies, is everywhere

identified with Varaha, the boar *avatāra* of Vishnu. By comparing the god's classical myths with those of his local homophones, and by illustrating the extreme variation found in myths, cults and iconography, the author suggests that the various local forms of the god are not necessarily derived from the classical one. Local gods, sometimes of tribal origin, seem rather to have been assimilated to and identified with the classical type through the sheer proximity of their names. The multiplicity of etymologies associated with the name of a deity like Varaha is seen by the author as constituting an 'area of meaning' which includes the options of various possible paradigms in the definition of a particular local deity. The author notices that, alongside this standardization of local deities according to a Sanskrit and Paninian model, the opposite phenomenon can also be found: namely, the 'localization' of a Sanskrit deity. Confronted with this stimulating interpretation, one would like to know whether these two trends can be linked to specific sociological contexts, leading people to emphasize either the classical or the local origin of a deity, and in which way these two opposite tendencies can influence, and be influenced by, human or village relations.

B. Chinn's contribution analyses some of the problems which arose in Kumaon during the period of British administration, as a consequence of the kind of relationship the British established with the Kumaoni people. She shows how this relationship differed completely from that which existed between the people and the previous rulers, which was based on interdependence and reciprocity between client and patron.

M.P. Joshi and C.W. Brown look at mediaeval north Indian history through a micro-level study based on the records of a district of Kumaon. They aim to show the existence of a system of social, economic, and political organization, which differs from that described by historians of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal empire.

The short contribution of Tobdan, a Buddhist scholar, aims to establish the existence of Buddhism in Lahul before the advent of Tibetan Buddhism. He identifies some place names in ancient Tibetan texts as referring to Lahul, or to some places in Lahul. This would also be the location of an ancient monastery for which we have some twelfth century records written by Tibetan lamas. Besides, according to the author, even if Indian Buddhism has been smoothly transformed to Tibetan Lamaism, the contemporary local temples of Lahul show that Indian Buddhist structures remained intact in Lahul, unlike in other parts of India.

The last contribution is written by an Uttaranchal lawyer, Dutt Gairola. The author makes some suppositions about the origins of the castes and sub-castes of Garhwal, presenting an internal perspective on the matter. Expressions such as 'the true spirit

of *Hinduism*, ‘true Kshatrias’, and ‘true Brahmans’, as well as the many adjectives which indicate a personal judgement, show a certain lack of distance from the subject of study.

The volume offers rich material for our understanding of the Himalayan region, not only in terms of its traditional structures but also of the transformations taking place nowadays. Some of the contributions are excellent and present a more general interest as anthropological studies of kinship and religion.

*Sharing Water: Irrigation and water management in the Hindu Kush-Karakorum-Himalaya* edited by Hermann Kreutzmann. Oxford and Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000. 277 pp. ISBN 0 19 579159 2

Reviewed by Linden Vincent

This is the first internationally published book to present case studies of aspects of irrigation and irrigated agriculture across the Himalayan mountain range. Its core aim is to show different aspects of water management in a complex and challenging environment—and thus the value of trans-disciplinarity—rather than make comparative analysis of water management technologies, institutions, or processes of change across the region. Another short book also published in 2000 on water management in this region, provides such a synthesis (Banskota and Chalise 2000). The book also aims to promote reflection on science and development, and to better link studies of traditional water management with teaching in the social and agricultural sciences, and with development projects.

The book succeeds in making some important contributions to these aims, and shows the complexity and subtlety of adaptations that are rarely reflected in mainstream irrigation science. The book provides papers on most countries across this mountain range except Afghanistan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh with: one paper on Central Asia; five papers covering areas of northern Pakistan; three papers covering areas of Northern India (Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh); three papers on Nepal (Dolpo, Mustang, and central Nepal) and one paper on water law in Bhutan. In this respect, the detail and breadth of the study is greatest with respect to northern Pakistan, and decreases eastwards. Of the thirteen case studies, three are by national authors from the region, with no local contributors from Nepal and Bhutan. Except for water harvesting in Ladakh, the case studies all focus on river diversion surface irrigation systems and their environments. These are the main source technologies of the region, but not the only ones (Banskota and Chalise 2000; Pande 1995; Vincent 1995; Yoder 1994).