

NEPAL

ORTNER, SHERRY B. *High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism*. Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, History. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989. xxiii+245 pages. Illustrations, glossary, references, index. Cloth US\$40.50; ISBN 0-691-09439-X. Paper US\$15.00; ISBN 0-691-02843-5.

This work is the author's second major publication dealing with the Sherpa. In her first book, *Sherpas through Their Rituals* (1978), Ortner analyzed Sherpa rituals; in this work, she takes up the theme of the historical events of the founding of monasteries in Sherpa society. The Sherpas, who are a Tibetan ethnic group living in the Solu-Khumbu region of northeastern Nepal, are Tibetan Buddhists, but because they belong to the Nyingmapa Sect, religious leadership has long been controlled by noncelibate Lamas, and monasteries made up of celibate monks have not existed until relatively recently. The first Sherpa monastery would be established in 1916, in Tengboche in Khumbu, after which, in a comparatively short space of time, several monasteries and nunneries would spring up in various parts of Solu-Khumbu.

The aim of the author, however, is not merely to describe the course of events during this period diachronically, tracing the facts as they occurred. She attempts to depict this process as the consequence of the interaction between the habitual "practices" of the actors participating in it, and external forces. The main factors in the latter, the external forces, are the cultural-social structures of the Sherpas themselves, and the political-economic structures of the countries surrounding the Sherpas, namely Nepal and India. For the establishment of monasteries in Sherpa society, two indispensable factors were, certainly, the reinforcement of integration of the Sherpas into the state (Nepal) from the latter half of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, and the development of the Himalayan region (especially Darjeeling) under the British Raj. At the same time, however, that cannot be done without the main subjects, the actors, and the execution is more effective when done in accordance with the structure of the society the actors belong to and with its cultural schema.

Ortner describes in detail the life histories of the individuals who played leading roles in the founding of monasteries, and compares their "practices" with the external forces that had effects on them. According to Ortner, in Sherpa society there exist two principles that are mutually contradictory: that of equality, and that of hierarchy, and individuals try to acquire, through free competition (analogous with modern societies), the status of "Big People," but because they need the help of externally existing patrons (protectors) to do this, the efforts of each individual are directed to the acquisition of a patron. In other words, in order to solve the structural contradiction existing within Sherpa society, the actions carried out in conformity with a fixed cultural schema do lead to historical events, but the subjective wills of the actors at work therein are only revealed to be selections from among limited alternatives.

The most distinctive feature of the present work is probably the way individual actions, which have tended to be disregarded in previous ethnohistorical studies, and such things as the social structure and cultural schema in each society, which, while always treated, have tended to be understood, rather, as factors that opposed the historical process, have here been discussed integratively. This ambitious attempt has on the whole been quite successful, I feel. One reservation I have is that, although reference has been made to the fact that monasteries were established in south Tibet to the north slightly prior to their establishment in Sherpa society in Solu-Khumbu,

there is no discussion of the effect this may have had. (More generally, Tibetan factors as external forces on Sherpa society have been neglected.)

This reviewer sympathizes with the author's argument that, in the field of history, and especially in a field that more properly should be called micro-ethnohistory, greater weight should be put on "practice" that involves the concept of subjective selection from among limited alternatives. Still, the role of that "practice" in history, at least in those cases where, as in the examples in this work, it has for the most part been fruitful (i.e., the founding of monasteries actually happened), is easy to verify. The actions of people, however, do not always produce clear results. How one finds out and evaluates "fruitless practice" is, I believe, a future task for a theory that would integrate history and "practice."

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DRIEM, GEORGE VAN. *A Grammar of Limbu*. Mouton Grammar Library 4. Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1987. xxviii + 574 pages. Maps, appendices, references, plates. Cloth DM 148.—; ISBN 3-11-011282-5.

Dr. van Driem's grammar of the *Phedāppe* dialect of Limbu is based on nine months of fieldwork in the village of Tamphula, Tehrathum District, the Kosi zone of East Nepal in early 1984. For three months he used Nepali as the means of communication and then Limbu itself for the first half of 1985. This is in fact the second grammar of the language; the first one is WEIDERT and SUBBA's description of the *Pān(c)thare* dialect, a "standard" variety spoken to the east of *Phedāppe* Limbu across the Tamor Khola. Van Driem's is more readable and useful for those who have had no previous access to the language, since Weidert and Subba's grammatical analysis is more confined to essential morphology and morphosyntax without sample sentences.

Limbu is the Nepali name (self-designation: Yakthunḡa, and the language: Yakthunḡaḡn/Yakthunḡa paḡn) for an ethnic group with many clans (*thars*). Their language, with nearly 180,000 speakers in Nepal, is a Tibeto-Burman language, which was originally, and is still, mainly spoken in the hilly area of the Kosi and Mechi zones in eastern Nepal, called Limbuwan or Pallo ("farther") Kirant/Kirat. Nowadays, however, Limbu speakers are found in considerable numbers in the adjoining Indian provinces of Sikkim and West Bengal and farther east.

The language is usually subdivided into four major dialects: *Tāplejung* or *Tāmorkholā*; *Chatthare*; *Pān(c)thare*; and *Phedāppe*, though in a recent classification of G. HANSSON (1988) the *Chatthare* dialect is considered a different language from Limbu proper. There has been consensus on the genealogical subgrouping of Limbu with the languages of the Rais or Khambus, who number more than a hundred clans originally inhabiting the area between the Sun Kosi and the Arun Nadi, called Khambuan, or Majhi ("middle") and Wallo ("thither") Kirant, to the west of Limbuwan, but now spreading into and settling in Limbuwan and over the Indian border. As yet, however, there is no agreement on the classification of this subgroup, named Rai-Limbu or Kiranti, among the Tibeto-Burman subfamily of Sino-Tibetan, though a still widely accepted classification is that of SHAFER (1966), who puts it in the Bodic division of