

## **Who's in a labour camp? A socio-economic analysis of Nepalese migrants in Qatar.**

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Investigations into Nepalese international migration have mainly focused on the mechanisms of migration, remittances and the social aspects of migration in Nepal and in India. According to the Department of Foreign Employment, between 1.3 and 2.6 million Nepalese migrants work in the Gulf (khadi) countries whereas in 2008, 206,572 Nepalese migrant workers headed for this region out of a total of 266,666 people who ventured abroad (NIDS 2008). Although the Gulf countries have emerged as one of the major destinations (after India) since the year 2000, scientific studies about Nepalese migrants in the Middle East are non-existent. As Nepalese workers face a brand new reality compared to their familiar world in Nepal or in India, Gulf countries are no doubt a privileged arena for understanding new migration dynamics and new social phenomena back home. Anyone arriving in Qatar is struck by the large number of Nepalese men in the Doha streets and shops, all of which reflects the craving youngsters have to travel abroad, which is so palpable in Nepal. A rapid overview of the migrants' environment in Qatar raises the question of how migrants handle their lives abroad. The apparent diversity of migrants, compared to the official discourse which states that all migrants come from the same socio-economic background, needs to be evaluated. Yet acquiring detailed data about Nepalese migrants in the receiving regions is always difficult, whether because no official data exist as is the case in India or these exist but are not made public, as in the Gulf countries. As far as Nepal is concerned, no large-scale study of migrants has ever been undertaken. Therefore the only way of forming an idea of who is in Qatar is to go there in person and collect data directly where the migrants themselves live. With this in mind, I spent five weeks in Qatar, between 2006 and 2008. Fieldwork was done among Nepalese migrants in a labour camp which, from now on, I will call Al Mihinat camp. A set of data was collected for nearly all 203 workers living in the camp: name, district of origin, caste, age, date of arrival, marital status, standard of education, how they came to Qatar, kind of job, second job and earnings. Apart from quantitative data, a series of interviews was also held with migrants. Analysis of the data has enabled me to acquire an in-depth look into the socio-economic characteristics of migrants and to understand the way in which they are representative of Nepalese folk. I will therefore try to provide an answer to the question: what do we learn about Nepalese migration from the study of migrants in a *labour camp*?

The term *labour camp* stands for a labourer's dwelling-place in all the Gulf countries. As migrants are grouped together in such a closed area, where they spend most of their free time, the researcher has the opportunity of interacting with migrants as much as possible during his/her stay in the camp. Whether the particular *labour camp* where I spent some time is actually representative cannot be asserted, since no statistical data exist about *labour camps* in Qatar. To my knowledge, no article has been specifically written about these camps in the Middle East, except for Marsden (2008) and Gardner (2005:128-132). Both printed and electronic media, from the region and from elsewhere, regularly emphasize the horrendous conditions the migrants live in. Gulf countries are indeed notorious for the indecent treatment of foreign migrants or "temporary workers", as local authorities prefer to call them. The Human Rights Watch and other international agencies regularly attempt to raise public awareness about the conditions the migrants live in (HRW 2006), often evoking slavery-like conditions due to the sponsorship system (Longva 1999). Needless to say, migrants themselves are fully aware of their low status in the society, often depicting themselves as slaves (*gulam*).

### **Nepal and Qatar, a "migratory couple"**

People from the Non Resident Nepali Association in Doha explain that the first Nepalese migrants to Qatar were Muslims from the Tarai, who could read and write in Arabic, and who found employment at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Others at the Nepalese Embassy told me that in the 1980s a Muslim from the Tarai found employment in the Qatari police. Apart from these very sketchy stories, more research needs to be done to trace the history of Nepalese migration to Qatar. The Nepalese Embassy opened in Doha in 2000, since the number of Nepalese workers increased steadily from the mid-90s onwards. Embassy staff now only number nine.

A labour agreement was signed between Qatar and Nepal in March 2005. Each year, there is a joint committee meeting but no decision is made as far as basic salaries are concerned. As there is no legal minimum wage in Qatar, the Nepalese embassy issues a ruling on this: in 2008 it was 600 Qatari Riyals, that is 108 euros. On the Nepalese embassy website the cheap labour is indeed a strong argument: "Nepalese workers are comparatively cost effective and their hiring cost is lower as compared to other labour exporting countries". That is precisely what workers criticize in their embassy's politics: "they do not protect us, they are weak compared to the Indian Embassy" said some workers I met in Doha. However the embassy has a minimum social policy: it inspects *labour camps* if called upon by workers and shelters a few of the thirty to forty

workers who come to complain every day about their work or housing conditions and who are in desperate need of food and a place to stay.

The majority of Nepalese workers arrived in Qatar from the year 2000 onwards, due in particular to the growing demand in the building sector. The number of Nepalese migrants was about 400 in 1994 , 30,000 in 1999 , 100,000 in 2005 , 157,000 in July 2006, 177,000 in October 2006, 266,000 in February 2008 and at least 300,000 in 2009. According to the Nepalese Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE), Qatar hired 34% of all Nepalese migrants in 2008 (NIDS 2008): 250 workers arrived daily at Doha airport! Among these, only 2-3% are women: the Nepalese authorities allow them to come and work in the “legal organised sector”, though many of them arrive illegally through India to work as housemaids and find themselves completely unprotected (*ibid.*). According to diplomatic sources, though more than 95% of the Nepalese manpower consists of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, there are also about one hundred engineers, a few entrepreneurs and an indeterminable number of men from the middle classes. Most of these migrants are “geographical bachelors”, whereas there were about 80 Nepalese families in Doha in 2008. According to the same sources, at least 15,000 Nepalese males stay in Qatar illegally: some have quit their jobs or were fired and have stayed in the country with no visa. In February 2008, about 800 illegal Nepalese migrants were being held at the Qatari deportation centre where they often wait for many long months before their family sends them money for a return ticket. Other problems faced by migrants are the non-payment, underpayment or delay in paying salaries, physical harassment, frightful living conditions and health hazards. Although every worker should benefit from free medical treatment by their company, it is seldom the case except for serious accidents. Just as the Nepalese population in Qatar has risen gradually, so has the number of dead: 139 men died in 2006, 151 in 2007 and 209 in 2008: “54 percent of them died due to heart attack, which Nepali migrant workers call ‘death in sleep’”.

Even if Nepalese cultural life is less developed than in other communities, there are some regular music and dance venues which draw thousands of workers. In 2008, there were at least five Nepalese restaurants in the centre of Doha and at least one in Al Khor and Doha Industrial Areas. Their names most definitely emphasize their nepaliness: Nepali Bhansa Ghar, Sagarmatha, Himalayan Restaurant, Samsara, Nepali Chowk. They are particularly frequented on Fridays when thousands of Nepalese migrants flock to the centre of Doha to a place which “is known up to the corners of Nepal” as the Nepali chowk. There, Qatari versions of Kantipur and Rajdhani are for sale, as well as the latest Nepalese films and songs. Finally, the 65 Nepalese associations headed by the Non Resident

Nepali Association, form a basis for acts of solidarity and to give migrants a sense of belonging.

### **The setting: a typical Qatari labour camp**

I persist in using the term *labour camp* because it is the local term used in the Gulf region to talk about a worker's dwelling-place. A better way to describe them would be to talk about labourers' camps because the *labour camp* denotes an exclusively dwelling function. Due to the negative image it conveys, new terms have been coined: "luxury labour camps", "labour villages" or "operative villages". Nevertheless, for a migrant, a *labour camp*, usually shortened to *camp*, is a dwelling place where he spends most of his time outside work. Companies usually rent camps out to other companies who run them and deal with all aspects of workers' life outside work. Camps embody spatial segregation, a major characteristic of Qatar town planning, where people live in different places according to their nationality and qualification (Nagy 2006). As workers, a majority of Nepalese live in *labour camps* (although no precise figures are available) where the conditions greatly depend on the willingness of their employer to provide them with proper conditions. If the employer is not a large company, workers share rooms in some derelict buildings in the centre of the town.

Al Mihinat *labour camp* is situated in a vast area called the industrial area, where there are only *labour camps*, parking lots and factories. Compared to other *labour camps*, it is of average size and only shelters 203 labourers. It is 45 by 60 metres long and consists of several one floor buildings lying adjacent to each other. Two mobile homes were recently installed to lodge more workers. Between 8 and 12 workers live in one room, which is 20 square meters on average and contains double bunk beds. The supervisor, Hemant Thapa, and the two "camp bosses" live in a separate room. Two toilet and shower blocks are at the workers' disposal. A small dining room is also available but seldom used by the men who prefer to eat their dinner in their rooms. Another room is used by a group of men who gather from time to time to rehearse dance programmes. Outside, next to the parking lot where cars and buses park, there is a recreational area which is sometimes used for volleyball. By and large, conditions in the camp are reasonable and, in my opinion, are middle-of-the-range regarding camp standards.

### **Social characteristics of workers in the camp**

Contrary to what I was used to in Northern India where I met Nepalese migrants (Bruslé 2007, Bruslé 2008), the geographical origin and caste-wise diversity of workers in the camps struck me. My first impression was

that the entire Nepalese male society was represented. Of course, this proved to be wrong. Their district of origin, caste and standard of education definitely distinguish migrants from their fellow countrymen in Nepal. The data analysed below are based on a few questions asked individually or indirectly to all camp-dwellers. For lack of time, no economic data other than wages have been collected.

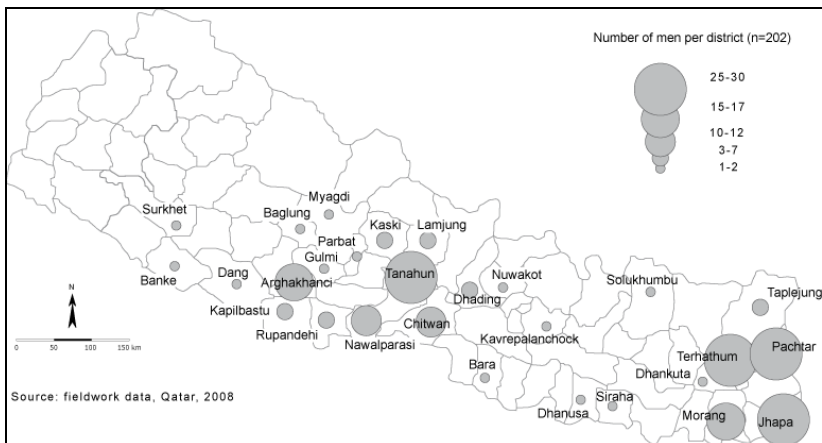
*Geographical origin of migrants*

The 2001 Nepal Population Census showed that migrants' destinations are highly dependent on their district of origin. At that time almost all migrants from Mid-Western and Far-Western regions headed for India, whereas in the rest of the country (See Graner and Gurung 2003), the situation was more diverse. An unequal access to migration was also observed in Al Mihinat camp.

**Table 1: Al Mihinat camp population per development and ecological zone of Nepal (in %) compared to the distribution of the Nepalese population.**

	East.	Cent.	West.	Mid-West.	Far-West.	Hills and Mountains	Tarai
Camp	51,5	8,4	38,6	1,5	0	58	42
Nepal*	23,1	34,7	19,7	13	9,5	51,6	48,4

\* Source: Population Census 2001.



**Figure 1: District of origin of migrants in Al Mihinat labour camp**

Figure 1 and Table 1 clearly show the spatial dimension of migration. Proportionally more migrants come from the Nepalese hills and

mountains than from the Tarai; thus this does not reflect the actual distribution of the population. There are two broad sending regions in Nepal represented within Al Mihinat camp. The Far East (mainly the four districts of Terhathum, Pachtar, Morang and Jhapa) and the Middle West (Tanahun, Arghakhanci and Nawalparasi districts) are the two main “gulf pockets” in the camp. It is worthwhile noting that this broadly corresponds to the main sending regions towards the Gulf countries as shown by the 2001 Census. Yet, if we compare this map with the one produced by Graner (this issue), with records from the Department of Foreign Employment, one has to admit that the Al Mihinat camp is not strictly representative of the migration dynamics recorded from 2006 to April 2008. However, the propensity to go abroad for men from Eastern districts and for those from the Western ones, as seen in this Qatari *labour camp*, is particularly high. The concentration of migrants from particular areas is illustrated by the fact that 74% of all Al Mihinat migrants come from seven districts, four in the Eastern Development Region, and three from the Western one. On the contrary, the camp population reflects the weakness of migration to the Gulf from Mid- and Far Western Nepal, and to a lesser extent from Central Nepal. Wherever I went through the *labour camp* area or in Doha, whenever I looked for people from faraway western regions, I could never find any. The over-representation of some districts will be explained below by the strength of networks based on manpower agencies and individual relations.

#### *Over-representation of higher castes*

In terms of diversity, seventeen castes and ethnic groups live together, which is remarkable (Table 2). Yet this diversity is hampered by the over-representation of high castes (Bahun, Chetri, and Thakuri) that represent 66.5% of the camp population but only 31.2% of the population of the ten major sending districts and 30% of Nepal’s population. Their proportion is therefore more than double what we might expect. It reflects the dominant position of higher castes in Nepal’s economic and social spheres, a domination which translates as access to foreign employment. Although Newars traditionally enjoy a high status in the economic sector, their proportion is far lower than the one in the districts of origin. This could be attributed to their higher standard of education and their business skills. It is frequent in Doha to meet Newars at hotel receptions or stores.

**Table 2: Comparison of caste and ethnic composition of Al Mihinat camp and Nepalese society (in raw numbers and % of the total population)\***

	Bahun	Chettri	Thakuri	Magar	Tamang	Kami	Limbu	Gurung	Newar
Camp (number)	71	57	7	21	11	8	7	4	4
Camp (%)	35	28,1	3,4	10,3	5,4	3,9	3,4	2	2
Major districts (%)**	19,4	11,1	0,7	7,4	2,5	3,7	4,7	4,3	3,6
Nepal***	12,7	15,8	1,5	7,1	5,6	3,9	1,6	2,4	5,5

\* Only caste and ethnic groups of more than three people have been taken into account. Other groups representing one to three people are: Muslims, Rai, Majhi, Damai, Tharu, Sarki, Sherpa and Sunar.

\*\* Here statistics are for the 10 districts from which there are 5 men or more in the camp.

\*\*\* Source: Population Census 2001.

Apart from Magars, who are proportionally in greater numbers than in Nepal, so-called martial races are scarce in this *labour camp*. This might simply point to a particular bias in this camp, since they are in fact present in large numbers throughout Qatar, according to Amrit Gurung, president of the Qatar branch of Nepal Adivasi Janajati Mahasangh. This could also be explained by the fact that working as a labourer in a Gulf country is less valued than more qualified jobs, not to mention being a Gurkha. With the exception of Kamis, lower Hindu castes, Muslims, Yadav (only two members) and Tharus are also under-represented. Despite the fact that the latter account for 12.7% and 16.5% of the total population of Chitwan and Nawalparasi districts respectively, only one member of this tribe, from Kapilbastu, is present in the camp.

Given the over-representation of high castes and since money spent to go abroad represents a substantial sum of money, from 800 to 1,500 euros, the hypothesis may be put forward that there is a correlation between caste, wealth and migration to Gulf countries. However, as the economic background of each migrant is not known, this cannot be asserted. However, if we consider that the amount of capital necessary to come to Qatar is more than what is needed for India, an explanation in economic terms must be taken into account to understand why some caste/ethnic

groups migrate and others do not. As one migrant explained to me: “the poor in our village do not travel abroad. In order to take out a loan, the money-lender asks for land as a mortgage. If you do not have any land, then it is difficult to go abroad”. Access to migration is definitely hampered by limited access to money, and to the informal source of money the money-lender (*sahu*) represents, to the detriment of migrants who pay high interest rates (up to 3% per month).

At national level as well as in Al Mihinat camp, regions of origin as well as caste membership show us how migration is neither a ubiquitous phenomenon nor a phenomenon equally accessible to all kinds of people.

#### *Age, age upon arrival and wedding age*

It comes as no surprise to note that the proportion of young males is high in the camp. Sixty per cent of them are aged 20 to 29, whereas this proportion is 15.5% in Nepal. Seventy per cent of the men are aged between 18 and 30, whereas only 7.8% are above 40, the maximum age being 44. Migration and household livelihood strategies depend on the younger generation. The mean arrival age in Qatar is 25 and the median 22, though 57% of the camp population arrived between the ages of 17 and 23. Even though since 1995, when the first men arrived, the mean arrival age has been different every year (24 in 2000 and 2001; 27 in 2005 and 2006), there is no visible trend.

In Nepal, 47.8% of the male population aged between 20 and 24 are married (Population Census 2001), whereas the proportion in the camp is only of 26%. At an older age, the proportion of married men from the camp tends to be the same as in Nepal, even though it remains a little lower. It may therefore be said that long-distance migration postpones marriage for men. This concurs with what young men say about their plans to get married only once they have settled down. There are many cases of young migrants getting married in the few weeks they are on holiday, between two contracts. The newly married woman will get to see her husband a few years later, while fathers are forever complaining about not seeing their children grow up.

#### *A higher standard of education than the average Nepalese*

Contrary to widespread allegations about Nepalese workers, migrants in Al Mihinat camp have a higher standard of education than the male Nepalese population. Fifty one per cent of men in the camp reached class 10, whereas the proportion of people who passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) is almost triple the national rate (Table 3).



Table 3: **Standard of education (in % of total male population above six years old)**

	No schooling	Primary (1-5)	Secondary (6-10)	SLC and above
Camp	7	16	48	29
Nepal*	5,5	25,7	20,1	13,3

\*Population Census 2001.

The high standard of education can be linked to the large number of Bahuns and Chetris, who are usually more educated than others. Sixty per cent of Bahun men reach class 10, whereas the percentage is as much as 80% for Chetri men. Eighty-five per cent of men who pass the SLC exam belong to higher castes (Bahun, Chetri, Thakuri). There is no doubt therefore that the caste characteristics of Al Mihinat *labour camp* greatly influence the standard of education of the men living in the camp. Should statistics exist regarding the standard of education among Nepalese migrants in India, I believe that they would show that migrants are less educated in India than in Qatar.

Access to migration is dependent on caste, education, region of origin: these factors constitute economic and social barriers which prevent the lower sections of society from going abroad. It is nothing new in migration literature to say that the poor and uneducated do not move. Social and economic capital is needed to migrate to the Gulf. This statement is even more accurate if we compare migration to the Gulf and migration to India, which is much less demanding in terms of money, but often no less in terms of networks. The official view of the Nepalese authorities (newspapers, embassy staff, members of associations) whereby the Nepalese who come to Qatar are poor and uneducated, is questionable. However, we shall see that the standard of education in Nepal does not translate into skilled jobs in Qatar, due in particular to the fact that the Nepalese, compared to other nationalities, are perceived as workers and as such fill the labourer niches. Just as for Nepalese nurses in England (Adhikari, this issue), for a large number of men, migration to Qatar also is a degrading experience.

### **“We’re here to work”: Recruitment, Job and Income**

I will not go into detail about the actual reasons migrants come to Qatar. In short, one can say that migration is definitely a livelihood strategy, just as it is for temporary migration to India (See Thieme 2006). Yet a large number of young men also admit that they are here not because their father told them to go and earn money for the whole family, but out of personal choice to live a life of their own. A desire to lead a different life

from their parents' drives them to a land where they hope to be able to attain higher goals. Without further elaborating, I would say that the longing to go abroad, to earn what can be viewed in Nepal as "easy money" in a modern world and to imitate one's neighbour also prompts young Nepalese people to come to Qatar. The "culture of migration" (Massey *et al.* 1993), in which migration is a "rite of passage" needs to be investigated further in order to better understand what is at stake in migration processes and in order to go beyond the classic "push and pull" factors. Household strategies, like the choice of destination among brothers, should also be studied. Nonetheless, the basic aim that migrants are forever stressing is that "they are here to work" because they cannot earn any money in Nepal.

#### *Date of arrival and duration of stay*

It was not possible to collect data about all the flows of people who came to Al Mihinat camp and returned to Nepal. I can only give a general picture of the camp at a given period. In February 2008, the mean duration of stay in the camp was four years, which corresponds to two two-year contracts. Fifty-eight per cent of the men arrived between 2004 and 2008, while the ones who had arrived before 2000 only represented 5%. This broadly corresponds to the waves of recruitment of Nepalese migrants in Qatar, which surged from the years 2003-2004 onwards. The arrival of a group of workers in the camp depends on the recruitment policy implemented by the firm employing the migrants and the country, and less so on the supply of Nepalese manpower, which seems to be endless.

#### *The strength of networks explains the destination*

As most Nepalese newspaper articles about foreign employment emphasise the fact that recruitment agencies represent the "dark side" of the migration system, with the agent (dalal) being its "dark angel", data from Al Mihinat Camp reveal that only 25% of the migrants come via manpower agencies, whereas 75% relied on their personal relations. This was already the case among Indian migrants in Kuwait at the end of the 1990s (Shah and Menon 1999).

The hiring process in Al Mihinat camp has been a two-stage one: at the beginning, pioneer migrants called upon manpower agencies to get into the country, then other workers came over thanks to these men who had already laid the foundations. Personal networks have become a major factor in the perpetuation of migration. One recruitment company, Efficient Manpower, is for instance responsible for having brought to Qatar all the very first newcomers from 1995 to 2001. Today they still account for the arrival of 18% of migrants. Among these, a man named Man Bahadur Chetri, whom I have never met, became supervisor. The supervisor is in charge of all the workers and deals with them within the

company; he dispatches them to different posts, replaces them when they fall sick, makes decisions regarding their holidays, etc. Thanks to his position as an intermediary, he has access both to company management and to the workers. If he is trustworthy, the company entrusts him with the task of hiring (and sometimes firing) new employees. This grants him a certain power since he can send visas, i.e. working permit, job contract and residence permit, to anyone in Nepal who is interested. Twenty-one per cent of the men in Al Mihinat camp are there thanks to Man Bahadur Chetri. He is now ironically known as Man Bahadur Overseas or Chetrimanpower. It is a way for him to turn his position in the company to his economic advantage since he takes commission when acting as an intermediary. His successor, Hemant Thapa, in his post since 2005, also takes advantage of this privileged position: 10% of the migrants in the camp have come through him. Where a two-year working visa, to which a residence permit is associated, costs around 1,500 Qatari Riyals (€275), Hemant Thapa “sells” it for at least 3,500-4,000 Riyals (€640-730). For the migrant, acting through a supervisor has various advantages. The cost is at least half of what he would have paid to a recruitment company, the uncertainty factor is low and the risk factor practically zero. Buying a visa, directly or indirectly, from the camp supervisor, is a much safer way of going abroad, given that thanks to these network ties, the conditions in the receiving region can be known in advance.

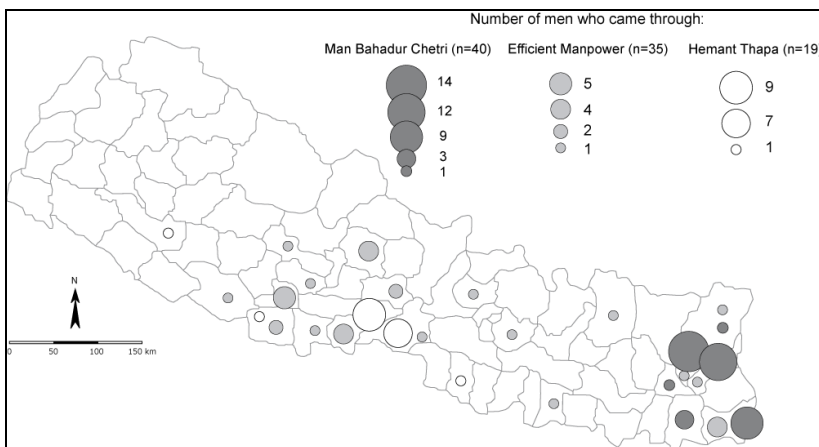


Figure 2: Spatial dimensions of recruiting networks

The recruitment process partly explains the caste and geographical origins of the migrants. As Efficient Manpower was located in Sundhara,

Kathmandu, the 35 people who came through it belong to different districts scattered over Nepal (See Figure 2). Different spatial characteristics emerge in the case of those recruited by Man Bahadur Chetri, who is from Terhathum. The 40 men he brought over, and who were in the camp in February 2008, hail from Terhathum (14), Pachtar (12), Jhapa (9), Morang (3), Taplejung (1) and Dhankuta (1). The same goes for the people brought over by Hemant Thapa, who lives in Nawalparasi near the Chitwan border: 85% of the 19 people he brought over are from his own and neighbouring district. These two cases stress the importance of word-of-mouth communication in spreading information about the possibility of migrating. The intermediaries' notoriety contributes to creating networks that fan out along village and castes lines. As far as the relationship between caste and networks is concerned, one could speak of caste networks. Among the 40 people Man Bahadur Chetri brought over, only three are from Sarki and Majhi groups; the others belong to Bahun and Chetri groups. It is worth noting that other Far Eastern Nepal workers from different communities (Limbu, Tamang, Rai, Sherpa) did not come through him. Apart from caste, location is an important factor explaining why migrants from the same districts are concentrated in the camp: a large majority of the workers stated that they came thanks to a villager. The nature of networks, depending on strong kinship or village ties, helps understand the origin of the workers.

However, networks built thanks to supervisors or recruitment companies do not explain everything: the case of Tanahun district, which groups together 13% of men from the camp, cannot be explained by the strength of one particular network. Indeed, men from Tanahun came either through a recruitment company, or with the help of a villager or relative. Apart from established networks, it also happens that a migrant who is on good terms with his manager and who can speak to him in English can also recruit workers from time to time. On the whole, 45% of migrants in the camp came through personal contacts who only sent a few men, contrary to the case of the supervisors mentioned above.

#### *Salary, second job and income*

Workers from Al Mihinat camp are mainly employed as cleaners, "tea boys", "offices boys" or waiters in offices and in gated communities. Most of them work in offices and thus do not correspond to the typical worker in the Persian Gulf toiling under the hot sun on a building site. Most of them readily admit that the work itself is not difficult. The legal working hours in Qatar are eight hours a day, six days a week. Workers from Al Mihinat camp also have the possibility of working overtime ("OT") and some even manage to get a second job pending the acceptance of their sponsor. However, wages are not high and it is usually only after the first

or second year that migrants can save money for themselves after having reimbursed the loan they took out to come over in the first place. This also explains why migrants renew their contract at least once.

#### *Basic salary*

When they reach Qatar, many workers realise that the salary due is not the one on their contract that was signed in Nepal. They nonetheless have little or no power to bargain and have to take what they get. In actual fact, both the gross and net salary must be taken into account. Even if the salary is 600 QR, accordingly to Nepalese Embassy rulings, 150 QR is deducted for food and lodging. That is why the basic net salary at Al Mihinat camp is 450 QR (€78 in February 2008) (See Table 4).

**Table 4: Distribution of monthly wage in euros in Al Mihinat Camp (February 2008).**

Monthly wage in euros	Average wage in this category (€)	Number of workers	% of workers in this category	Cumulated %
78	78	128	64,7	64,7
79 to 156	130	29	14,7	79,4
157 to 260	217	26	13,1	92,5
261 to 416	320	9	4,5	97
417 to 607	580	5	2,5	99,5
1,386	1,386	1	0,5	100

Table 4 shows the very high concentration of wages at the bottom of the wage hierarchy. Whereas the average wage is 137 euros, 65% of the workforce in the camp, cleaners and tea-boys, earn a basic salary of 78 euros a month. There is little chance of securing a higher salary in the company and this seems to be related to the time spent in Qatar. The forty-four migrants who arrived between 1995 and 2000 earn an average wage of 272 euros, whereas migrants who arrived over the following period (2001-2008) only earn 107 euros. In fact, it seems that the most senior workers stay in Qatar because they manage to get better paid jobs. Poorly qualified at the outset, rare are the men who manage to learn a few skills (typing, speaking English, using a computer) to move up the ladder. They usually arrive as cleaners and stay as such. They have no prospect of getting a more qualified job, contrary to others who, with better credentials, can start straightaway as “photocopy boy”, clerk or driver. However, some men do manage to change jobs to earn better money. This

is the case of a young boy who arrived as a cleaner. He saved some money to take his driving licence (more than six months' salary) and now, as a driver, he is earning more than twice what other cleaners earn.

Finally, getting a better job depends on the willingness of the supervisor, who, according to many workers, privileges his own people (aphno manche), that is the ones who came through him or are related to him. Yet overall, there is a correlation between a migrant's level of responsibility, rank in the company hierarchy and salary. Being capable of speaking a little English and demonstrating a few basic intellectual capacities is definitely vital to ensuring a better paid job.

Table 5: **A better education means a better salary (n=187)**

Standard of education	Number	Mean salary (in euros)
Class 0	14	103
Class 1 to 5	28	126
Class 6 to 10	92	121
School Leaving Certificate	37	155
Class 12 to BA	16	326

As opportunities to climb the career ladder are rare, difficult to achieve, and reserved for the more educated, another way of earning a better salary is to have a second job.

#### *Holding down a "part-time" job*

Among 198 men for whom I have information, 45% have a second job. Among the other 55%, most of them cannot find a "part-time" job anyway, others already earn a good salary or they are simply not interested in working more hours. Having a second job definitely makes a change to the pyramid of earnings, as Table 6 proves.

The "part-time" job consists in doing housework in private houses and in cleaning cars. This is done in a gated community located not far from the Al Mihinat *labour camp* where some of the Nepalese work. Contrary to most Nepalese construction workers, men from this camp have the opportunity to do extra work because in the course of their "official" work, they come into contact with some high-level managers who live not far from them. These managers, who know the Nepalese workers, call on them to do additional work, usually paid on a monthly basis. These second jobs are highly sought after. It was thought that research would show that due to their large numbers and traditional solidarity, Bahun and Chetri would benefit more than average from a second job. On the contrary, only 41% of all Brahman men have a second job, whereas this is the case for

53% of all Chetris. On the whole, there is no apparent connection between caste and a second job. Investigations should be more oriented towards links between a second job and the length of service. But here, once again, the expected higher rate of second jobs among men who have been in Qatar for a long time compared to newcomers does not prove to be the case. Even 40% of the forty men who arrived in 2007 found a second job. However, there is definitely a link between the length of service in part-time jobs and the money earned through this second job. Those who have held down a second job for a few years enjoy incomes of up to 150 euros a month, whereas those who just starting out in a job earn between 50 to 80 euros. The 91 men with a second job have a lower average salary than the others, but thanks to this extra work they manage overall to bring in a higher level of income compared to the others (See table 6). For many of the men with an extra job, this work becomes their prime concern and the main attraction of their stay.

Table 6: **Average income in euros according to the number of jobs workers hold down in Al Mihinat Camp (February 2008).**

Workers with two jobs (n=91)			Workers with only the company job (n=107)	All workers (n=198)	
Average company wage	Average part-time income	Average total income	Average total income	Average company wage	Average total income
106	104	210	154	137	180

Finally, one should note that some workers find other ways of earning money, by burning CDs and DVDs and selling them to co-workers in other camps in the Industrial Areas or on Fridays at Nepali Chowk. For two men in the camp, this has become real second job which occupies almost all of their free time.

On the whole, thanks to the informal job, the longer people stay in the camp, the more overall income they have.

### **Al Mihinat labour camp epitomizes Nepalese inequalities and hopes**

This paper has shown that the *labour camp*, as a vernacular category in Qatar, is a valuable place to study migration. As a closed space, the camp can be seen as a small world where a social world is built under

institutional and economical constraints. Even though Al Mihinat camp does not represent the whole of Nepalese male society, we can still draw some conclusions about Nepalese migrants in Qatar. The over-representation of high castes and the concentration of men from particular districts mean that migration, in this case, does not contribute to equally distributing income among different population groups and throughout every region of Nepal. Moreover, it is striking that even for so-called unskilled migrants, education is a major factor in boosting one's income. International migration is definitely a highly selective, non-egalitarian and inequality-making social phenomenon.

This article should be considered as a preliminary report on a Qatari *labour camp* occupied by Nepalese labourers. As a particular case study, Al Mihinat camp cannot be taken as representative of all Nepalese *labour camps*. Though it gives some insight into a new phenomenon, other *labour camp* studies should be undertaken in order to provide a comparative view. Even if quantitative data are vital in accounting for who actually lives in the *labour camp*, studies should also be completed by qualitative research. Observing migrants in a camp is an extremely valuable experience and themes such as the pain (*dukh*) of exile, separation from the family, ways of handling this trauma, remittances, relationships among migrants and with fellow workers and transnational lives should be highlighted.

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## BOOK REVIEWS



***Nepalis Inside and Outside Nepal*, Edited by Hiroshi Ishii, David N. Gellner, Katsuo Nawa. *Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia*, vol. 1. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers. 2007, 543 p. ISBN 8173046999.**

Reviewed by Martin Gaenszle

These two books on “Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia” are the result of two international workshops in Tokyo, which were attended by Japanese, Nepalese, British, Irish and American scholars. As the editors point out in the preface to the first volume, the aim was to encourage the comparative study of social change in an area (the northern part of South Asia) which is made up of several nation-states, yet has many cultural traits in common. This is a welcome departure from previous approaches in which the regional focus is often bounded by national outlooks. Apart from this, the publication provides valuable insight into the barely known work of a new generation of Japanese scholars, whose monographs are often only available in Japanese. (The volumes are published as Nos 6 and 7 of “Japanese Studies on South Asia” which was created in order to make Japanese studies accessible).

The first volume focuses on the Nepalese and transnational linkages. Over the last two decades Nepal has undergone tremendous changes, most visibly in the political field, as epitomized in the abolishment of the monarchy. How this has had repercussions on daily life, the social organisation and social structure is less self-evident. Due to the violent conflict that began in the late nineties, carrying out anthropological fieldwork became more and more difficult, and it seemed for a while that social scientists channelled their efforts almost exclusively into the Maoist armed insurgency. That “classical” anthropological research continued nevertheless, both taking account of the war and bearing in mind the larger picture of less dramatic changes, is shown in the detailed case studies in this volume. In the introduction the editors highlight the issue of ethnic identity and the long-standing debate about the differentiation between ‘tribes’ and ‘castes’, stressing that the Nepali use of the terms *jāt* and *jāti* has changed over time, particularly in the context of ethnic activism. Similar historical changes in social categories are underlined in several of the contributions.

The papers in the first part of the volume (“Urbanization, ethnicity, and occupation”) all deal with Pokhara – thus providing a multi-faceted portrait of a small town and “government-declared urban centre”, which is somewhere in between the “real” centre (the Kathmandu Valley) and

the hill villages. Jagannath Adhikari's account of the urbanization process, which is based on a wide range of hard data, as well as a long-standing acquaintance with his home town, shows a gradual shift in the distribution of power among the communities. This study is complemented by Yuji Yamamoto's vivid study of squatter settlements in Pokhara. It describes the development cycle of such *sukumbāsi* settlements from initially spontaneous and improvised appropriations led by a charismatic leader to the well-organized and increasingly legalized structure of a new urban quarter. The author analyses this as a "from *communitas* to *community*" process. Similar processes have been described in other parts of northern South Asia, such as the development of "slums" (a term the author seems keen to avoid). The other two papers in this section discuss the changing situation of lower castes, or Dalits: Jalari, Kumal, and Kami, Damai, Sarki (Ram Chetri), and the Gaine (Biswo K. Parajuli). Both of these case studies confirm the general trend of weakening client-patron relationships and the loss of traditional occupational skills. While in the case of hard manual work (such as that of blacksmiths) this shift to other forms of labour may be seen as progress, the situation is more ambivalent in the case of the Gaine who as bards have had a rich oral tradition. Though in decline, this traditional occupation still seems to survive in some marginal form; it is left to future research to explore these changes within the tradition.

The topic of part two is "Marriage, kinship, and transformation of intimacy". As pointed out by the editors, kinship studies, though once central to the discipline, have become a much neglected field in anthropology, and the time has come to rethink issues such as marriage practices and gender roles under contemporary conditions. Hayami Yasuno's paper on "Abduction, elopement, and incest in Khas society" takes up some classical topics in Himalayan kinship studies: divorce through marriage by capture and elopement, negotiations of compensation, dealings with incest, etc. The well-researched paper shows that these practices are still very much an issue in north-western Nepal, even though the way they are dealt with has undergone a change due to the increasing presence of the State. The chapter contributes to a much needed ethnography of legal practices in the Himalayas. Seiko Sato's chapter raises the issue of women's agency among Yolmos and wonders in what respect structural constraints are binding for the individual. Through case studies Sato provides insight into the conflicts of young self-confident Yolmo women who want to go their own way (proudly proclaiming that they "do not mind being a woman") but nevertheless have to find a compromise with tradition. Sarah Levine looks at the changes in marriage practices among Newars (in Patan) and Bahun-Chetris (Godavari). Clearly, arranged marriages are still the norm, though

“love marriages” are increasingly considered a viable option. While this is often seen as a threat from outside (“she has been getting all these ideas from TV”), it has become more acceptable as long as all sides are involved in the negotiation and a joint decision is made. Similarly inter-caste marriages, though still scandalous, are rejected outright far less than before. Using alternative forms of ritual, socially ostracized marriages are nevertheless condoned. The comparison between rural Parbatiya and urban Newar is interesting in its contrasts, but it is not always clear which features are due to cultural norms and which are class-specific. That love marriages nevertheless come with their own problems becomes evident in the chapter on domestic violence, or gender-based violence, by Makiko Habazaki. This study on a neglected aspect of kinship realities in Nepal is based on cases recorded through an NGO (“Saathi”) and comes to the conclusion that there is widespread “sociocultural violence” which is not simply spontaneous but follows certain cultural patterns. The chapter on drug users in Dharan by Khusiyali Subba also draws attention to a phenomenon that has hardly been studied at the margins of contemporary society, raising the question of what this can tell us about the social consequences of ethnic and historical marginalisation. Judith Pettigrew’s major study of the ‘culture of terror’ during the Maoist insurgency and its effect on the children growing up during this period fills a gap, showing that the political upheaval has left deep scars at a psychological level, less visible but perhaps more enduring. These last two papers indicate that the absence of fathers (due to labour migration, or soldiering) has become an important factor in the transformation of familial intimacy, leading to fundamental changes in the mental landscape.

The third part deals with transnational links inside and outside Nepal. Izumi Morimoto describes the development of Thamel as a tourist area, a “translocality” with a multi-ethnic entrepreneurship which cashes in on the myth of Shangrila. The chapter by Taeko Uesugi deals with the transnationalism of the Gurkhas, which is a unique mixture of both Nepalese nationalism and loyalty to the British Crown. This double allegiance has been maintained through a pseudo-ethnic Gurkha identity which has continued to flourish in an increasingly globalized context. However, it is not without its contradictions (e.g. the call for English education for children), and tensions and conflicts with the States involved are bound to erupt. Similarly, Nepalese migrants in Japan, who are the subject of Keiko Yamanaka’s contribution, act in a transnational sphere. The study shows how social networks are valuable as social capital. The Nepalese stick together in difficult times, but more recently ethnic divisions have led to increasing fragmentation. In such a situation religion can become an important cohesive factor. As Makito Minami

points out in his chapter on Magar ethnic associations outside Nepal, Buddhism has become important in the newly defined diasporic identities, largely for political reasons. What kind of Buddhism will emerge still seems to be an open question.

In his concluding observations, Gerald Berreman brings us back to a comparative perspective. He discusses a number of questions concerning the differences and similarities in the Indian and the Nepalese Himalayas. For example, he explains the occurrence of an armed insurgency in Nepal based on the coincidence of class and ethnicity conflicts. (Berreman does not refer to Maoist insurgencies in India, however, which could have further added to his argument). He also reflects on the local response to Western research in social science and the problem of scholarly misrepresentation. This book, however, is a good example of going beyond such a divide, as it is the result of a true East-West collaboration. It is a landmark volume as far as it represents a state-of-the-art view of an international Himalayan social anthropology which has come to include a wide range of relatively “new” topics, such as recent urban developments, changing gender-relations, and the fall-out of globalized mobility. Considering the ambitions voiced in the preface, the comparative perspective on Northern South Asia may still be a bit sketchy in this first volume (the focus largely remains a Himalayanist one), but the collection of high-quality essays is a valuable guideline and inspiration for further such studies.

***Political and Social Transformations in North India and Nepal.***  
**Edited by Hiroshi Ishii, David N. Gellner, Katsuo Nawa. *Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia. Vol. 2.* New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2007, 520 p. ISBN 8173047294.**

Reviewed by Marie Lecomte-Tilouine

The second volume of *Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia* is devoted to political and social change. It is made up of three parts.

Part 1 explores the changes in various Indian and Nepalese social and political contexts under the effect of modernisation, which includes more specifically: access to education, land reform, and the professionalization of services. The two chapters by Surinder S. Jodkha on Punjab and by Krishna Hachhethu on the town of Bhaktapur in Nepal are remarkable. They both offer a very clear overview of society and an astute interpretation of its evolution. Both chapters ascertain that the

importance of caste is now mainly to be found in the political sphere, while it has dwindled in daily life and in the organisation of work. We should note, however, that these authors have not fully addressed the ritual domain. A chapter by Hiroshi Ishii explores the contradiction between Louis Dumont's various statements, which are taken out of their context of enunciation and regarded as axioms; the author discusses whether or not, for Dumont, the notion of substantialisation involves a process, without considering that its ending in "–isation" readily provides the answer. He then draws a sketch of the social changes in a Newar locality and relativizes their importance. Akio Tanabe also deals with caste organization, in the context of Orissa, and provides a rich review of its different sociological approaches. He suggests adding another component to its two main modelizations (i.e. the Dumontian linear hierarchy and the neo-Hocartian concentric model around the source of power), that of "ontological equality". Yet the only example he has selected to illustrate it, that of a community with the headman in the forefront bowing low upon the goddess's arrival, rather seems to display a model of pyramidal hierarchy. A greater focus on local exegesis would add to the strength of the analysis in this case. In the same manner, the author's interpretation of the sacrifice as a substitution between the sacrificer and the victim needs to be substantiated, since it is far from being systematically conceived as such in other Hindu contexts. Still, it is a very rich chapter and deserves attention.

The second part of the book focuses on religious identities and practices. It addresses various topics such as the development of Theravada Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley (Keshav L. Maharjan), the transformation of death rituals among the Byansi of Darchula, Nepal (Katsuo Nawa), or the Hindus' perception of the Muslims in Gujarat (Lancy Lobo and Biswaroop Das). Subtle as the latter chapter is, it is unfortunate that the Muslims' reciprocal perception of the Hindus has not been addressed.

The most interesting chapter in this second part is by Minoru Mio on the new urban festivals in Udaipur. The author shows how these festivals organized by Youth associations are "the best means of acquiring leadership", while evading "criticism by conventional elders".

The third part of the volume is devoted to "secular activism", yet it opens with a chapter on the rehabilitation of Bengali refugees in Delhi by Tetsuya Nakatani, who shows that this group has not created an exclusive colony because their rehabilitation took place twenty years after Partition. Tatsuro Fujikura then retraces the Freedom movement among the bonded agricultural labourers in the southern part of western Nepal. He provides a very detailed history of the main organization that led the movement (BASE), but does not refer to its different versions or points of



view. Mrigendra B. Karki and David Gellner's sociological approach to activism in Nepal includes important data on the way Marxist ideas penetrated Nepal's educated elite during the Panchayat era. Indeed, the influence wielded by Gorky's *Mother* needed to be stressed. In the next chapter, Joanna Pfaff evaluates our knowledge of the violation of human rights as being very selective, and she underlines the fragmentation of protest movements when faced with the construction of dams in India and Nepal. Finally, Kioko Ogura's chapter on various villages in western Nepal under Maoist rule provides detailed information on this key-period in Nepalese history. Few scholars ventured into these regions during the People's War and Ogura's data are thus extremely precious. In her conclusion, the author suggests that one of the main causes of the conflict was "antipathy towards the State".

The volume ends with Jonathan Parry's eloquent discussion on the changes observed in caste organisation, in which he explores its two possible evolutions and/or interpretations: a tendency towards a merging of castes or an emphasis on their differences.

I personally regret that the discussion on caste, which forms the most coherent ensemble in the volume, is mainly based on urban cases, and, especially, as far as Nepal is concerned, on Newar society. Still, it is a very thought-provoking volume and it is impossible to do justice to the very rich ethnography and the many discussions contained within the span of only a few lines. To conclude, I would add that the volume is of further interest in presenting us with recent research carried out by our Japanese colleagues, which is not always readily accessible. We certainly recommend it to all social scientists working on the Indian sub-continent.

**Indian Nepalis. Issues and Perspectives. 2009. Edited by Subba T.B., Sinha A.C., Nepal G.S., Nepal D.R., New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 398 p. ISBN 9788180694462**

Reviewed by Tristan Bruslé

This book, a publication of part of a research seminar held in Gangtok in April 2006, may be seen as a sequel to *The Nepalis in Northeast India* (2003), yet from a broader perspective. After having focused on the identity of Nepalis in North-East India in the latter book, Indian of Nepali origin (INO) researchers, Indians of non Nepali origin and two Westerners raise certain "issues and perspectives" about Indian Nepalis. As for the "5 to 10 million" INOs (Sinha: 18), identity issues are still at the forefront of their demands,

and as recent events in West Bengal prove, the identity and sense of belonging of INOs are a subject of debate. Therefore, identity issues remain central to the book.

The book is divided into five parts: 1) Conceptual and theoretical issues 2) Search for an Indian identity 3) Regional identities of Indian Nepalis 4) Nepali sub-cultures: youth, women, food and medicine 5) India-Nepal links: history, literature and people. There is an index at the end of the volume.

Many authors recall that Nepalis in India are the product of colonial state politics, when it was easy to travel around South Asia, even for Nepalis who did not belong to the British Raj. They show the diversity of the migrants who came “as soldiers, graziers, farmers, porters, traders, sawyers, *chowkidars*, etc.” (Passah: 238). Bidhan Golay writes a challenging article about the formation of the Gorkha identity in British India, at a “time of modernity” when “the hill-man was turned into a reified commodity” (Golay: 83). According to this author, the Gorkha identity must indeed be studied within the framework of the colonial discourse on ‘martial races’: “colonialism violently disrupted the social-conceptual world of the Gorkhas, taking away his freedom by permanently colonising his body. The gorkha subject was dislocated by stripping off his past and relocated him back again a deterritorialised subject of ‘History’” (Golay: 79). As such, the history of the Gurkhas should be re-written: “there is a need to reconstitute the Gorkhas as a historical character, rehabilitate their consciousness and agency in history” (*ibid.*: 87). When studying the willingness of Indians of Nepali Origin to assert themselves, Chalmers describes the formation of a group consciousness, in a very documented article about the “emergent Nepali public sphere” at the beginning of the twentieth century in Banaras and Darjeeling, at a time when the former lost its influence over the Nepali community in India for the latter’s benefit. In Darjeeling, a process of language unification accompanied the idea of creating a society turned towards Western-oriented progress (*unnati*) through education. Chalmers dates the beginning of the creation of *nepaliness* to this period, when elites realised that “the promotion of Nepali education was only one front in a broader struggle for cultural recognition and community representation” (p.116). The means to achieve these goals were the circulation of printed books through the creation of libraries (the first ‘Gorkha library’ opened in Kurseong in 1918), the standardisation of the Nepali language and its official teaching in schools, which was instituted in 1926 in Bengal. In 1924, the first guide to Nepali literature for second-grade students was published. The importance of literary associations and of journals was stressed by the Nepali elite at the time as a way to elevate their community not on the base of their birth but according to “formal education skills” (Chalmers: 128). This

accompanied a shift towards a new society “from a traditional model to a more open model” (*Ibid.*). The making of an Indian Nepali culture is perfectly reflected in Upadhyaya’s article about how, from the end of the 1920s to 1980s, Nepalese novels “captured the social, economic, political, educational and cultural problems of the Nepalis in Northeast India” (Upadhyaya: 204).

Going through the articles in the volume, one realises that history is always written in relation to identity and belonging issues. Gurung (from p.259 onwards) describes how indentured labour from Eastern Nepal was used by colonial companies to exploit coal mines in Assam. Here again, the author shows how the racial discourse about particular races being adapted to strenuous work benefited the Nepalese. The commoditization of the Gurkhas as a martial race is illustrated by the fact that “their recruitment in the coal mines was [considered] a gross wastage of valuable natural resources” (Gurung p.269). In the 1920s, as the mine recruitment process in Gorakhpur competed with recruitment for the Gurkha regiments, it was finally forbidden to recruit martial races in the mines.

Despite asserting their belonging to India, Indians of Nepali origin still have not found their rightful place in the Indian political landscape. The problem of their assimilation with Nepalese citizens still hampers their vows to appear as a distinct community. Their colonial identity as “the sahibs’ faithful boys” (Sinha: 12) is pervasive among non Nepali Indians: the quest for a non derogatory identity was launched decades ago, but no solution has yet been found. It has been further aggravated by the fact that Nepalis stand divided (Sinha: introduction). As a result, INOs are “puzzled” (Sinha: 4) and their children are even qualified as IBCNs or India-Born Confused Nepali<sup>17</sup> (Sharma: 277). Hutt sees manifestations of an identity crisis in the study of literature where both the pride and the pain of being Nepali are depicted. The need to build an Indian Nepali nationalism within India is somewhat contradicted by cultural bonds with Nepal “that could neither be severed nor denied” (Hutt: 39). The question of the compulsory distance *vis-à-vis* Nepal and the Nepalese lies between the lines of all the articles.

Issues of belonging find expression in the recurrent debate about names: “the very nomenclature of the community creates confusion even among them and their neighbours” (Sinha: 3). Nepalis referring to themselves sometimes as Bhargoli, Bharpali, Nepamul Bharatiya, INOs (favoured in the 2003 book) or Gorkhas have to put up with sometimes derogatory names given by non-Nepalis, such as *Daju*, *Bahadur* or *Kancha*. For Subba, the issue of names remains crucial since it is vital for INOs to

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<sup>17</sup> This refers to ABC (American Born Chinese) out of which ABCD (American Born Confused Desi) was coined by Non-Resident Indians.

not be considered foreigners or as “second class citizens of India” (p.385). By coining a new name, the goal is indeed to widen the gap between themselves and Nepalese migrants who “leave leaving behind a mess for Indian Nepalis to clean up” (p.385). Subba proposes “Sakhaa” (friend) as “Indian Nepalis need a de-territorialised and de-ethnicised identity for they are not only de-territorialised in India but also have frequently experienced ethnic anger of the locally dominant communities” (p.392). A few authors focus on the regional identities of Nepalis, and especially on the history of their arrival in North-East India, that is Mizoram, Meghalaya and Assam. The role of the Gurkhas to attract their countrymen in a chain migration type of movement is emphasised and the different niches where Nepalis are employed are recalled in the same way as in the 2003 book. Yet these articles merely seem to hint at research which in fact needs go into more depth. The overall portrayal of INOs, in Assam, in Mizoram or elsewhere shows them as still inhabited by uncertainty and the fear of being evicted as they were from Bhutan or from Meghalaya. This fear translates into pain (*dukha*): “this sense of ancestral *dukha* underpins much of the experience of being Nepali in India, and characterises much Indian Nepali literature” (Hutt: 32). This “sense of historical *dukha*” (Hutt: 34) could be one of the things that binds all INOs together. Except for a common history and language, what are the other factors? The book does not really provide any answers.

Sinha, in a new research proposal, compares the fate and situation of INOs and Nepalese of Indian Origin (NIO), both “invisible, yet exploited” (p.372) communities. They have numerous points in common, like being rarely studied by academics and politically under-represented in their own country, whereas they have both fought for the sake of their country, against the Ranas on the one hand and in the freedom movement on the other. Their treatment as “non-existent citizens” (p.379) or as a threat to national unity must be understood, as Sinha says, within the ongoing context of nation-building exercises in South Asia.

In order to find a solution to their identity crisis, INOs also have to go beyond their differences so that a “strong ethnic solidarity” (Sinha: 13) emerges among them. That is also the problem with a new name: it is easy to find one but difficult to have it adopted by so many different Nepali communities. Subba thinks the future of the “Sakhaas” goes through a more detailed writing of their history, a focus on language and the abrogation of the 1950 India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship.

Despite bringing new themes about Nepali Indians to the forefront and evoking in-depth analysis of identity issues from a strong historical perspective, which is of great benefit to anyone interested in Nepal or India, the book does have its limits. First, it often oscillates between a manifesto written by INOs for the sake of their own community and a

more classical academic book, with a disparate quality between each article. Some authors tend to say “we” when speaking about INOs. As confirmed by Subba (p.26), this book may provide some guidance to the Nepali youth, intellectuals and opinion makers. However, for the non INO reader, the impression may be confusing. Secondly, it is regrettable that studies of Indian Nepalīs still concentrate on North-East India. This is understandable, as it is where the greater concentration of Nepalīs are located, but it would be of great interest to learn about the numerous Indian Nepali communities who live in big cities like Delhi or Mumbai. The Gorkha community from Derhadun is, for example, completely absent from the book and, to my knowledge, no study has ever been made of it. The need to differentiate between the different INO communities would clarify things and highlight the bonds between them. As Golay (p.75) says, there is no “comprehensive study of the contributions of social and cultural movements in Darjeeling and elsewhere towards the formation of a distinct Gorkha identity”. Thirdly, except for general statements about the INOs and their occupation, and two articles about food (Tamang: 296) and herbal medicine (Chhetri: 311), anthropological, religious or cultural studies should really be enhanced in order to understand practices and the world view of INOs. Grass-root data about INOs are lacking for the community to be fully understood. Overall, the assumption that what unites Indian Nepalīs is a common language, a common origin and history has not been totally checked at local level. The question is raised in the introduction, but there are very few hints as to its answer. The reader is given no information about the links between scattered communities, though some study of them would have been of great interest. And finally, the term diaspora, seldom used, is not really re-appraised. The question remains: are Indian Nepalīs part of a diaspora, whether south Asian or global, or are they just another Indian ethnic group?

***Nomads of Eastern Tibet. Social Organization and Economy of a Pastoral Estate in the Kingdom of Dege, by RINZIN THARGYAL. Edited by Toni HUBER. Leiden: Brill, Brill’s Tibetan Studies Library 15. xii + 222 p. ISBN 978 90 04 15813 9.***

Rewieived by Pascale Dollfus

*Nomads of Eastern Tibet* is a monograph of a pastoralist community from the Kham region in Eastern Tibet during the mid-20th century. This small and mutually dependent community, known as Zilphukhog, was located in the Kingdom of Dege whose prestige and power at the time was quashed

by repeated acts of rivalry and intrigues. The pastoral community itself ceased to exist after 1958 due to the Chinese occupation. In fact, the research itself was not conducted “on the field” but in the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal between September 1982 and February 1983 among Tibetan Refugees who had been living in exile for the last two decades and, especially, among ten informants representing nine different households. At the time of Rinzin Thargyal’s fieldwork the youngest informant was aged 54, and since then some of them have passed away. The author is one of the first Western-trained native Tibetan anthropologists. He did an M.A. in Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo in 1985, and now teaches the Tibetan language and works for the Network for University Co-operation Tibet-Norway. Though born in Tibet, he had to flee his homeland when he was 10 years old, leaving his family behind under the Chinese administration. He himself was not a nomad but belonged to the lower ranks of the aristocracy of the agricultural region of Meshe, one of 25 traditional “districts” comprising the kingdom of Dege.

Rinzin Thargyal documents the life of pastoralists in detail in this book. Having recounted how the Zilphukhog was founded and evolved, the author briefly examines the structural features of the Dege polity. He then discusses the nature of labour service as it manifested itself locally among the three groups of dependents – nomadic pastoralists, peasants and monastic households describing the corvée labour service, along with the costs and benefits of the system for the lord and his dependents. Since nomadic pastoralist households were numerically dominant and had a preponderant impact in the region, he introduces us to animal husbandry, giving the local taxonomy for animals according to sex and age categories, describing the methods of slaughtering yaks and sheep, of milking, tanning and weaving. The author subsequently deals with trade and peripheral incomes (such as gold mining, butchering animals for wealthy households, hunting and gathering) which supplemented these pastoral resources, and he examines the economic and strategic exploitation of the pastures, the pattern of movement or migrations back and forth between a winter tent encampment and summer pastures. Having described the household economy at some length, Rinzin Thargyal devotes three chapters to the social organization of the community, starting with the spatial and ritual organization of the household, and the tent as a social place, then marriage patterns and kinship, and ending with birth and death.

Concerning polyandry (p.167) for example, he points out the diversity of this practice among Tibetan pastoralists even within a small community, showing that this form of marriage is practised only by those who own their own animals and who have well established households.

“When there is a head a tail is needed. If there is not head a tail is not needed.” However, the central focus of this work is the lord/dependent relationship. In this way, Rinzin Thargyal convincingly contributes to a crucial and controversial issue in pre-modern Tibetan societies, namely the debate about feudalism or serfdom. Based on case-studies, he offers a new and nuanced analysis of the dyadic relationship between a local “lord” (*dpon*) and his “dependents” (*’khor pa*), both peasant and nomadic pastoralists, as well as monastic dependents, who were obliged to perform corvée service. According to the author, this relationship was more hierarchical in the Dege Kingdom during the 17th-19th centuries than it was during the mid-20th century when the weakening of the State and the effects of various political upheavals “gave dependents an unprecedented bargaining power vis-à-vis their lords or leaders. To put it metaphorically, in a sea of political fluidity and fluctuation, one could swim almost in any direction one chose given that one was prepared to take the risk of drowning” (p.184).

This descriptive portrait of a pre-modern pastoralist society in Eastern Tibet is introduced by a comprehensive essay by Toni Huber, a specialist of the anthropology and cultural history of Tibetan and Tibetan-influenced Societies in Central Tibet, Amdo, Changthang, but also Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh in India. He points out how the modern anthropology of Tibet has been circumscribed by the difficulty or impossibility to freely conduct research on the Tibetan plateau, leading researchers to “work at distance” either among Tibetans settled outside the Tibetan Plateau or in Tibetan speaking populations located in the Himalayan highlands. He also places Rinzin Thargyal’s work in its context and highlights its uniqueness – working with pastoralists rather than agriculturalists in Khams, a complex region which remains largely unknown – then he sketches a brief biography of Rinzin’s life.

Besides this introductory essay, Toni Huber also edits the entire text. As he notes himself in his Preface, he provides “footnotes for clarification, and also to direct readers to literature and debates about certain topics which have appeared since Rinzin undertook his research; standardizing the phonetic equivalents used for Tibetan words, and their Romanization; redrafting Rinzin’s original hand-drawn figures and providing several new maps; adding black and white photographs from the relevant historical period and geographical area [by Josef Vanis and Albert L. Shelton]; and compiling an index”. This extensive editorial task is indeed much appreciated. As such, Toni Huber and Rinzin Thargyal’s book is altogether an important contribution to our knowledge of Tibetan nomadic societies, which once again are endangered by Chinese policies of rangeland privatization and the forcible relocation of herders in new Chinese-built

villages, which leaves them with no livestock and drastically curtails their livelihood.<sup>18</sup>

As is always the case with Brill's Tibetan Studies Library series, the layout and the presentation of this book which includes an index, 9 figures and 11 photographs are of a high standard.

***Through the Eye of Time – Photographs of Arunachal Pradesh 1859-2006: by Michael Aram Tarr and Stuart Blackburn. coll. Tribal Cultures in the Eastern Himalayas , vol. 1. Leiden/Boston: Brill. (Brill's Tibetan Studies Library Volume 16/1). 2008. 217 pages, 220 pictures, 2 maps. ISBN 978-90-04-16522-9.***

Reviewed by Marion Wettstein, University of Zurich

The region today referred to as Northeast-India has since British-colonial times fascinated anthropologists. Among the areas most researched were the Naga Hills and what is today the Indian Union state of Arunachal Pradesh. After Indian Independence these areas have become largely inaccessible, though never forgotten. Since a few years they are partly open to visitors and researchers again and the recent flow of publications shows that this corner of India has not lost its importance for anthropology. Unlike in the 1920s and 30s, today the medium of photography rather than writing seems to be the means to portrait and present the region. Many of the publications on Northeast India of the last years – scientific or popular – are photo-books emphasizing contemporary pictures.

The work of Michael Tarr and Stuart Blackburn, which was realized in the context of the Tribal Transitions project (2002- 2007), gives a new viewpoint to the corpus of photographic publications on Northeast India. The authors have collected the earliest photographs known from

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<sup>18</sup> On these policies implemented since 1999 – fencing off pastureland, resettlement and livestock limitation affecting Tibetan herders which are presented as a necessary response to an environmental crisis of pasture degradation and overgrazing, see among others Human Rights Watch, 2007, 19 (8) “No One Has the Liberty to Refuse”. Tibetan Herders Forcibly Relocated in Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and the Tibet Autonomous Region; Zukosky Michael L. 2007. Making pastoral settlement visible in China. *Nomadic Peoples*, 11 (2). pp.107-133. Robin, Françoise. 2009. “Les nouveaux villages socialistes’ en Région Autonome du Tibet: remodeler le paysage rural, contrôler les populations”. *Perspectives Chinoises* (3). Hong Kong. pp.60-69.



Arunachal Pradesh and its inhabitants and followed the visual representations through time, completed by contemporary ethnographic views by Michael Aram Tarr. Historical and contemporary photographs have an equal share and stand where ever possible in relation or in completion to each other. After a short introduction by Stuart Blackburn the main part of the book follows, namely the plates, which make out nearly 200 pages. Historical photographs are commented by the original captions of the photographers whenever known and by additional short explanations by the authors. The contemporary photographs are commented by the photographer Michael Aram Tarr himself.

The aim of the book is to compare, by the means of photographs, historical periods, change and continuity in a “corner of the world tucked away between Assam, Tibet, Bhutan, and Burma” (p. 1), little known to neither an anthropological, scientific audience, nor to an interested general audience. In the genre of “ethnological” photo-books, introductions to the “land and people” and to their customs are still commonplace today. But Stuart Blackburn’s introduction is different. He is mainly interested in embedding the photographs in the context of their time, especially focusing on the photographers as persons, their function in the colonial setting, and their motivations. And with this focus – and not only by the introduction, but also by Michael Aram Tarr’s own photographs, his choice of the historical photographs, their captions and layout – the book clearly distances itself successfully from the coffee-table books and photo books published en masse about “foreign cultures”. Such books are usually structured in chapters with short in-between introductions to each chapter focusing on different features of the “life of the XY-people”. The structure of Blackburn’s and Tarr’s book, however, more resembles the genre of a photographers-book: a short introduction speaks about the photographer and his work, after which the plates follow as a corpus.

In his introduction, Blackburn remarks that even if in the beginning of colonial contacts the camera did indeed follow the gun, the camera soon started to capture the complexity of colonial context rather than solely supporting its aims. Here he relativizes a dominant discourse on photography in India (and elsewhere), which tends to focus on photography as an instrument of colonial dominance. Blackburn starts his portrait of photographers with the 19th century surgeon Sir Benjamin Simpson, who had captured many of the early studio-portraits of the Arunachal hill peoples. Following the theory of the time, these portraits were aimed at classifying people and were often staged with attributes and ornaments considered characteristic of a certain ethnic group. The purpose of the photographs was large photo exhibitions in India and Britain. The Tribal Transitions project, too, was designed with the same

intention in cooperation with the British Museum where the photographs of the project are currently exhibited together with ethnographic objects (Between Tibet and Assam: cultural diversity in the eastern Himalayas, British Museum, 23 October 2008 – 19 April 2009). But the debut-exhibitions were held in Northeast India itself and one of the overall aims of the book and the whole project – so is the authors' hope – is that through the photographs “the people of Arunachal Pradesh are gaining new perspectives on the past 150 years of their history” (p. 19). That photographs indeed, as stated by the authors, are locally used in today's constructions of and debates about tradition I could witness myself in neighbouring Nagaland.

After the first contact with the hill tribes the British colonial administration started expeditions to the hills of Arunachal in the early 20th century. Also for this historical period the photographers are introduced in detail. A few chosen pictures are commented by diary entries of the photographers themselves and short stories surrounding them. By these short descriptions, we can but guess how much in depth context a single photograph can potentially concentrate on itself. The detailed contextualisation of each and every photograph in the book – let alone of the total of all collections gathered in the Tribal Transitions project given as nearly 8000 photographs – would fill hundreds of pages. In this part of the introduction one can estimate the decision of the author: Does he attempt to introduce the “photography of Arunachal Pradesh” as a whole, as a corpus, or should he choose some single examples to illustrate the potential of “a photograph of the Arunachal Pradesh”? Already Roland Barthes complained about the mere impossibility to describe “photography” as such, its essence, and decided, that the only possibility to describe and analyse photography is by the single chosen picture (Barthes 1980). Blackburn obviously came to a similar conclusion and so the spectator of the more than 200 photographs is left with just about enough information to trigger his interest to start his own investigations.

With the difficulty of describing photography as such in mind it is not amazing that, as Blackburn remarks, not much is known about the role of photography in Northeast India in the middle of the 20th century despite the huge collections that were produced especially in the 1940s and 50s (p. 13) by scholars like Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, C.R. Stonor, Ursula Betts (Graham-Bower), or Verrier Elwin. He observes that compared to the preceding decades, the photographers stayed much longer in the region and thus were able to visualize processes lasting over days or even weeks, for example rituals. This is surely a result of the new style of anthropology during the first half of the 20th century: the ideal of long participant observation emphasized by Malinowski whose lectures Haimendorf for

example had attended (Macfarlane and Turin 1996). The new photographic technology of the 35mm camera with short shutter speed made it possible to freeze people in motion and the telephoto lens enabled close-up views of emotional faces without the photographed necessarily noticing it. This technical precondition soon would determine the aesthetic style of the photography in the time, as can be seen explicitly in the photographs of Furer-Haimendorf or Elwin. All photographers of mid-20th century share another feature in common: most of them (Elwin is an exception) had spent long time in the Naga Hills and had started their photographic endeavour there. One could say that the Naga Hills had been the visual pathfinder for Arunachal Pradesh.

The plates make out the bigger part of the book. They are structured along ethnic groups of the area, which, in the order of their appearance, are the Adi (specially mentioned are the Gallong, Abor Adi, Palibo and Tangam), the Idu Mishmi, the Digaro and Miju Mishmi, the Khanti, the Singpho, the Wancho, the Hill Miri, the Apatani, the Nyishi (and Dafla), the Aka, the Miji and Bugun and the Monpa (specially mentioned are the Sherdukpen). The Apatani make out the largest part, placed in the last third of the book with 37 pages containing 43 photographs. A similar volume of pictures we find for the Adi at the beginning of the book with 28 pages containing 30 photographs and the Monpa at the end of the book with 25 pages containing 30 photographs. Only very few pictures can be found for the Singpho, the Aka, the Wancho and the Miji and Bugun, who are covered with two to eight pictures each only. The Idu Mishmi, Digaro, Khanti, Hill Miri and Nyishi are presented with an average of twelve to 18 pictures each. If we compare the order of ethnic groups with the maps given on p. 2 we realize that it roughly follows the three cultural zones shortly mentioned in the introduction: It groups together the people around the Subansiri, Siyom, Siang and Dibang rivers (zone 2), the people of Tirap and around the Lohit river (zone 3) and the people around the Kameng river (zone 1). Unfortunately neither the table of contents nor a clear signalling of "chapters" indicates this overall structure, which makes orientation in the plates a little complicated. Besides the ethnic groups, the assembling of narrative strings is a second element of structuring the plates. Always within the framework of the tribal groups, stories are told as often as possible by the sequence of pictures. Most obvious they are when festivals or rituals are documented, but also other sequences are arranged as narratives, like the murder of Noel Williams and its consequences or the raid on the Nyishi village Kirum. The rhetoric of the photograph gets its content through this embedding into the narrative structure and by it operates as part of an argumentation line.

The photographs selected for the book are mainly single or group portraits and ritual processes. Very seldom one encounters landscapes or

architecture, scenes of everyday life in agriculture and household or crafts. So the focus is on people and the way they look. Many portraits show smiling faces and underline the dignity and natural self-esteem of the subject. In many of the pictures one can feel the respect of the photographers, historical or contemporary, for the hill tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. In this context one can of course agree with Solomon-Godeau that photographs (and their published compilations) serve the ratification of a complex ideological setting, which in a certain historical moment is perceived as reality (2003: 59). In the case of Blackburn's and Tarr's book we can identify one of these anthropological ideologies of our time as what I would call the understood perception of "the other" on eye-level and with high esteem as a prerequisite.

For the presentation of the photographs of each ethnic group, two approaches can be made out: Either the plates start with the oldest photograph and move on chronologically in time – this proceeding is usually used when only a few pictures of the specific group are available –, or they start with the oldest one or two photographs and further on juxtapose photographs of the middle of the 20th century with contemporary ones. The juxtapositions show that changes have occurred especially in ornaments and clothing. In the choice of plates of Blackburn's and Tarr's book there is actually only one pair of photographs, which shows nearly identical dress and ornament today (2005) and 60 years ago: The attire of the Apatani priest during the Murung festival (pp. 144-145). As the authors also state the rituals and festivals have changed but little. On the series taken by Michael Aram Tarr in the last years we see many people in "modern" trousers and jumpers, most of them engaged in some animal offering, sports game or other ritual. This stands in sharp contrast to the situation in the neighbouring Naga Hills today, where the ritual context has been lost largely and dress and ornament being displayed at tourist events have seen standardization on the one hand and elaboration towards modern dress cut on the other. Compared to the Naga Hills, my own research region, it seems indeed that Arunachal has not changed as sharply. In the photographs we do not encounter any urban settings; tin roofs and concrete walls seem only to start to replace wood and thatch in architecture; and missionaries seem not to have invaded the country (as yet).

Beside ethnographic and historical diversity, a main criterion in the choice of photographs in the book – according to the authors – is aesthetics (p. 1). The authors do not specify what defines aesthetics in their eyes, but in looking at the photographs intensely, one is pleased once more by the fact, that they free themselves from certain visual conventions. Blurred, damaged or spotted historical images are not ruled out and many of the contemporary photographs show a very specific

colour spectrum. One is tempted to judge that they are just badly printed. Most of them have a strong yellow shade and the magenta is often exaggerated. An extreme example is the picture of a mithun offering (p. 84), where the blood of the meat is as pink as the waistcoats of the sacrificers. Whether the colour balance is due to the printing or indeed intended by the photographer, the effect is an interesting one in any case: It gives the very recent photographs the air of time. They feel “old”. Without reading the captions, one might easily be misled to date them somewhere in the 1970s. By this aesthetic, which is noticeable throughout most of Michael Aram Tarr’s colour photographs in the book, they decidedly distance themselves from the high-sharp, glossy photographs of today’s ordinary coffee-table books and don’t run the risk to be mistaken for this category. The play with time is also visible in the few black and white photographs by Michael Aram Tarr. At first sight they blend in perfectly with the historical black and white pictures and if one doesn’t pay attention to the dating in the caption, one can easily mistake them for “historical” photographs. In the context of documentary photographs it seems a visual convention to perceive black and white photographs as “old”, while colour photographs suggest modernity, present or at least recent past. Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, already among the Naga in the 1930s, experimented with the just invented colour film for 35mm cameras (Oppitz et al. 2008: Frontispiece). It would not astonish if he and his colleagues would also have done so in Arunachal a decade later. However, in the book all of the photographs of the 1940s and 1950s are black and white. A further element which distinguishes the book from other ethno-documentary photo-books is its layout. As a rule, there is one photograph shown at each page with original captions and a short comment by the authors. From time to time longer series of events are shown – usually rituals or festivals – which are often denser in pictures, three to four on a double page. Very seldom we find a seamless picture and the framing white borders add style and dignity to the photographs.

In the publisher’s announcement this book is described as a “visual history of Arunachal Pradesh”. I would agree and add that visual histories in the form of photo-books with little written text are rather rare in anthropology. Even though visual anthropology as a discipline is now over a decade old, and despite the fact that drawings and photographs have been an important part of scientific argumentation in anthropology since the 19th century, the methods of producing (rather than analyzing) visual books as scientific publications are still in an experimental phase and are not yet fully acknowledged by the scientific community. Stuart Blackburn and Michael Aram Tarr have herewith given a good guideline for the substance, structure and style of an anthropological visual history book.

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***Himalayan Tribal Tales. Oral Tradition and Culture in the Apatani Valley.* by Stuart Blackburn. coll. Tribal Cultures in the Eastern Himalayas, vol. 2. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008. xviii + 298 p. ISBN 978 90 04 17133 6**

reviewed by Pascal Bouchery, University of Poitiers

It is a pleasure to note the recent appearance of several in-depth studies of oral literature of societies in Arunachal Pradesh, at a time when many of them, along with the languages from which they emanate, appear to be on the decline. Following Verrier Elwin's pioneering works in this field (*Myths of the North-East Frontier of India*, 1958; *A New Book of Tribal Fiction*, 1970) and subsequent attempts to cover more or less all ethnic groups of the State, such as *Folk songs of Arunachal Pradesh* (Pandey, 1997) or *Myths and beliefs on creation of universe among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh* (Duarah, 1999), the current research trend appears to focus more on extensive studies relating to specific ethnic groups. O. Tayeng published a *Folk Tales of the Adis* in 2003, followed by a voluminous *Mishmi Folk Tales of Lohit Valley* (2007). It is now the Apatanis' turn to unveil their rich oral literature to a larger audience, as written about by the folklorist S. Blackburn.

Hemmed in by the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh, the tiny Apatani valley and its seven villages attracted a lot of attention from the first

Western observers as it had remained very isolated until the middle of the last century. There was practically no direct contact between the Apatanis and the Tibetans towards the North, while a difficult six-day journey on foot had to be undertaken southward to reach the Assam plains. Travel was always possible, yet up until 1950 safe-conduct had to be procured from the neighbouring Nyishis with whom conflicts were recurrent. The anthropologist C. von Fürer-Haimendorf was among the first outsiders to visit the valley. He spent two years in 1944-45 as an Assistant Political Officer of the then North East Frontier Agency, and he later published various books and papers devoted to the Apatani social organization and religious system between 1946 and 1980. On the basis of his ethnographical accounts it has become customary to label the Apatanis a “well-documented group”. However, as remarkable as this contribution might be, it overlooked many cultural aspects, including the study of oral literature. Fragments of longer stories have been collected, though rather randomly, by various authors (Abraham, 1985; Bower, 1953; Duarah, 1999; Elwin, 1958, 1970; Ghosh & Ghosh, 1998; Hage, 2006). More recently a few Apatani intellectuals or scholars also started to translate and publish parts of it, such as C. Kalung’s *Nitin Hormin. A Compilation of Popular Apatani Proverbs* (1998), and P. Hage’s collection of 24 tales entitled *Ranth-Pigeh. Short story. Part 1* (2004). Yet never has there been any attempt to combine both a collection of tales and their analysis into a separate book. In this respect, S. Blackburn’s contribution is a welcome change.

As the author explains, his intention was not to limit himself to a mere description of tales, myths and histories, but to place them in a cultural context which render them meaningful, and more generally to explore the relationship between the stories and the culture. For that reason, only half of the book is comprised of the narrations themselves, the rest being devoted to historical or sociological aspects, or comparative analysis. The book also includes a glossary, a well-documented bibliography and an index. Several conclusions can be drawn from this study: firstly, no understanding of oral literature can obviously be reached without a thorough examination of the context of utterance and its relationship to the sociological background; secondly, Apatani oral tradition owes little to Indic or Tibetan traditions; and thirdly, numerous mythological parallels are to be found between the cultures of Central Arunachal Pradesh and beyond, and those of South-western China and mainland Southeast Asia.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The author introduces each of these, as he does for the tales themselves, with rich descriptive background information on the Apatani world and the narrative context. Chapter one mostly contains an introduction to the general objectives and methodology, as well as a clear and concise classification of Apatani oral genres (pp. 18-22). Oral literature may be broadly classified into two

categories, ritual and non-ritual. Ritual oral literature (*miji*) is restricted to recitation (or more often chanting) for ritualistic purposes by male priests (*nyibu*). It uses a specific or “ritual” speech which is known only to them and often requires interpretation. Non-ritual oral literature (*migung*) can be narrated by any knowledgeable person outside of a ritualistic context, in a prose identical or closer to day-to-day speech. However, there is no clear-cut division, since the same stories can be chanted or narrated alternatively in ritual and non-ritual contexts, though not usually by the same kind of people. In terms of comprehensibility, there appears to be a *continuum* between the various non ritual forms of oral literature, the level of discourse varying according to the genre, the context of recitation, the narrator’s emotional state, and his perception of the listeners’ state of mind. Altogether, *miji-migung* constitutes the dominant genre on which this study focuses almost exclusively.

The second chapter offers a detailed and learned sketch of the population of the valley and its history. This is a solid piece of work containing a good deal of valuable information, as well as a lucid presentation of some issues central to present-day society, such as status differentiation or religious changes. The author discusses them in an open, discerning style with no oversimplification. Indeed, I often found my own observations regarding Apatani society to be very much in line with the author’s views. Many topics raised in this chapter provide those interested in India’s north-eastern region with useful, more global information: population trends, land ownership imbalances, the effects of urbanization, the distribution of power between natives and outsiders at local and regional levels, and the spread of literacy or the minority rights issue. With regard to education, indeed a “success story” over past decades, the author prompts readers to examine the determining influence of the type of residence, proximity to urban centres, and the fact that all villages have easy access to schools.

The main section of the book, as shown in the title, concerns Apatani oral literature, more specifically *miji-migung*. Chapter Three (pp. 55-105) contains twelve stories or tales belonging to the non-ritual *migung* category, and Chapter Five some fragments of *miji* ritual texts (pp. 165-212). The non ritual collection has not gone entirely unpublished as partial translations into English have already figured, for at least about half of them, in previous publications: the story of *Baro Piicha* (Abraham, 1985, given along with the Apatani transcription), the Tallest Tree (Hage, 2004), the eviction of *buru* mythical aquatic creatures (Izzard, 1951; Bower, 1953), the migration stories (Bower, 1953, Fürer-Haimendorf, 1962, 1980), *Kar Siimii* the “Blinding Lake” (Hage, 2004). Still we are left with a substantial corpus of newly collected and published folktales, and for the first time great care is taken to provide biographical information about informants.



Most texts are written in a polished, literary, at times more ethnographic (due to the fact that Blackburn's informants themselves often felt the need to supplement the narration with ethnographical material) style, frequently complemented and enlivened by the author's own comments regarding the narrator or the conditions in which data were collected. Only very few inaccuracies are to be found from an anthropological point of view: married women, for example, do not "*retain their clan name or first name*", as stated in a footnote p. 95. They change their surname upon marriage from birth name to their husband's clan name which becomes their family name. My only regret is that, for a book specifically devoted to the Apatani oral literature, the stories are confined to their English translations, and that the transcription of the Apatani texts and their English counterpart do not appear side by side (only one tale is given with a full translation in Appendix 1). Not only would this have given scope for the reader to point to possible approximations or mistakes in translation, but valuable information would also have been provided for anthropologists and historians. In a sentence such as "*The people made Pala Talo king and gave him the title of 'Master'*" (p. 83), the vernacular terms for both 'king' and 'master' are of particular interest regarding a society which never had any form of centralized power prior to the advent of the modern State. Here again we have no means of knowing the rhythm or pace of live performances, nor of the features of discourse in the two major oral forms. This is particularly unfortunate for ritual texts, given that they are recited or chanted to a fixed rhythm. Considering the importance of ritual speech (*miji agung*), as well as the fact that hardly anything is known, let alone published about it, it would have been interesting for the reader to have at least an overview of this language in order to glimpse its specificity. As the author is preparing another book specifically dedicated to one "*Shaman Chant*", this will hopefully be corrected in the forthcoming publication. Last but not least, Apatani original texts would have provided valuable information on the way the various forms of oral literature are interrelated. Among the Galos, who are the Apatani's neighbours and speak a language of the same "Tani" group, Mark Post recently highlighted the fact that, even though most of the words in the classical language (*gorɲkù*) are not etymologically related to their counterparts in the conversational form, *gorɲkù* not only appears in ritual contexts "*but presents a rich and culturally significant "parallel lexicon to the ordinary Galo speaker which may be employed to great effect in orations, village councils, and storytelling"*" (2007: 45). This statement also seems to hold for the Apatanis. One example of this permeability within oral forms is given by the fact that classical words often surface in conversational language through several structural devices or features of discourse, such as these "*noun-pairs*" (labelled as such and rightly pointed out by the

author himself p. 159) which are so typical of Apatani formal discourse *outside* ritual context, as they also are in Galo. Another example is provided by Apatani proverbs (*nitin-hormin*), another popular genre. Though the vocabulary is basically from conversational Apatani, they are typically arranged in two-line couplets and use a contracted form not readily understandable to all which consequently requires some interpretation. In addition, each line of a couplet very often begins with one component of a given noun-pair. Thus, elements of oral discourse such as rhyming features, idioms, schemes of thought, also permeate the conversational language or today's modern songs. Even intellectuals who publish pamphlets on *Meder Nello*, the Apatani local form of "Donyi-Poloism", in an attempt to elevate traditional religion to the rank of a religious philosophy appear to use a great deal of vocabulary related to (or alluding to) oral literature, through which their texts seem to gain legitimacy. How traditional forms adapt to popular culture, modern media and take an active part in the process of "*reinventing religions*" might have been another possible entry to explore the dynamic relationship between oral literature and culture.

Several stories make up what can be regarded as an Apatani cosmogony, even though there is no central tale or story that can be labelled as such. The author rightly identifies two major features, each of which has a broader resonance in the region: first the origin of the universe that is conceived as an emergence, rather than a creation, and operates basically through a gradual differentiation process. This general framework not only belongs to a "*regional tradition in central Arunachal Pradesh*" (p. 215), but also fits into a more general pattern widespread in the Himalayas, including its enlarged Chinese extensions. It basically depicts various phases of gradual differentiation of an as yet undifferentiated, undetermined, undivided, most often watery single entity. The specificity of these cosmogonies is to bind the physical evolution, the sociocultural development, and the geographical migration, and set them in a progressive dynamic that moves from undivision, disorder and non-culture to a conclusion of separation, order and the establishment of cultural norms. A first step in this process is marked by the appearance of a two-fold (Sky-Earth) or three-fold division (Sky-Earth-Water/Underground). This is followed by the separation of man from spirits, often accompanied by establishing distinct boundaries between them, the separation between humans and animals, and later the separation of various ethnic groups whose male progenitors are generally regarded as siblings. In the Apatani story it is concomitant with the acquisition by each group of distinctive natural and agricultural resources (p. 114). Here the author could also have invoked the motif of the river boundary illustrating the split of the bulk of migrating ancestors into two

sections: one group following another loses the other's tracks after crossing a river because the marks left by the preceding group are no longer visible; thus the migrants left behind either decide to turn back or to settle on the other bank of the river (p. 115). It is a typical motif of widespread resonance often resorted to for explaining ethnic distinctions between close neighbours who are nevertheless regarded as having genealogical or close cultural ties<sup>19</sup>.

Another major trait rightly pointed out by S. Blackburn is the fact that the migration epic, being conceived as a spatio-temporal path, is not a mere story but also a ritual instrument. Again, as already noted by the author in a previous publication (2003/4: 50 n57), this immediately evokes a larger area stretching from the Western Himalayas to Southern China and mainland Southeast Asia where several important rituals such as funerals require the ancestral journey to be, to quote Höfer, "*walked back in words*" (1999: 226-227). Among the Hani of Yunnan for example, the complete recitation of individual ancestral genealogies, upward and downward over fifty to sixty generations, by the reciter priest (*pima*) is a necessary step to ensure access to ancestor status (Bouchery, forthcoming). The journey evoked in the chant retraces the migration route to escort the dead to their ancestors' abode. As pointed out by M. Gaenzle, one specificity of these ritual journeys in the Greater Himalayan region as compared to other parts of the world is that they are not only mythical but take place through the real landscape "*and thus combine cosmological notions with the known geography*"<sup>20</sup>.

More problematic is the author's statement that "*these eleven stories [migung] represent almost the entire repertoire of Apatani folktales*" (p. 231). It is hard to agree with him on this point, as there are obviously more stories than those in his book. It may be true that a lot of them can be ultimately connected to one or another major event or figure or the Apatani mythology, such as Abo Tani or the migratory epic. Still, not only do many of these stories seemingly stand on their own in various contexts, but the author himself acknowledges that "*Apatani mythology is not a formal system, and accounts are diverse, inconsistent and often vague*", which is indeed a typical feature of many, if not all mythologies in this region. The story of

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<sup>19</sup> A few autonyms of this region, such as "Aorr" (literally "those who crossed" in Ao Naga language) derive directly from this motif, and evoke an ancestral relationship with neighbouring groups nowadays established east of the Dikhu River (Mills, 1926). The marks usually become invisible due to natural causes, not due to human intervention. They are expressed through a limited number of stereotypes found throughout the Himalayas and mainland Southeast Asia.

<sup>20</sup> 1999: 137

*Dimper Manu*, that of *Poper Lali* who twice sold his cock, the story of *Tapu* and *Kupu*, the story of the separation of Man and the mithun, who were originally brothers, the story of the hero *Pengu miilyobo*, that of the Giant Hunter and the Jungle Pigmy, the story relating the origin of the burial practice, the story of *Abo Tani* and *Yapung*, the story explaining the origin of village sacred groves, the story of *Ato* and his dog, the story of the boy and the Tigress, etc. are some examples of stories missing from Blackburn's book. Comparison with previously published oral material also reveals that there is a wide range of individual variation within the limitations established for specific genres, as well as many divergent versions of the same story<sup>21</sup>.

In Chapter Five we are offered a glimpse of Apatani ritual texts (*miji*), though still a small part of the entire repertoire. The chapter begins with an insightful discussion on the functions of the main religious specialist (*nyibu*), who combines the features of a shaman, reciter, diviner and religious practitioner performing various rituals for his clan, but not those of a village priest (pp. 160-161). Each chant is introduced by rich anthropological background information on the ritual to which it applies, as well as the context of utterance. Among them are extracts of *Subu Heniin*, the longest and most prestigious chant, and we are informed that a full version will be the subject of a forthcoming volume. As with other similar forms of oral literature of this region, repetitions frequently occur in *miji* in order to underscore the notion of completeness, or highlight culturally salient categories. This section also contains two samples of *ayu*, chants performed in contexts of verbal competition or antiphonal singing.

The last chapter, entitled: "*Comparisons: Apatani stories in the wider world*" (pp. 214-21, summarized in Appendix 3), is an attempt by the author to enlarge the scope of analysis of the Apatani corpus of myths and insert it in a wider regional context. He first identifies a core group corresponding basically to the "Tani"-speaking people of Arunachal Pradesh (i.e. Apatanis, various Adi and Nyishi groups, Galos, Tagins, Hill Miris and Misings) and he rightly identifies this group as being comprised of societies which are collectively bound by both a genealogical and mythical reference to the central figure of apical ancestor Abo Tani. Starting from this Central Arunachal cultural cluster he then moves eastward, leaving Arunachal and entering China and mainland Southeast Asia. This choice is motivated by the author's argument that the oral tradition of Central Arunachal has little connection with Tibet, Assam or mainland India, compared to what he defines as the "*Extended Eastern Himalayas*", a somewhat discontinuous area mapped out on p. 220

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<sup>21</sup> Fürer-Haimendorf, for example, reports two versions of the origin of Abo Tani (1962: 134; 134n).

encompassing Arunachal Pradesh, the hills of the India-Burma border, plus a vast tract of mountains and hills in Southwest China and adjoining countries, the limits of which however are not clearly defined:

Taken all together, these parallels for the stories of the Sun-Moon, lost writing and journey of the soul show that Apatani oral tradition is linked to traditions in three regions: central Arunachal Pradesh, the India-Burma order; upland Southeast Asia/southwest China. Equally significant, these stories appear to be found only in these three regions –with no close parallel in Assam or Tibet. (p. 219).

Such converging evidence leads the author to address the unresolved question about the origin and migration routes of the present-day Tani-speaking people. He argues that the continuity of oral literature within the extended Eastern Himalayan region is suggestive of a historical continuity through generational transmission, thus pointing to an eastern origin and east-west migration route, rather than a northern Tibetan nidus, as indicated by the stories themselves. This part of the analysis is less convincing, partly because his comparative material is incomplete, also partly because some reservations can be expressed from a methodological point of view. Blackburn's limits of the culture area appear to be loosely defined and at the same time rely on somewhat arbitrary criteria: it is in fact confined to upland, stateless (or "tribal") societies who live east (but not west) of the Apatanis and, for the most part, speak languages of the Tibeto-Burmese family. That is not to say that his suggestion of some Himalayan mythological continuity between North-East India and China – invoking an unbounded geographical transmission of cultural material – is not grounded. But what appears to be questionable is the relevance of the limits assigned by him to these "*Extended Eastern Himalayas*" which he further regards as forming a distinct culture area (p. 230).

First of all, there is some ambiguity as to the area and the people actually covered by this concept. The Khasis and Garos, for example, appear in the comparative profile given in Appendix 3, but their habitat, the Meghalayan plateau, is shown as being external to it in the map given on p. 220. It is also most surprising to see the author exclude from his comparison –therefore from the culture area itself– all societies of the Brahmaputra Valley, apart from the Misings. Can it be seriously asserted, on the basis of a single study (as Blackburn does on p. 227, by quoting Datta *et al.*, 1994) that "*no stories [are] common to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh*"?. This is obviously not tenable given the complexity of the ethnic, linguistic and cultural matrix of this region. All the more so because the Brahmaputra Valley has always been – at least since the 13<sup>th</sup> century – a major corridor connecting mainland India with East and Southeast Asia, as

well as a major linguistic contact zone. Hence we can expect extensive cultural interaction within the valley itself and with the surrounding hills. Of course, the oral literature of the 600,000 or so Misings, though influenced to some extent by Hinduism, manifests the presence of Blackburn's Central Arunachal "*core group*" right in the heart of the Brahmaputra Valley. No doubt the Karbis, Dimasas and Lalung-Tiwas of Assam, among others, would have made equally good candidates as the Khasis and Garos for comparative study, had only their oral tradition been thoroughly studied. And what about the Noctes inhabiting the Patkai Hills separating India from Burma? The Ahom influence so strongly pervades their mythology and migration stories that chiefly families, like the ancient Ahom ruling aristocracy, locate their ultimate origin in the former Mogaung Shan State of Northern Burma, relate their genealogies to those of the Ahom rulers and, like them, invoke Indra as their progenitor and claim that their ancestors descended from the sky by a golden or iron ladder (Dutta, 1978; Bouchery, 2007). On this point, Gait's statement, quoted by the author on p. 228, that the plain's influence on upland people's oral literature is limited to the immediate border with Assam, is outdated, just as the dualistic separation between the hills and plains in the India-Burma region has become outdated since Leach's major contribution (1954) highlighting the cultural interactions between the Kachins and the Shans.

The same thing can be said regarding Tibet. The author argues that he has found "*no significant parallel in Tibet*" (p. 228). It is true that very few stories are found to be similar or share the same narrative structure, and that a central trickster figure comparable to Abo Tani appears to be absent in Tibet. Yet this difference should not be overemphasized, for there are many cosmogonic parallels between Tibet and what can be called a Greater Assam including both the Brahmaputra Valley and the surrounding hilly areas. The "birth out of eggs laid by birds" motif is a recurring theme in various Himalayan and sub-himalayan cosmogonies (Tibetan, Tamang, Karbi, Meitei, among many others). The Heavenly Rope (tib. *mu*) or the Heavenly ladder one motif, commonly related to royal genealogies in societies having centralized political systems such as the Tibetans, the Ahoms and the Kachins *gumsa* – but not in stateless societies – is another example illustrating the mythological continuity of this region. It has several resonances elsewhere, among the Thado Kukis for example, for whom the celestial ropes take the form of a tall ever-growing creeper that touches the skies and leads to the other world, and further east among the non-Buddhist Tai of the Indochinese peninsula where it is represented as a cane bridge. Yet among Apatanis we also find the theme of connecting earth and sky by some means, at least in one version of the *buru* episode collected by Elwin: *Doje-Karanga*, who dwells in the sky, and

*Buru-Gudu* who dwells in water, both decide to marry the other's daughter, and build a path connecting the sky to the earth in order to be able to visit their respective spouses (1958: 80). The underlying idea that prosperity results from the union between sky and earth is of course a common theme of representational systems of the entire sinicized world, including Tibet. It is also surprising that the author does not consider the creative dismemberment as a central motif of the Apatani cosmogony. For this theme seems to be no less significant than the "Sun Moon" or the "Lost writing" on which he bases his definition of the shape of his "extended East Himalayan region". All the more so as there are two occurrences of this theme in his own corpus (pp. 84; 109; 214): the stories relating how the primeval spirit *Niikun* formed the earth out of her body parts, and how the malevolent spirit *Arii* created a parallel world by transforming parts of her body into the main elements of the universe, both closely parallel the Tibetan myth in which the universe is created through a dismemberment from the actual body of a primordial goddess (*klu*). In these three cases the spirit is a female entity, and her body parts are used to map a macrocosm. In another Apatani story, a giant stone owned by a mythical hero, *Pengu miilyobo*, is destroyed by lightning and its fragments dispersed in places corresponding to the seven villages of origin, each associated with a particular organ. Apart from the creative dismemberment theme, this tale strongly evokes another constant mythical motif of the Tibetan world, the marriage of a deity to a rock or mountain, which is always seen as a territorial deity<sup>22</sup>.

Furthermore, questions may be raised about the eastern limit of the author's proposed culture area. That the myths of North-East India have close affinities with those of the northern part of mainland Southeast Asian, especially Burma, is a well known fact, and indeed ethnic groups such as the Lisus, Adis, Mishmis, Kachins, Tangsas, Noctes and northern Tai's inhabit both sides of the borders separating Arunachal from Northern Burma on the one hand, and North-Western Yunnan or South-Eastern Tibet on the other. Yet there is certainly no reason to exclude mainland China from the scope of the comparative study, nor does it make much sense to restrict the comparison to upland South-East Asian societies (p. 261). H. Maspero demonstrated, as long ago as 1924, that striking parallels exist between the Ancient Chinese mythology contained in the *Shujing* and the cosmogonies of the non-Buddhist Tai's inhabiting the valleys of erstwhile Tonkin. Further research since then has established that the same motifs are shared by most, if not all upland Southeast Asian societies. A few examples will suffice here: the motif of the creation of the

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<sup>22</sup> On the extension of the theme of the creative dismemberment in the Himalayan region, see Macdonald, 1980.

universe through the dismemberment of a primeval god or beast is not only shared by Tibetans and various Himalayan cultures, but also has strong resonance in the Chinese myth of *Pangu*, to which the motif “mankind generated from an egg” is associated. Parts of the dead body of *Pangu* turn into the various elements of the celestial and terrestrial landscapes: stars, mountains, water, fertile lands, trees, flowers, etc. The myth of *Pangu* is shared by various cultures of the sinicized world, as far as the Lis of Hainan Island whose language belongs to the Tai-Kadai family. The motif of the Heavenly Rope runs through the *Shujing*, where the link is said to have been cut to prevent gods from descending to earth (Maspero, 1924, p. 46). Regarding the “*Sun Moon*” motif, which the author considers as particularly significant for his comparison, a culture hero (usually an archer) shoots down the superfluous suns and moons who pose a direct threat to human life. It is true, as the author says, that it is a recurrent motif of various non-Han ethnic groups of Southwestern China, but the comparison certainly does not end here. It is found all over Central, East and Southeast Asia, from Mongolia and Siberia to Borneo, and appears to be quite old. In China, first mention is made in one chapter of the *Shujing*, presumably written between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries B. C. The number of celestial bodies varies (10 for the Ancient Chinese, 9 for the Hanis of Yunnan, 7 for the Kachins, 3 for the Golds of Amur region, 2 for the Lepchas of Sikkim, etc.) as well as the throwing weapon (bow, crossbow, spear and blowpipe). Outside Eastern Asia it appears in several Amerindian mythologies of North and Central America, and the theme of the plurality of the sun and moons also exists in Central India (Ho, 1964).

As a matter of fact, a number of parallels exist between the mythologies of the “*extended Eastern Himalayas*”, Tibet and mainland China. Yet we must take into account the fact that in both Tibetan and Chinese mythology, stories and tales are characterized by a large degree of syncretism as well as processes of both mutual influence and external influences from India, Central Asia and even, in the case of Tibet, from Persia. Moreover, in much the same way that Han historiographers from the Zhou and Han dynasties historicized their ancient mythology and historians and philosophers introduced fragmentary passages of mythic stories into their works to give authority to their statements, Tibetan historiographers, Tibetan monks or lay scribes incorporated mythological frameworks and mythological figures in historical, religious or philosophical records, making the comparative study more complex, thus requiring rather different methods of approach. However, at least regarding China, the converging works of the palaeographer N. Barnard (1973) and sinologist S. Allan (1991) cogently demonstrated that a true cosmogony existed during the Shang dynasty that had significant parallels



with those of contemporary peripheral societies of the sinicized world. That is to say, S. Blackburn's concept of an "extended Eastern Himalayas" culture area restricted mostly to Tibeto-Burman speaking, tribal upland societies remains ill-defined, unless we accept to consider it regardless of the wider cultural and historical resonances that may be imputed to it.

The author concludes the book in a most accomplished way by pointing out an underlying structural element of these oral accounts – set of exchanges and alliances – to avoid or to solve conflicts, certainly the most pervasive and recurrent theme contained in stories of Central Arunachal as already stressed by Ramirez (1989). As the author notes, the necessity to conclude (either political or matrimonial) alliance often arises from the differentiation process itself (pp. 111, 235).

The above remarks regarding the last chapter and the relevance of the author's definition of an extended Eastern Himalayan culture area do not obscure the basic value of the book. The general reader wishing to peruse a truly "representative" corpus of Apatani stories in an English translation and learn about the condition in which they are produced or reproduced will find S. Blackburn's book a major contribution. This rich and interesting account of an extraordinary culture should prove to be of particular interest to any student or scholar concerned with the relationship between anthropology and folklore studies.

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***Rulers on the Celestial Plain. Ecclesiastic and Secular Hegemony in Medieval Tibet. A Study of Tshal Gung-thang* by Per K. Sørensen and Guntram Hazod (in Collaboration with Tsering Gyalbo). Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2007. (Öst. Akd. d. Wiss., Philos.-hist. Klasse, Denkschriften, 361. Band) 2 Vols., ix, 347 pp.; vii and pp. 349-1011, incl. numerous illustrations (photos, maps, drawings) and 50 pp. facsimile editions of two Tibetan texts. ISBN 978-3-7001-3828-0.**

Reviewed by Rudolf Kaschewsky, Bonn

The work under review constitutes in a sense a continuation of two earlier books by the same authors which were published in a similar fashion: *Civilisations at the foot of Mount Sham-po* (2000), dealing with sources for the post-dynastic history of Tibet, and *Thundering Falcon* (2005), a detailed historical and philological study of Khra-'brug, probably the oldest temple of Tibet; see *EBHR* vol. 20/21 (2001): 239-241, and 29/30 (2006): 184-189. All

three publications are characterized by a very special methodology by combining textual analyses and historical research with anthropological fieldwork and geographical investigations.

The Tshal Gung-thang (Chin. Cai gongtang) complex is a well-known location, situated some seven kilometres south-east of the centre of Lhasa and intimately linked with the famous Zhang Bla-ma, alias Zhang Rin-po-che (A.D. 1123-1193) (see Ferrari: *Mk'yen Brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*, Rome 1958: pp. 105-106, note 105; Wylie: *The Geography of Tibet according to the 'Dzam-gling-rgyas-bshad*, Rome 1962: 84, 162). Administratively it belongs to Lhasa City (and not to sTag-rtse County, as Dorje: *Tibet Handbook*, 1996: 202 seems to suggest), and consists of the Tshal village and the Gung-thang-Temple (along with some other shrines), "a few kilometres further south-east" (p. 27). For short descriptions cf. also Chan: *Tibet Handbook*, Chico 1994: 198-199; Everding: *Tibet*, Cologne 1999: 188. The word *gung* (usually 'middle', Skt. *madhyama*) is understood by the authors as 'heaven', which has led them to give their work the title "Celestial Plain" (p. 7) (*thang* 'plain').

Part I of the book presents a richly annotated translation of the *Gung thang dkar chag*, a pilgrim's handbook similar to many other texts belonging to the *dkar chag* genre; it was written (or compiled) in 1782 by Ngag-dbang bstan-'dzin 'phrin-las rnam-rgyal (p. 13), the xylographic Tibetan text of which is presented in Part II. That *Gung thang dkar chag* has also been the subject of an exhaustive and very reliable study by Karl-Heinz Everding: *Der Gung thang dkar chag. Die Geschichte des tibetischen Herrschergeschlechts von Tshal Gung Thang und der Tshal pa Bka' brgyud pa-Schule*, Bonn 2000, second edition Halle 2005 (*Monumenta Tibetica Historica*, Abt. I, Bd. 5). This study was the first edition and translation of one of the most important texts shedding light on the history of the Tshal pa bKa' brgyud pa school of Tibetan Buddhism and the mighty Tshal principality. To the present reviewer it seems rather unusual that a few years after such a thorough study another research project is carried out on exactly the same subject. Nevertheless, Sørensen and Hazod declare that their work "forms the first major Tshal-pa study in which all the relevant sources (...) have been taken into account", because the previous work, namely Everding 2000, "did not include any in-depth study in his publication" (pp. 9, 10). This remark appears at least a bit too hasty, as the authors did not take into account Everding's second edition which, consequently, is not included in their bibliography.

In the "Table of Contents" some corrections are to be made: From section 4.1 onwards all page numbers should be increased by 1 (25 > 26 etc.); for "40" read "42", for "46" read "48". From chap. I of part I (p. 72) onwards the pagination is correct. As for part II, in the tables of contents the page number "281" should be read as "381". On p. vi, second part of

section 3.2 “Bum thang, Tshal[-thang] Bye-ma-can, [Ngan-lam] Tsha-ba-gru and rTa-mo-ra” should be renumbered 3.2.1, and the next section “3.2.1 Wandering Toponyms...” likewise renumbered 3.2.3. On p. vii, after “7. The gNyos Clan...”, it should be inserted: “7.1 The gNyos lineage”, page number “672”; for “688” read “689”.

The Introduction (pp. 7 to 65) presents a (mainly historical) survey of the Gung-thang area, discussing the “clan-supported monasticism” and the “proliferation of religious institutions”, which, as the authors rightly emphasize, “was not unlike the situation in the Europe of the Middle Age” (p. 10). One section is dedicated to the “charismatic ruler” Gung-thang Bla-ma Zhang. The virulent changes in hegemony and strategy of the relevant political and ecclesiastic forces are elaborated in a very detailed manner, which is especially perceptible in the list of different “phases” within the “lHa-sa valley and in the middle section of sKyid-shod” from the 1350s until the mid-1640s (p. 49). The structure of the introduction is in part intransparent: Between a section on “political hegemony and strategy” and another one on a “key district of Northern Central Tibet” we find surprisingly an outline of the main text (*Gung thang dkar chag*) and an overview of the “structure of the present book” (pp. 13-17). The historical sequence in section 5.1 “11th and 12th centuries”, in section 8. “13th and 14th centuries” and in section 9. “15th and 16th centuries”, is repeatedly interrupted by (in fact very valuable) insertions on certain personages, special geographical areas and monastic affiliations. This renders it difficult (at least for the non-specialist) to follow the main flow of events. So the reader appreciates the “Short Chronology of the History of Tshal Gung-thang” which is found on pages 775 and 776 of vol. II, where not everybody would expect it. Beside the historical outset, the authors pursue the fate of the Tshal Gung-thang area up to the present time, mentioning the connection of the famous Khri-byang rin-po-che, junior tutor of the XIVth Dalai Lama, with Gung-thang (p. 62). They also delve into the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, the activity of the 6th Gung-thang-tshang incarnate ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i dbang-phyug (1926–2000) and the (not much advanced) restoration of the damaged buildings, which stand today “as silent, almost forgotten witnesses to their past greatness” (p. 65).

What follows is a “detailed outline and translation of the Tibetan text”, i. e. the *Gung thang dkar chag*, consisting of five chapters: a short “introductory history of Buddhism in Tibet” (corresponding to fol. 1–6a of the Tibetan facsimile text, to be found on the pages following p. 772 of vol. II), the “biography of the Tshal-pa founder and his disciples and the split of the School” (fol. 6a–42a), a “description of the temple and its monastic complex” (fol. 42a–65b), “sacred objects of veneration” (fol. 65b–71b) and “virtuous benefits accruing from visiting the objects” (fol. 71b–76b). The

system of square brackets used throughout the translation seems not to be fully consistent: in some cases, passages within square brackets are quasi-commenting insertions, in other cases, literal translations are also given in square brackets. It would have been helpful, if only those passages would have been placed between square brackets, which are *not* found in the text itself (i. e. insertions made by the translator[s]).

When, in the notes, the authors refer to sources listed in the bibliography, the indication is in some cases ambiguous: For example, p. 110, end of note 162, and p. 207, note 538: “Tsong kha pa'i rnam thar” – which of the two *bTsong* [sic] *kha pa'i rnam thars* is meant? Except for literal quotation, one should not fluctuate between the spellings *Tsong-kha-pa* (not so listed in the Index) and *bTsong-kha-pa*. Similarly, p. 130, end of note 280: “Everding 2006” – which of the two works of Everding 2006 is meant? Or, p. 635: “Thang ston [recte: stong] rnam thar” – which of the three biographies mentioned on p. 848 is “TN”?

The last fifty pages of vol. I consist of “maps and photographs”, the aim of which is to illustrate the locations mentioned in the texts. This is a laudable attempt (that one also encounters in earlier publications of the authors). However, with one exception, the maps do *not* have a scale indication, and thus, the distances between certain locations are difficult to estimate. The maps are mostly based on satellite maps with inserted place names. There are two traditional drawings (p. 313) showing the location of Tshal and Gung-thang; one of these is a “detail from the *srin mo gan rkyal du nyal ba*”, i. e. the famous demoness covering the whole of Tibet, with temples/monasteries situated on different parts of her body. Very impressive are the photographs of the region, taken in the 1920s. Other illustrations are modern photographs of the relevant landscape (some of them from Google Earth), of buildings and of interior works of art.

Vol. II consists of six appendices of rather uneven importance with bearing to the main topic, viz. the history of Tshal Gung-thang. App. I (“Icons of lHa-sa Rulers”) expounds the interrelationship between religious power and thangka illustration, one important example being the “kesi tapestry” of Bla-ma Zhang. In connection with the (stylistic and historical) type of the relevant kesi masterpieces the authors provide a plausible explanation of the surprising affinity of “wholly Tibetan or Indo-Tibetan icons” to those of Tangut origin, touching, incidentally, also on the (hitherto seldom mentioned) close relationship between the Tangut people (Xiao) and Tibet, especially the Sa-skya (pp. 367–378). In depicting the odyssey of that thangka from its “initial haven” (Tshal Gung-thang) to several intermediate locations, among them even Beijing, and finally to the Potala palace (where it returned after having been stored in the new Tibet Museum) (pp. 378–380), the authors lucidly explain the

interconnection between power and its symbols in a seemingly marginal short note. There is (pp. 393-397) an impressive series of portraits of the Bla-ma Zhang, taken from very different sources, which illustrate the “ambiguous” faces of that Rin-po-che.

In what looks rather like a preface to the description of a “gNyo Patriarch Icon” we are informed “about the overwhelming importance” and influence of “being the authoritative holder of esoteric teachings” – a fact that is well-known from many biographies and religious chronicles, but has seldom been so clearly underlined as in the book under review: Possessing (and authoritatively teaching and explaining) the *Guhyasamāja tantra*, for example, is a guarantee of standing in highest esteem, also among powerful worldly figures (pp. 381-385).

App. II (more than 150 pages) deals with “geo-political schemes” and the “ideological battlefield” under the heading “Control over the lHa-sa Maṇḍala Zone”. In a very clear (but somehow hidden) note (p. 453, n. 93) the authors justify this expression by explaining the “mandalaic” structure of that most central part of Tibet, where the Ra-sa ‘phrul-snang as the “epicentric or cosmocentric navel” lies, and which in local sources is spelled *dkyil ’khor sdings* or the like. A connection with the well-known “Nepālmaṇḍala scheme” seems “not entirely unfounded” – and thus we would have a good example of “sacred geography” *in situ*. (The reader only wonders why this explanation is not presented right at the beginning of the appendix some 90 pages further above!) A table listing “the toponyms of the lHa-sa Maṇḍala Zone” is given in Guntram Hazod’s contribution on p. 576.

After the “break-down” of the old Tibetan kingdom from the middle of the 9th century onward, there were rather chaotic struggles for hegemony in Central Tibet, above all for the supremacy over “Tibet’s true *sanctum sanctorum*”, the Ra-sa ‘Phrul-snang (pp. 401ff.). (An interesting parallel or continuation of this struggle is found even in the claim of the dGe-lugs-pas, arguing that their “privileged, if not exclusive, access to, and maintenance of, the *sanctum*” is based on the fact that the prosperity of the region is owed to the blessed activity of Tsong-kha-pa [p. 497]). Here (pp. 405-408) the reader obtains, incidentally, valuable information about the famous disciple of Atiśa, rNgog Legs-pa’i shes-rab, whom the authors regard as “the father of Tibetan scholasticism” (p. 688, note 3), and – again incidentally – about the origin of “ancestral and spiritual genealogies” connected with king Srong-btsan sgam-po and the Avalokiteśvara Cult (pp. 463-471). The authors then turn to the concrete or “reality-based” impact of that “lHa-sa Maṇḍala Zone” (pp. 471-483), namely the question of how to protect the holy region against flood disasters (namely by “taming the Nāga” and by building embankments and dikes). Here one finds interesting details on bSod-nams rgya-mtsho of

'Bras-spungs, being styled "the master over the waters und architect of alliances" (pp. 526–529). Added is a short but impressive passage on the "drama behind the Dalai Lama Succession", discussing the background of the finding of the new 4th Dalai Lama (pp. 530–532) as a "politically motivated recognition" (p. 533).

App. III is entitled "The Tshal-pa Myriarchy" and starts with a concise survey of the "Mongol conquest" of Tibet, reducing the latter to a "vassal under the great Mongol empire". (On p. 196 the authors mention the institution of a "Mongolian Resident Commis[s]ioner" [Mong. *daruyāčī*], a position, which was, according to some sources, also held by Tsong-kha-pa's father! See, e. g., Kaschewsky: *Leben des Tsongkhapa*, 1971: 72, 245.) The close connection of the Tshal pa clergy with the Mongols is mentioned in the preceding appendix (p. 485f.). The Tshal pas were, quite cunningly, able to convince the Imperial court that their Gung-thang complex contained a private temple or a "local bastion" of Qubilai Qan, whom his mighty brother Möngke had placed "in charge of the territory of Tibet" (p. 555). The result was a massive support from Qubilai and his successors. App. III deal with the method of the Mongols to divide the subdued population "into administrative units of ten, hundred, thousand and ten-thousand" (p. 554), that gave rise to the formation of the (thirteen) "myriarchies" (*khri skor*), one of the most important of them being Tshal pa (pp. 557ff.).

App. IV (authored by Guntram Hazod alone) discusses the intimate interrelationship between history and the tradition of religious cults so typical for Tibet as a whole, and also inherent in quite particular situations. Thus, the question arises whether, according to Tradition, the great fire of Gung-thang (in the year 1546, see p. 627f.) was a result of the ongoing discrepancy between the Bla-ma Zhang and the divine protector of Tshal, Pe-har (p. 571f.); a statue *Gung-thang me-shor*, commemorating that fire disaster, is even kept in the Jo-khang temple of Lhasa (p. 631). There is also a description of the region of Grib (pp. 573–596) where the "hero" dPal-gyi rdo-rje "disappeared", after having killed the sinful king Glang-dar-ma (p. 579). This prompts the author to give an account of the annual three-day flower festival that articulates the "alliance between Grib and Tshal" (pp. 585–593, with a photographic documentation made in 2001). Immediately after this interlude, there follows a "brief description" of the Tshal Gung-thang District and the related toponyms (pp. 596–610). Here again the reader is puzzled why this fundamental information is not presented at the beginning of such a bulky work on Tshal Gung-thang!

When dealing with the "divine patrons" (pp. 615ff.), the author relates the cycle connected with the "white mare" (pp. 619ff.), the expression he has chosen as the heading of the appendix. The "white mare" is a protectress of the Tshal, and Hazod discusses the possibility that this



divine animal might have something to do with the old toponym of Tshal, namely rTa-mo-ra (*rta mo* ‘mare’) (pp. 622–624).

Appendix V consists of thirteen tables listing different “throne holders”. Table 1 and 2: Religious and secular rulers of Tshal-pa, starting with Śākya ye-shes (12th century), up to the 17th century, with their family- or “clan-affiliations” (p. 637f.); very impressive are the lists of the branches of the Tshal-pa-School, showing the three regions sMad-Tshal, Bar-Tshal and sTod-Tshal (p. 639) and the succession of their “lineages” (pp. 640–642). Table 3 lists the principals of the (three) colleges of Tshal Gung-thang. Tables 4 and 5 contain lists of teachers and disciples of Bla-ma Zhang with ample notes on each person, as well as illustrative portraits (pp. 647–658). Table 6 enumerates the religious settlements of the early period of the second propagation of Buddhism (*phyi dar*) in dBus, and Table 7 informs about the gNyo clan of Central Tibet and the “Abbatial succession” of the Gye-re lha-khang.

Tables 8 and 10–11 contain “Abbatial successions” of important monastic seats, including gSang-phu and sKyor-mo-lung, rGya-ma rin-chen-sgang, ‘Bri-gung and sTag-lung, whose abbots are listed up to the 20th century. Table 9 is devoted to the *bzhi-sde* institution of the lHa-sa Ra-mo-che, “one of the oldest and most celebrated in the inner lHa-sa area” (704); their succession (*gdan rabs*) is listed from the 12th to the 15th century. Table 12 contains a scheme of the genealogy of the Phag-mo grup-a ruling lords, the “effective regional rulers” up to the mid-17th century. This appendix concludes with the “short chronology” already mentioned above.

Appendix VI offers the Tibetan texts of the *Gung thang dkar chag* (a fairly legible facsimile of the block print, 76 fol.) and of *sMon lam rdo rje rnam thar* (manuscript, 69 fol.); added is a list of the titles of sMon-lam rdo-rje’s collected works.

The Bibliography (pp. 833–914) lists Tibetan primary sources (more than 400 titles), Tibetan secondary sources (books authored by contemporary Tibetan researchers) and European language sources, including a few works by Chinese and Japanese authors. In the biographies, the names are given at times in the genitive case, at times without: see, e. g., *Karma ... rdo rje’i rnam thar* vs. *Kun dga’ rdo rje rnam thar* (p. 833). The immense wealth of personal names and place names, including most of the place names occurring on the maps, is listed in a Tibetan index containing several thousand entries, as well as in (very short) Sanskrit, Chinese and Mongolian indices. The Chinese names are not given in Chinese characters.

Given the abundance of names, minor discrepancies in the alphabetical order are unavoidable. To mention only a few: *mKhyen* should be listed before *’Khon*, *Bla brang* before *Bla ma*, *sBa bzhed* after *’Brug*, *’Bum* and *’Bri*

after *dBang*, *Lo sems* after *Ri-dbang*, *Ngag-dbang dbang-mo* after *Ngag-dbang blo-bzang*, *Sang rdor*, *-'bum* and *-rin-pa* after *Sangs-rgyas*. In some cases, a certain name is listed twice or three times without specification, e. g., *Grag-pa rgyal-mtshan* (pp. 753, 119, 764) – one and the same person? Or *Jo-sras* (pp. 642, 690, 99) – one and the same person? The name *dNgos-grub rgya-mtsho* (p. 930) is borne by two persons: one is a *slob dpon*, the other one the 16th *Tshal pa dpon chen*. – Among the European language authors, names beginning with Y should be listed before Z.

The spelling of some Sanskrit names should be corrected: *Dharaśrī* > *Dharmaśrī*, *Kalācakra* > *Kālacakra*, *Tathagāta* > *Tathāgata*, *Dīpaṃkāra°* > *Dīpaṃkara°*, *Mahākāruāikā* > *Mahākāruṇika*, *Vimālagupta* > *Vimalagupta*, *Smṛtijñāna* > *Smṛtijñāna*. – The Mongolian *Sayin-eka* (pp. 150, 775 and 1011) should be spelled *Sayin-eke*.

The book under review is an exhaustive and very reliable encyclopaedia of the religious and political medieval history of Central Tibet. The question is whether that treasure house of extremely detailed information has been made accessible enough to the reader. Still, those who will work with this book – not only Tibetologists, but also historians, researchers interested in historical geography and the interdependence of religious and political trends and strategies – will doubtless obtain well-established and elaborate results. Those who might be fascinated by the wealth and depth of Tibetan Buddhism, its ideals of compassion and mystical experience will in this book become confronted with never-ending political struggles between clans and monasteries, saints and rulers, and even between human and divine powers – in short, with a wholesome adjustment against uncritical fancies, even if such was probably not the intention of the authors.