

Book Department

A. Short Reviews

Siegfried Lienhard, Nevārīgītimañjarī, Religious and Secular Poetry of the Nevārs of the Kathmandu Valley; Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm Oriental Studies volume 10; Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm, 1974; 332 pages. Price not stated.

This book is an important contribution to our knowledge of Nevār culture. In the West, Nevār art and architecture have been much admired and are beginning to be studied seriously. Little attention, however, has been paid to the rich literature of the Nevārs. In Europe, Hans Jørgensen played a pioneer role in Nevār literary studies, a role which was much appreciated in Nepal and was not without influence there. It is good to see that Mr. Lienhard is continuing the task in such a competent manner.

The inadequate catalogues and the few manuscripts published so far underline the fact that our knowledge of early Nevār literature is still scant. Mediaeval Nevār literature in what is, following Jørgensen, known as the "classical" language, flourished from c. 1350 up to about 1850 A.D. when it suffered heavily from Rāṇa disapproval. In this "classical" period, the most widely used alphabet in Buddhist as well as Hindu works was Nepālākhala. Practically all of this mediaeval literature is founded in works in Sanskrit. Bhaktagrāma (Bhatgaon) specialised in Hindu studies; Lalitapaṭṭana (Patan) in Buddhist texts, whereas at Kāntipura (Kathmandu) Buddhist as well as Hindu works were interpreted. Faithful translations were executed of religious, medical and scientific works, and many bi-lingual renderings of metric texts (Sanskrit and Nevāri) were accomplished. Free paraphrases formed a separate and important literary genre: the Utkṛṣṭas or Uddhṛtas which Mr. L. renders as "adaptations". Other genres which were popular in this period were the Vaṃśāvalīs (chronicles), the Purāṇas and Māhātmyas, the Epics (Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa), popular tales (kathā, bākhāna), Buddhist sūtras and vyūhas, Dharmaśāstra and Silpaśāstra, didactic poems and stotras.

During the Rāṇa period, and especially during the office of Juddha Samser, Nevāri was frequently persecuted and between 1940 and 1946 many important authors were sent to prison. In recent years a certain Nevāri literary renaissance has taken place. The Nepālhbhāṣā-Pariṣad, in particular, has encouraged many publications of varying kinds. This modern literature has largely abandoned many of the traditional forms. Short stories, poems and essays are now popular. Indian influence, however, has remained strong. Lyrics tend to be markedly Sanskritized, and literary Hindi (Khaṛīboli) influences prose-writers. In writing and printing this modern Nevāri, Devanagari is used. In his Introduc-

tion (p. 1-31) Mr. L. rightly stresses the importance of stanzaic poetry which, in his view, constitutes "a link" between the two main periods of Nevār literature. "The composition of religious hymns, secular songs sung in leisure periods or when at work, love-poems, narrative verses and so forth, has always flourished alongside classical prose-writing based on Sanskrit sources and it continued to do so in later times, when modern Nevārī came into use. As in other literatures, this poetry, mainly popular in character, naturally adhered to ancient and traditional models; and a fact especially worthy of note is that even texts of a comparatively late date tend, linguistically, to maintain a classical or semi-classical language. Today, a considerable number of hymns and songs are still in vogue amongst temple-musicians and some private singing-groups at Kathmandu, but strenuous efforts would be necessary to keep up as long as possible a once-flourishing tradition which, I am sure, will soon sink into oblivion" (p. 16-17). In fact the author's purpose in presenting one hundred hymns, poems and ballads in this well-printed anthology was two-fold: 1) "as far as possible to offer a representative selection from a poetry soon to become extinct" and 2) "to put into the hands of the learned reader compositions in Nevārī which neither translate nor paraphrase Sanskrit but which, in essence, are primarily Nevār" (*ibid*).

He has grouped the corpus into four sections. Religious poetry (p. 37-52) 2) Songs of love and marriage (p. 55-83) 3) Epic poetry (p. 83-123) 4) Didactic and enigmatic verses (p. 123-125). A certain amount of over-lapping in subject-matter and function between the sections was inevitable. The poetic compositions edited in transliteration and translated into English in this volume cover the period roughly from 1560 A.D. to 1911 A.D. and even later. Most are anonymous although this is not always the case. Many are dated, in the colophons. When this is not so, the author has been able to work out approximate dates of composition on the basis of stylistic and linguistic evidence. In all four sections many varied aspects of Nevār life are touched upon. The author is to be complimented on having sought to attract attention to "the old ways, usages and folklore of the Nevārs" (p. 20)". "Particularly valuable for our knowledge of Nevār society are the accounts of engagements, marriage and married life with its frequent collisions between hnyathu, the husband's first wife, and lithu, his second, of divorce, funeral rites and satī. Further points of interest are the bahray cone, i.e. the confinement of girls before puberty, and the practice of releasing pigeons when a patient has survived smallpox. Last, but not least, there are such minutiae as the different ornaments worn by females (tāyo, mukhuli, maichu, etc.), various objects of sacrifice and the tools and instruments used on special occasions (dhuli, etc.)" (p. 27).

While space precludes my commenting here on all the types of song, I would like to emphasize Mr. L's remarks on the sihnājyā songs, which were somewhat neglected by my friend Gopal Singh Nepali. Mr. L. writes: "To the most genuine patterns of true

Nevār poetry belong the so-called sihnājyā songs which are working songs and, on account of their predominantly narrative nature, appear in most instances in the form of what a Western reader would call a ballad. The proper occasion for chanting these poems was the time of sihnājyā, when Nepalese farmers transplanted the tender shoots of rice in the rice-fields. Most compositions of this type are composed in dialogue form, and the stanzas were usually sung by men and women alternately. The girls were then adorned with the red sihnājyā mark on their forehead. Not infrequently the air of the song is sprightly and gay and follows a specific tune called sihnājyā-rāga. The stories, sometimes funny, sometimes sad, relate all sorts of events and practical experiences and, what is exceedingly valuable, abound in particulars of social and domestic life, of the various rites, customs and practices of the Nevārs. As the sihnājyā work provided both sexes with a most favourable opportunity of mingling quite freely, many songs describe first love, flirtation, or even adultery" (p. 22).

Much of the poetry is intensely personal. In the love-poetry typical Indian similes are employed: eye and lotus, face and moon, etc. But some seemingly indigenous Nevār imagery is also apparent when, for instance, a girl's heels are compared to egg-shells, her calves to small cucumbers, her cheeks to omelets, her vulva to an oil-lamp, etc (p. 153). There is little punning, little ambiguity: but riddles and enigmatic expressions are much in favour. It seems that certain acrostics techniques may have been borrowed fairly recently from Maithilī or similar models.

The poems published here have been culled from two main sources: anthologies already published locally by Nevār compilers, and oral tradition. All the songs were sung to the author by Śrī Lokaratna Upāsaka. Most of the songs and hymns are taken from Ṭhākurlāl Mānandhar's Pulamgu mye and Prema Bahādur Kasā's Matenāyā mye. Some poems are from Sugatadās Tulādhar's Malla Śāha kālayā me and ballads from Prema Bahādur Kasā's Bākham-mye. In one appendix (p. 240-242) are listed the tālas and rāgas as found in anthologies published in Nepal; in another (p. 243-248) two songs have been transposed tentatively into European musical notation. I was interested by the author's remark (p. 31, n. 9) that "with the exception of a few Indianized poems using Sanskrit metre, the rhythm of the Nevār songs is not determined by the number of syllables or syllabic instants contained in each verse-line, but is characterized by rather freely divided units of time". This can be compared and contrasted with what Mireille Helffer and I found for Nepālī sung verse. See "Remarques sur le vers Népalī chanté" in l'Homme, VIII, 3 and 4, Paris, 1968.

There is a good bibliography of both Nevāri and European works (p. 249-252) and the third part of the book (p. 255-332) contains a most useful glossary in which the author follows the order of the Hindi alphabet, abandoning the impractical order used by Jørgensen. Throughout the book, the notes to the texts and those which introduce each song are very helpful.

I regret that it was not deemed possible to print the English translations (p. 129-239) opposite the transliterated Nevār texts (p. 37-125). Mr. L. has aimed to provide faithful translations and "no time has been wasted in a vain endeavour to combine accuracy with beauty" (p. 31). In consequence some of his translations are somewhat wooden. For instance p. 156: "as long as there are no children the little (person) deserves to be slept with". There are few slips (p. 142: Burā Nīlakaṇṭha is said to be situated" in the eastern part of Kathmandu").

When will someone settle down to give us a solid etymological dictionary of Nepālbhāṣā and thereby help to fill one of the great gaps in our knowledge of Nepalese culture as a whole ?.

A.W. Macdonald

A. Patricia Caplan, Priests and Cobblers: A Study of social Change in a Hindu Village in Western Nepal, Chandler Publishing Company, 1972, 103 pp. with 8 tables, 6 illustrations, 2 maps and index.

The book is the first of its kind by a social anthropologist concerning Western Nepal although the field-area has been open to foreign anthropologists for the last two decades. The author is concerned mainly with the problems of social change taking place among two groups - the Brahmins, the top group in the Hindu hierarchy, and the Cobblers, the lowest in the social strata. A somewhat similar problem was dealt with by her husband L. Caplan in East Nepal (1970) but the confrontation observed there was not between untouchables and Brahmins but between Brahmins and the "Clean" caste group of the Limbus. The difference in the two works is that L. Caplan emphasized the economy of the tribe and their victimization by Brahmins whereas P. Caplan has given special importance to political groups and factions rather than to the total economic framework of the two groups.

In the past, the economy of various ethnic groups has been studied; but relatively few anthropologists have paid special attention to the political institutions of tribes. This is perhaps the consequence of the delicate nature of the subject. Again anthropologists have often envisaged political institutions in terms of structure rather than in terms of social change. In Nepal, this field of anthropology is almost unknown and those anthropologists who dealt with this subject have studied political institutions as an autonomous institution and have not studied factions as instruments of new social opportunity. P. Caplan adopts this perspective and has tried to analyse the politico-economic factors underlying social change in Duari village, selecting for study groups which are opposed in the Hindu - hierarchy. The author shows that, in the new panchayat democracy in Nepal, low-caste groups like cobblers can be of special interest to politicians although, in the strict Hindu hierarchy, they have no status at all. She has considered village politics in relation to national

politics and has also shown how the latter inspire changes in the former. First, let us examine briefly the contents of her book.

This work is the outcome of one year's field-work from January to December, 1969 in a village fictitiously named Duari. The author has also changed the names of the districts and the clan names of the groups. The village selected for study has a varied ethnic composition and numbers 1228 inhabitants, out of which 30.2% are Jaisi Bahuns, 14.7% Bahuns, 43.1% cobblers. The Magars who live just outside Duari village and who have played important roles in Duari village politics are not taken into consideration.

Five chapters are devoted to the village economy and politics. The introductory chapter introduces the theme of the study, the district, the village and its people. In chapters concerned with economy the author deals with the usual topics such as agriculture, grain deficit, etc. and there is nothing very new to attract the reader's attention. However, a letter written by a cobbler to his wife is well noted by P. Caplan (p. 42). If one reads this letter carefully, one can see clearly the real structure prevailing in Nepalese society. She also noted that economic independence and the mechanisms needed by the social units work towards the maintenance of the political system.

The changes which she observed in the space of two decades are bound to occur in developing countries, like Nepal. Likewise, the changes in terms of literacy, government, employment, shop-keeping, migration etc. are sure to happen even if the people themselves remain little changed. Society is bound to change according to the times. However, such changes have effected the cobblers the least, though there has been a slight change in their economy and in their political position. In the author's words, "members of each caste were able to exploit the new opportunities already predetermined by such factors as wealth and literacy" (p. 56).

In the "political" chapters she has shown that there are a series of groups which oppose one another. But these groups are to be found not in the group which are in the majority but in high-caste groups only. These opposed groups are linked within the society by various social relations but at the time of political crises they cut these ties. High-caste groups and government officers are co-related. So, the high-caste groups, which are linked together by kinship and employed in government offices, have clear political functions. At the end of the book, the author has considered the problem of the integration of the untouchables into the total system. In brief, political behaviour has been interpreted in the pattern of a descriptive ethnographic summary.

Some points concerning the structure of the groups remain obscure and this is particularly so when P. Caplan tries to equate Brahmins with Jaisi Brahmins. Brahmins in this study are a

negligible quantity. Jaisi Brahmins can never become priests and, among the Brahmins too, there are only a few who perform priestly services. So the ambiguity of a term like 'priest' in the title of the book is rather unsatisfactory. The structural localisation of the Jogis is also vaguely expressed in the monograph. If they do not wear sacred threads how are they to be placed in high caste groups? (p. 4). It cannot be claimed that they are the descendents of high-caste men and women. As our society accepts them, it is better to class them in the category of "clean" caste groups like Magar, Gurung, Newar and others. So the structures underlying situations of conflict within the total system which is concerned with maintaining social unity are presented in vague terms. It is always possible in a simple society and in Nepali village politics that political roles and norms are directly concerned with the safeguard of sectional interests. The basis of political association through kinship is well observed. It is also a known fact that by one or an other means, powers and privileges increase within groups or within the society as a whole when factions and cliques are most common. Here one sees that notions of prestige have been linked in terms of wealth and this clearly denotes political functions. The author interprets the relationship issues of local village to the higher country-level politics but little attention has been paid to the implications of religious tensions though there are two village temples clearly shown in the map (p. 9). Sometimes authority, structure and personality factors, and decisions concerning religious activities may provoke reactionary feelings within social groups P. Caplan had already underlined the reactionary feelings of the Brahmins when the 'Bhasa School' (p. 61) was opened.

I think that she has misunderstood the clan structure of the untouchables. They definitely do have clans which are exogamous and which play a dominant role in terms of marriage alliance. Most of their marriages are arranged and follow in most cases the typical Brahminical pattern with regard to the marriage ceremony.

A few statements like, "acute pressure on the land is the incidence of the high birth rate" (p. 24) require further clarification. It seems sometimes that P. Caplan has not observed the migration which is taking place throughout Nepal. "Opening shop is the perfect occupation of a politician" (p. 54) is a statement applicable only to three Ramas out of the 1228 people studied and "There is a wide disparity in grain incomes" (p. 29) is a statement which is true not only of one Duari village but of the whole of Nepal and our readers know this well.

In reality, the author has not shown clearly how, in the past, the cobblers were wholly dependent upon the Brahmins and how now this relationship has been broken. Throughout the monograph, it is nowhere shown that the cobblers have many important links with the Brahmins in an economic context, apart from the ploughman-relation service.

So, this book is a case study about the nature of conflicting relations; but how integrity is maintained within the traditional institutions is nowhere shown. It is well known that local factions and cliques, as she has observed them, are mainly the consequence of the newly-introduced voting system and a reaction to the Government's policies on village development.

D.R. Dahal

Excavations at Tilsurakot and Kodan and Explorations in the Nepalese Tarai, by Debala Mitra: Published by the Department of Archaeology H.M.G. Nepal, 1972: p., XIII, 262, index; 48 figures; 6 plans and maps, 158 half-tone plates; price, Rs. 30.00.

Very few sites in Nepal have earned the distinction of being excavated for archaeological research. The first such site to be dug in recent times is Tilaurakot, in the district of Kapilavastu, in the Lumbini zone. Excavations were conducted here in 1962 by the Department of Archaeology, H.M.G. in collaboration with the Archaeological Survey of India. This work has been followed by subsequent excavations at the site by the Department over many seasons - which gives it the double distinction of being an extensively dug site in Nepal. Its importance to Nepal and to the world as a whole can hardly be missed. Tilaurakot represents the site of ancient Kapilavastu, the capital of the Kingdom of Suddhodana, father of Gautam Buddha. The significance of the first discovery of the inscribed pillars at Nigalihawa and Lumbini at the close of the last century, establishing respectively the birth-places of Kanakamuni Buddha and Sākyamuni Buddha within the Nepalese borders has been great, these attracting the attention of Indologists and leading them to explore the rich-potentiality of archaeological research in this part of Nepal, in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The decision to commence work at Tilaurakot made by the Department of Archaeology H.M.G. should be praised.

The present report describes the results of the first excavations carried out at the site in 1962. It consists of three main parts as is evident from its title. The style of description and the arrangement of material is strictly in conformity with the standards laid down for report-writing of excavations in India. One hundred and forty-seven pages are devoted to describing the excavations at Tilaurakot. Beside the description of the lay-out of the site, the cutting of a trench and the sequence of deposits, an indepth study of antiquities has been made, accompanied by line-drawn and photographic illustrations. The site is situated on the Banganga, a rain-fed stream. It was covered with a thick forest which needed clearing before work could be started in it. A single trench 32 by 6m. was laid across the fortification in the northern part of the mound. This revealed a total of three phases. Period I represented the pre-fortification stage characterized by a few sherds of grey wares of excellent fabric, a preponderance of NBP ware, a limited percentage of black-and-red ware, and red ware. Period II marks the phase of building of the mud-rampart and

possibly the later addition of the brick-fortification-wall to it. Its pottery is not at variance with that of Period I, mainly because it is mixed up with the former as the filling material for the rampart was obtained by digging the habitational layers of Period I. As a consequence of this digging, a moat formed around the rampart. Period III marks the decay of the fortification and the end of the settlement at Kapilavastu. When Fa-hien visited it, in the fourth century A.D., he found the city 'like a great desert', and later on, in the seventh century A.D., Hiuen-Tsang wrote: 'the capital is overthrown and in ruins'.

The author has ably presented her material. But surprisingly she shows an ambivalence in dating the upper limit of the site. To illustrate this I will quote several of her sentences. 'In terms of pottery (p. 16 ff.).. it may be said that phase A of Period I was coeval with the occurrence, at the site, of the Northern Black polished ware (the absence of the ware in the fugitive layer 8 B need not be emphasized in view of the limited area under excavation)...But with all reservation necessitated by the extent of the trench it may be expedient to concede that the settlement of the town may go back to about the sixth century B.C., if not earlier (p. 15)...But the pottery of Period I here is not earlier than the third-second century B.C. which is the date of phase A of period I (p. 16)'. In an almost similar ceramic sequence encountered in a small trial trench at Banjarahi near Lumbini, Dr. S.B. Deo has no hesitation in fixing the upper limit of the earliest deposits there to the 7th-6th century B.C. (See Deo, S.B., Archaeological excavations in the Nepal Terai: 1964, Department of Archaeology, H.M.G., Kathmandu, 1968). It would have been extremely helpful if one could use the material dug up in the subsequent excavations of Tilaurakot to shed further light on the question of dating the upper limit of the earliest deposits there, but this material alas was destroyed in the Singhadurbar fire. One rather suspects that when the Tilaurakot report was finally made out in 1972, with great delay, Indian archaeologists had perhaps started talking about Piprahawa across the border in India as being the possible site of ancient Kapilavastu instead of Tilaurakot; and Mrs. Mitra's ambivalence in dating might reflect this changed stand. By dating Tilaurakot's earliest deposits to the 3rd century B.C. it is impossible to associate it with the times of the Buddha.

Most antiquities dug from the site, including the pottery, are compared to similar objects found from Period III and IV of Hastinapur. Similarity between the objects of these two sites may be due to the existence of a comprehensible report of Hastinapur for comparison, and a corresponding lack of similar reports on other excavated sites in north India. Bead-making at Tilaurakot has been recognised as a local and a highly developed industry. However, the range of their variety is the same as in other Indian sites. Excavations in the four mounds at Kodan revealed a group of two medieval temples, a well, and a brick platform in three phases of construction. The temples, dedicated to Siva,

were made of highly ornamental bricks. Their date, according to the author, seems to fall between the 9th and the 11th centuries A.D. The period of Kodan temple has been called a prosperous period of temple-building in this area, as is gathered from similar ornamental bricks lying in seven other sites noticed during the exploration of the area by D. Mitra. The present temple of Rumindei in Lumbini with the mutilated sculpture depicting the scene of the nativity belongs to this period.

The part dealing with the exploration describes the surface finds from thirty-six sites, of which twenty-one are new and fifteen revisited by author since P.C. Mukherjee reported them in the last century. The finds consist of old structures of bricks, pillars, sculptures, terracotta figurines and objects, coins etc. It is possible to see the influence of the Sunga, Kushana, and, in a single site (Lumbini), the influence of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods of India in this area on examining the diverse surface finds. This vindicates the richness of the area and should stimulate further research.

The appendix on pottery-making at Lausdiya, a small hamlet close to Tilaurakot, fails to serve any significant purpose for understanding the art of pottery-making acquired from the excavations. The most impressive part of the book is its detailed photographic documentation at the end running to one hundred and fifty-seven plates with most showing two illustrations each. It is undoubtedly an invaluable report which students and teachers of Nepalese archaeology will have frequent need to refer to. It is a welcome addition to the scarce literature on the field archaeology of Nepal and, like P.C. Mukherjee's report, will prove basic for doing further work in the area. The importance of the report will therefore enhance in future with the increase in research work in that area as it will be needed for checking, comparison and revision.

One more observation in conclusion. Many years were taken in the production of this report (compare the year of excavations with the date of writing the foreward by the Director of Archaeology, Nepal (1969) and the date when the book finally came out: 1972); but it is the only report on Tilaurakot excavations made available to the public so far and is therefore most welcome. Although the Department of Archaeology may have faced many snags in coordinating the work of report-writing between itself and the Archaeological Survey of India, which caused this enormous delay, this alone cannot explain why reports on subsequent excavations at Tilaurakot exclusively conducted by it have not been published. It is now reported that all the excavated material, including the drawings and photographs taken at the site at the time of the excavations, has been irrevocably lost in the Singhadurbar fire, and this points to the risk delay can cause in such work.

P.R. Sharma

B. Annotated Bibliography

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