

archaic branches of one of the “great” traditions to the north and south, and not as viable cultural entities in their own right. Particularly colourful and intriguing Lepcha tales documented in the manuscripts include “The Legend of the Ants” (Number 15), a popular story about the interactions of a holy man and an insect, and “The Legendary Origin of Tobacco” (Number 16) which deals with the demonic origin of tobacco and the negative consequences which follow from its use and abuse.

In conclusion, the *Catalogue of Lepcha Manuscripts* is both beautifully produced and affordable, a combination sadly uncommon in academic publications. The author must also be commended for the manner in which she effortlessly incorporates the Lepcha script alongside her chosen transliteration system, with the result that each salient Lepcha name or term is provided in a graceful Lepcha font. This superb catalogue can be ordered online from IndexBooks: www.indexbooks.net.

***Gespräche mit einem Brahmanen im Kumaon-Himālaya: Diskursanalytische Transkripte und annotierender ethnographischer Kommentar* by Ulrich Oberdiek. Ethnologie 3. Münster, etc.: Lit. Verlag 2002.**

Reviewed by Claus Peter Zoller, Heidelberg

The book is a collection of transcripts of interviews that the author recorded with a brahmin from the Kumaon-Himālayas. The subjects discussed by the two neither focus on Kumaon nor do they reveal new, hitherto unknown information about India. They do present a fairly comprehensive overview of the “typical worldview” of an educated male member of the Indian middle class. Those who have spent some time in India will surely have frequent “flashbacks” when reading through topics such like the caste system, mythology, national characters, arts, etc.

The theoretical approach – not to deliver readymade products of field research but instead rather seeking to illustrate and comment on the encounter between the researcher and his partner, and on the inequalities and conflicts such encounters frequently entail – is in line with current ethnographic practice. Even though it was certainly helpful to move away from an all – too – complacent attitude of “the people of... say, they

believe...”, and give the others more space to represent themselves, this approach, too, has its problems.

- As there can be only one “foreground”, extensive comments and annotations put other parts of the record into the background. Although the author expresses his hope (p. 36) that the relation with his partner was not too asymmetric, the presented transcripts do become asymmetric due to the extensive comments and annotations exclusively produced by the author. The asymmetry, however, is twofold: comments and explanations are offered not only as supplements to apparently fragmentary statements of the Indian partner, but also with regard to the presumed incomplete background knowledge of the prospective readers. The asymmetry between author and partner is intensified by addressing the partner as “you” in the dialogues and as “he, Pandey” (or “Herr Pandey”) in the comments (where the prospective readers are now the “you”), and by numerous corrections of information given by the partner. All this reinforces the central position of the author in a way that is probably not intended by him.
- The introduction to this book – again in line with other ethnographic literature – shows a decided concern for ethics, morals, power and exploitation, etc. However, as usual, the issue is discussed only with regard to the behaviour of the researcher and not of the researched. Moreover, it is not continued in the post-field research phase when the researcher returns to his own campus and the process of re-contextualization of the field data begins.

The value of this book lies not in the content of the subjects discussed (which is often trivial) but in its formal structure. It clearly separates the perspectives of interviewer and interviewed with regard to India (and many other topics), and thus invites the reader to learn something not only about the worldview of an educated representative of the Indian middle class, but also about Oberdiek’s own picture of India as reflected by his numerous comments and annotations.

Information for authors

Proposals for articles should in the first instance be sent to the managing editor, Prof. William Sax. All articles submitted are subject to a process of peer review.

We would prefer that you send us both "hard" and electronic copy of your contribution, formatted in Microsoft Word. Please use author-year citations in parentheses within the text, footnotes where necessary, and include a full bibliography. This is often called the "Harvard" format.

In the body of your text:

It has been conclusively demonstrated (Sakya 1987) in spite of objections (Miller 1988: 132-9) that the ostrich is rare in Nepal.

In the bibliography:

Sakya, G.D. 1987. *Nepalese Ostriches: A trivial myth*. Kathmandu: Mani Pustak Bhandar.

Miller, M.L. 1988. A comprehensive rebuttal of G. Sakya. *Kailash* 6 (2): 121-83.

Smith, B.C. 1992. Looking for ostriches. In *Research Methodologies for the Himalayas*, edited by J. Pande, pp. 110-145. Shimla: Mountain Publishers.

Use of quotation marks:

Use **double quotation marks** (" ") for quotations of any kind, and for so-called "epistemological distancing".

Use **single quotation marks** (' ') for quotations within quotations and semantic glosses, including literal renderings of indigenous terms.

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EBHR c/o William Sax
Ruprecht-Karls-Universität
South Asia Institute
Department of Anthropology
Im Neuenheimer Feld 330
69120 Heidelberg
Germany
e-mail: william.sax@urz.uni-heidelberg.de
Tel. +49-(0)6221-548836/8931
Fax +49-(0)6221-548898

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