
Thakalis are one of the widely studied communities of Nepal. A recently done annotated bibliography (Vinding and Bhattachan 1985:1-23) shows that a number of Nepali as well as Western scholars have studied various aspects of the Thakali people and culture. The present book is yet another addition to the works. I think that perhaps it is the cooperative and friendly nature of the Thakali people, plus their interesting ways of life, in the practice of religion, rituals, and economic pursuits, which keeps attracting scholars to do field researches on them in different parts of Nepal.

The book by Heide is divided into five chapters. The first chapter discusses geographic, climatic, and demographic factors and thereby provides a context for the rest of the discussion. The second chapter on economy and society occupies about two thirds of the total book. It is a very inclusive chapter, having discussions on agriculture, the village layouts, trade, residence, Tamhang Thakalis, Mawtans, the Yhulkasummis, marriage and death. Except religion, most aspects of Thakali culture finds a place in this chapter. Only 18 pages are devoted to the last three chapters on religion, history, and conclusion. The short chapter on religions (pp. 71-74) tries to give some idea as to when and what kind of Buddhism entered the Thak region. Heide makes a statement that “... Buddhism has lost ground among the Thakalis” which would be a surprise for the Buddhist Thakalis. The chapter on history deals with the myths and legends, the documented history, and the rise of Subbas.

The book is interesting on two counts. First, it presents a discussion of the Tamhang, Mawtan, and Yhulkasummis of Thak Khola in a single work. Second, it makes us ask questions like: Do these three groups of people share a culture? The answers are not spelled out in the book, but the author summarizes some of the similarities and differences among the three groups as they exist today. We learn that in spite of the apparent similarity in the clan structure of the Tamhang and Mawtan people, there are some important differences. For instance, among the Mawtan, gumli thowa phobe (Juharchan) and gumli chyungpa phobe (Pannachan) “are the separate parts
of a formerly common clan" and therefore, intermarriages between these two clans cannot take place (p. 55).

The similarities in the cultural practices of the three groups are also interesting. Each of them has a festival which provides for the out-married women of the lineages to come back to visit their original lineages. As a rule, all three groups also practice and endorse community endogamy. However, for the Tamhang people, Heide remarks that parents do not try to prevent the exogamous marriage of their children, especially when the prospective spouse comes from a well-to-do family. She writes that "among Tamhang Thakalis, there are cases in which influential men or famous lamas from other ethnic groups have been accorded the status of a Tamhang Thakali by virtue of having been received into the group. They were able to marry Tamhang Thakali women, and the children of such union were regarded as Thakali" (p.65). The definition of Thakali given according to Thakali tradition, as reported by Vinding and Gauchan (1977) thus seems to be questioned by Heide's statement.

Heide discusses the inheritance pattern in brief (pp. 62-63), and also reports that cross-cousin marriages and brother-sister exchange marriages are in practice among all three groups (pp. 68-69). It would have been interesting to have some comparative discussion on the kinship system among the three populations. Heide correctly points out that the present three endogamous groups could at one time intermarry, which is suggested, for example, by the marriage of Sheli Raja's daughter from Marpha with the son of the king of Thini and by the marriage of Hansa Raja with Nhima Rani (see pp. 80-81). More intensive studies into the socio-cultural past of the Thakali populations may shed more light on the vexing question of whether the three groups of people share the same ethnic origin.

The book is an M.A. Thesis published by a popular publisher in Kathmandu. It would have been nice if Heide had included some analytical discussions. Methodologically, too, she could have done a better job. For someone who claims to have spent nine months among the Thakalis and who visited Nepal as recently as 1984, it would not have been hard to gather one's own statistics. Heide presents a number of charts and tables which are credited to other scholars who have worked on the Thakalis. Also, for a book published in 1988, it would have been nice if she had more recent sources of facts and figures than those of 1979.

While the statistics Heide provides on tourism — especially the number of tourists visiting Nepal for different years and also the number of trekking permits issued are interesting to note — a treatment of something like the impact or influence of tourism on the socio-economic life of the Thakalis in Thak Khola would have been interesting to read. It is, however, amusing to learn that some of the international
tourists “leave without having paid or make off with bed linen or lamps” (p. 31) from the hotels on the trekking routes.

Heide correctly comments on the disowning of the mother tongue by the Thakali people “once they got outside Thak Kholo” (p. 33). In my work on the Thakali community in Pokhara (Chhetri 1986), I also have pointed out that Thakali youths are gradually giving up learning or use of their mother tongue. Since language could be regarded as a carrier of culture of a people, the Thakali community may find it beneficial in the long run to save their language and thereby stop the process of the attenuation of their cultural distinctiveness. Some Thakali youths seem to be active in perpetuating their culture by providing forum for the publication of writings on various aspects of Thakali culture and history (e.g. the journal Khangalo published in Nepali).

The book is interesting to read because it presents a discussion of Tamhang, Mawtan, and Yhulkasummis in a single comparative work. The book can be regarded at least as a beginning towards examining the similarities and differences in the cultural traditions of these three groups of people who have been living not only in the same region but also in close proximity and in constant interactions with each other.

– Ram B. Chhetri
BOOK REVIEW


This book represents a full-scale effort by a German scholar to summarize in English his findings on micro-research into Himalayan trading patterns. The author chooses five important communities from the Nepal Himalayas, all of which have historically carried out trade within their localized corners of Nepal: The Byanshis of Darchula, the Thakalis of Thak Khola, the Manangbas of Manang, the Sherpas of Solukhumbu, and the Bhotiyas of Olangchung Gola. All of these communities had an historical involvement in the trans-Himalayan trade of salt, grain, and other goods between Nepal-Tibet and Nepal-India. The author notes that his objective is to “attempt to make a regionally comparative analysis of the indigenous development of long-distance trade practiced by different trading communities, living under conditions of similar availability of natural resources” (pp. 4-5). This is a crucial point, of course, since it raises the issue of precisely what can be said to count as “natural resources” in a given environment, suggesting that some attention be given to both cultural perceptions of what constitute resources and their cultural modes of exploitation. I will return to this later in the review. The primary data for the author’s own field research were collected during 1983 and from October 1985 through May 1986. There are four major chapters in the book—organized to provide theoretical insight, macro- and micro-contexts of trade, and a summary based on substantive results. Chapter three alone, containing the specific substantive material on the five societies, is 187 pages long.

In chapter one we find the theoretical overview driving this effort. This chapter incorporates references to the literature on classic economic theory and economic anthropology to develop a framework for analyzing small-scale long-distance trade. The author derives two sub-types of these small-scale forms of trade: that which is subsistence oriented and that which is profit oriented. Four major theoretical issues are raised in this discussion: (i) the impact of ecology on trade: (ii) the interrelationship between social stratification, local hierarchies, and trade; (iii) the Weberian question of
the relation between religious values and entrepreneurship; and (iv) the question of differential dynamics in land-locked trade entrepots and harbour principalities.

Chapter two reprises the general description of Nepal's history, geography, cultural diversity, and religious traditions. This is followed by a discussion of officially sanctioned Nepal-Tibet trade relationships in historical contexts and a description of how this relationship deteriorated through the years. Similarly, the chapter also includes material on the Nepal-India trade relationship in light of the East India company's desire to develop Kathmandu as a trade entrepot center and buffer zone between India and Tibet.

The core of the book is chapter three, which provides programmatic substantive accounts of trade practices within the five societies mentioned above. These five societies, the author maintains, live in quite similar ecological zones spanning the entire length of Nepal from east to west. Each society is dissected with descriptions of their: setting, micro-socioeconomic development before 1960, sources, ethnic history, religion, social life, trade and resource mobilization relationship with the state and macro socioeconomic development since 1960. In the case of the Manangba, however, the author uses the slightly different watershed year of 1965 to account for the special trade privileges they received from the late King Mahendra.

Finally, chapter four discusses the implications of these five case studies in the context of issues and theoretical questions raised in the first chapter.

This is an undoubtedly useful summarizing book on the sociology of the particular form of trade characterizing the Nepal Himalaya. The only other specifically focussed study we have available to us is Professor Fuerer Haimendorf's attempt, now in need of updating. Moreover, Professor Fuerer Haimendorf's book is limited by its lack of a comparative picture and presents a somewhat foggy account of trans-Himalayan trade itself. Mr. Schrader, on the other hand, very nicely highlights how the issues of ethnicity, religion, subsistence patterns, and environment play key causal roles in the development of trade within particular communities in the Nepal Himalaya. As he points out, many of these groups were encouraged to become exemplary traders, not only to overcome the harsh mountain eco-zones which provided them little-food, but also because of historical contingencies such as the lack of competition which helped them to monopolize trade in their respective areas. The Manangbas are a particularly important case study in the dynamics of becoming quite successful international traders when that market was opened to them and grafted onto an indigenous cultural development. Indeed, an entire book needs to be devoted to the transformation of this group.
In spite of its strengths in providing useful summaries, pulling together widely scattered documentation and organizing it for scholars of Himalayan society, this book has some unfortunate drawbacks that readers need to be wary of.

First, though the book claims to be a clear extension of Polanyi's thinking and a pulling together of material from the substantivist and formalist debate in economic anthropology, the data presented are at too abstract a level to pull this off successfully. Lacking is a sense of the individual and structural interplay in trade practices.

Second, and related to this issue, the author relies far too heavily on secondary data. Quite often too, the reader is uncertain if we are being presented with the author's primary data collection or with summaries of other work, except in the instance of the Manang bas. There is also the tendency for the author to take cases as isolates and to look rather abstractly at relationships within groups without considering the important issue of their comparative place within Nepali society—this becomes obvious, again, when there is no consideration of the fact of the Manangba, Thakali, and Byanshi being the most prosperous communities in Nepal. It is not simply subsistence motivating their rise. Once the prospects in trans-Himalayan trade began to dwindle, they diversified their trade towards other parts of Nepal—especially into the cities of Kathmandu, Pokhara, and Bhairahawa—to become even more prosperous. Surely, some attention to cultural motives and the drive for profit itself need to be considered beyond mere subsistence as a motivation for this pattern. Similarly, a proper contextualization of place within larger Nepali society would necessarily draw attention to the socio-political maneuvering exemplified by the Thakali and Byanshi instrumental shift toward Hindu values and merits—a clear case of social rather than economic maximization.

Third, a very serious deficit of the book is a lack of consideration of the real trading skills of communities in competition with others. This would lead to an evaluation of the future survival of these transformed trading strategies in the face of competition with the Newars and Marwaris who have traditionally monopolized trade in Kathmandu.

Finally, the book contains a number of factual errors and spelling mistakes that could have been avoided with a little more attention to sources. Some of these historical errors are disconcerting in that they cast doubt on the validity of the more specialized material. For example, the author refers to Jung Bahadur Thapa (pg. 50) when he can only have meant Jung Bahadur Rana. He mentions a trip by Jung Bahadur to England in 1815 when this trip actually occurred in 1850. Perhaps more serious is his reference to the capturing of the Kerong Pass by Ram shah in the 17th century (pg. 48) when it is common knowledge that the pass was not taken and held for a long period until the 1855 war with Tibet, long after the reign of Ram Shah of Gorkha. These are
questions of scholarship that responsible foreign researchers must take care about in their publications.

In summary, this book is a useful addition to the literature on Nepal. It provides valuable summaries specifically focussed on trade and its bibliography will allow others to proceed into more detailed comparative and culturally motivated studies of the particular communities. I have already mentioned my most important reservations. In addition, I believe that the text's readability would have been enhanced with a separate chapter on ethnography and trade and a comparative discussion of the business acumen of the trading communities within the total Nepali social context.

— Dilli R. Dahal.
BOOK REVIEW


This is a book that scholars of Nepal have been waiting to see. Carlo Valdetarro, who died shortly after the final editing of the book, was a long time friend of Nepal and an ardent collector of Nepalese coins. At the time of his retirement because of ill health, he had just achieved a long cherished goal, a posting to Kathmandu. While he struggled to regain his health, we who know him sympathized and agonized with him. He had collected information zealously for a magnum opus on Nepalese coins, and it seemed that this great work would never see the light of day. During his years of convalescence, he found a new friend and fellow enthusiast in Nicholas Rhodes of London and once again, usually with Rhodes as co-author, he began to publish articles on Nepalese coins in numismatic journals of international repute. Gabrisch added the final touch to the work of these two by completing the collection of photographs the book required and tracking down the references needed to complete the documentation. In the Finished product we have a monument to the three co-authors and a touching reminder to all of us of the support and information Carlo readily supplied each of us who went to him.

The Coinage of Nepal contains six chapters, seven appendices, a detailed bibliography, an index of collections and other sources cited, a general index, and fifty magnificent plates illustrating over 1400 Nepalese coins.

The chapter headings give a fair idea of the book. Chapter One deals with the Lichhavi Period. Chapter Two deals with the period from 750 to 1540 A.D., Chapter Three deals with the Malla Dynasty. Chapter Four deals with the Shah Dynasty, Chapter Five deals with the Coinage in the Nepalese Hills. And Chapter Six deals with various topics, including the use of Nepalese coins in Tibet, forgeries, both ancient and modern, and tokens, amulets and similar objects related to coins. Chapters three, four, and five contain catalogues of the coins of the Mallas, the Shah Dynasty and the Nepalese Hills.

The development of the thought line is logical and consistent throughout the book. The writing is crisp and the detail abundant. Each chapter provides a summary
description of the coins, the documentary evidence for the coins, the numismatic evidence for the coins, and a summary of the evidence for dating the coins.

Although this is a very scholarly work, explanations flow smoothly and entertainingly. Truly this is a story of the evolution of Nepalese coinage that students will find engrossing and scholars will find endlessly valuable. But The Coinage of Nepal is more than a story that entertains. Included are precise table of the silver content of the coins minted by the kings of Nepal, the amount of base metal included, the comparative value of coins, and fascinating information on the copper coins that circulated in the Hills,

Numismatists will be the first to appreciate The Coinage of Nepal, but historians will find it equally useful and challenging. The amount of historical detail contained in the book is impressive. Students of history will find any number of topics for further research and even dissertations. More advanced historians will find ample evidence to support or question theories that have been brought forward. And, of course, there is also the historical evidence contained in the steady devaluation of Nepalese coins during these periods to indicate the economic pressures on the ruling dynasties.

Two short quotations will illustrate the historical value of The Coinage of Nepal:

When Prithvi Narayan conquered the Kathmandu Valley he retained the basic currency system, but he devalued the debased coins issued by the Malla kings, and gradually withdrew them from circulation. Whereas, prior to the AD 1760s, the mohar had circulated at the rate of two mohars to the Indian rupee, in AD 1769 four “Chyasin Mohars” were equivalent to a rupee, halving their value to roughly the silver content, or even below. We do not know whether Prithvi Naryan devalued all the old coins, irrespective of their fineness, or whether he bought in the fine pieces, those struck before AD 1755 or after AD 1753, at a higher value. This withdrawal of old coins took time to implement, particularly as they continued to circulate in Tibet, and according to T. R. Vaidya, Malla coins were still circulating in the Valley in AD 1790, but Hamilton, who visited Kathmandu in AD 1809, was unable to find any coins of the Malla dynasty. (p. 120)

After his conquest of the Valley, Prithvi Naryan (AD 1768-75) sent few coins from Nepal to Tibet because of a dispute that developed between the two countries. Prithvi Naryan refused to accept the debased Malla coins as being equal in value to his own fine silver coins, while the Tibetans demanded that as they had exchanged them for fine silver bullion in good faith, the Nepalese should accept the coins at face value. By AD 1775 the lack of supply of new coins had changed the value of the old ones in Tibet.
Far from falling in value because of the alloy, they had actually increased in value. George Bogle, who was in Shigatse in the early part of AD 1775, noted that a *srang* of silver exchanged for as few as 6 of the Nepalese coins, compared with the traditional rate of 6 2/3, and that during his stay in Tibet the value of Nepalese coins was daily rising. In order to satisfy the demand an agreement was reached whereby Nepal supplied Tibet with about 1.5 million coins over the next two years, debased to 67 per cent silver, i.e. a similar standard to the debased coins of Jaya Prakash Mall. The coins sent to Tibet were of a special design with the petals separated on the reverse.

This influx of coins to Tibet satisfied demand such that by AD 1784 nine coins could be exchanged against one *srang* of silver, and hence the debased Nepalese coins now circulated a value close to their silver content. (p. 206)

The scholarship with which this book was prepared is of the highest standards. The authors present their evidence and arguments clearly. Yet at no time do they close the door to further investigation. Rather they invite it. In fact, Nicholas Rhodes, one of the authors, in an article published in *Kailash* (Vol. xv, 1989, Nos. 1-2) challenges historians to pursue the lines of historical investigation their research has suggested.

- Ludwig F. Stiller, S.J.