

Book Review

The Mollas of Mustang: Historical, Religious and Oratorical Traditions of the Nepalese-Tibetan Borderland, 1983. David P. Jackson. 248 pages. Library of Tibetan Works & Archives. Dharmasala. Price not given.

David P. Jackson has been engaged in the study of the history of Mustang (also called Lo, or Blo in Tibetan), a trans-Himalayan tract in the upper basin of the Kaligandaki river in north-central Nepal, for about a decade now. His two articles, on 'The Early History of Lo (Mustang) and Ngari' in *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 39-56, 1976-77, and on 'Notes on the History of Se-rib and Nearby Places in the upper Kaligandaki' in *Kailash*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 195-228, 1978, affirm this and give us the first searching accounts of Mustang's historical past which can be rendered only by an accredited Tibetologist like him. He had to compile and collate his material from diverse and scattered sources in Tibetan the more important of which have been incorporated in the present work.

In Jackson's words, 'molla', in Tibetan, signified a 'speech.' Rendering of 'speeches', according to him, was an acknowledged part of the Tibetan Buddhist ritual on special occasions, the purpose of which had probably been to form a bond of beneficial relationship between the monks and their more wealthy lay patrons. Praises made by monks in such 'speeches' to their patrons would bring munificent endowments to the monasteries from the latter. Despite the 'speeches' being a part of the wider Tibetan religious and cultural traditions, the complete texts of the 'Mollas' as such, however, have been found only from Mustang and nowhere else. Jackson gives the following etymology to 'Molla': molla < mol ba < 'bel gnam or alternately, mol gnam or mol tshig. The recitation of the Molla to a religious assembly consisting of the King, his aristocracy and the monks was a traditional practice in Mustang. The tradition, however, may have discontinued towards the close of the 19th century. Michael Peissel, a French author, who briefly visited Mustang in the early sixties, witnessed something similar to a 'speech' recitation before an assembly of the village in Ghiling in 1964. A team of scholars at CNAS carried out a spell of field-work in Mustang in the summer of 1983 of which I was also a member. We were then told by local informants that the task of reciting the Molla had been the responsibility of the abbot of the Tsarang monastery. This could be true in view of the fact that the seat of the abbot in Tsarang Gomba was normally reserved for a brother of the king of Mustang--a practice which seems to have come into vogue from the time of the first Tsarang abbot, Glo-bo-mkhan chen Bsod-nams-lhums-grub (1456-1532), brother of King Bkra-shis-mgon.

It is quite natural, therefore, that mollas mention and glorify kings and their acts of charity towards the religion, i.e., Buddhism. Soon enough, the Mollas took the form of a genealogical account of the royal line. Mollas in their more complete and formalised forms also came to incorporate a few features from Tibetan history and myth-writing: sections of it describe cosmology and geography as derived from Buddhist canonical sources. In the genealogical rendering, too, the Tibetan tradition is unmistakable, because a Molla gives in it the origins and descent of the ancient Tibetan monarchs.

It was not Jackson who made the first discovery of the Molla texts. It was Peissel who came across a couple of them in the course of his stay in Mustang. He, too, was the first to realise the historical potential of the Mollas and make a feeble attempt at Mustang's history on their basis. However, a scholarly justice to the Mollas has been done only by Jackson. In editing them, his interest has naturally led him beyond Mustang's history and toward the understanding of the wider Tibetan literary and cultural setting. It is a slim book of 248 pages including a bibliography and indexes. There are eleven chapters in the book each neatly and concisely written and bolstered with copious footnotes. In the first two chapters are discussed the physical setting and the previous research done in Mustang. Chapter 3 discusses the various texts of the Mollas. These are five in all, and a kindred text, called the Gelung Speech. Chapter Four analyses the structure and content of the Mollas. The following three chapters show the Mollas to be linked to the Tibetan historical, religious and oratorical traditions, the focus underlined in the subtitle of the book. The remaining four chapters focus on the historical materials incorporated in the Mollas, including an edited rendering of the Tsarang Molla in Roman. An appendix also reproduces in Tibetan the Molla text from Namgyal. On their own the Mollas would be able to provide a less than reliable history: some of these are contradictory even with regard to the line of succession of the kings. But Jackson has appraised the Mollas critically, checking and rechecking them against other available sources (published or unpublished)--among which the gdung rabs of the Lo kings is particularly important.

A greater justice to the review of Jackson's book can only be possible from a qualified Tibetologist. My own review here has been prompted by a desire to record an appreciation of his work, because it has been invaluable for consultation to the CNAS team in a dissertation form prior to its present publication. I merely wish to add a couple of supplementary informations that came to be known to us during our field work in Mustang. We, too, came in possession of a copy of the Molla (from a resident of Gharphuk) which on examination proved to be identical to Jackson's Tsarang Molla (No. 1) except in a few minor respects. One variation occurs on folio 11 which inserts this additional passage. It reads: "the religious king A-mgon-bzan-po established the four large monasteries of assemblage to the four cardinal points of mkha'-spyod-steng, namely Brag-dkar-theg-chen-glin to the south, Phu-phag--bsam-gtan-glin to the north, Ri-cin-sdoms-gsum-glin to the east, and Byamps-pa-bcad-sgrub-glin to the west." Another variation comes at the end in the

name of the last king mentioned. This, according to the Gharphuk Molla, is dNos-grub-spen-pa. He probably is the same person as dNos-grub-dpal-'bar mentioned in some of the other documents we found and from which the reign of this king seems to fall between 1871-1893. The last king in Jackson's table is mentioned as A-ham-kun-dga' -nor-bu (c. 1837-1855). However, between this king and dNos-grub-dpal-'bar, there was one more king who ruled. He is 'Jam-dbyans-dban-'dus--for whom we have got two dates, 1859 and 1861. It is surprising that this king is left out in the Gharphuk Molla.

For the genealogy of kings before Kun-dga'-nor-bu, Jackson's conclusions, I think, are unassailable and his approximation of time for them also seems generally reliable. We found one document in course of our research which seems to be of considerable importance in fixing the chronology of some key events in Mustang's history. It is a dkar-chag of 'Byamps-pa monastery. It was written after the renovation of the monastery at the time of King Bsam-grub-dpal-'bar (10 b in Jackson's genealogy of the Molla) in the water and rabbit year which should fall in the year 1663. Now this year has been used like a datum in the dkar-chag for computing other past events of Mustang which is quite revealing. For example, the birth of A-me-dpal, the first king to establish an independent kingdom in Mustang, is said to have occurred 276 years before the renovation of the monastery. Similarly, the birth of King Amgon-bzan-po is given as occurring 244 years before 1663, establishment of the capital at Lo happening 223 years before this, and the first construction of the 'Byamps-pa monastery having been carried out 216 years before it. There are also other dates calculated in this manner in the document and a separate article on this dkar-chag is being written by Mr. J.M. Gurung, a member of the Mustang research team, in an issue of the Contributions to appear later.

Mustang stands unique in some respects from the other Himalayan regions of Nepal. First, no other region can probably boast of the same antiquity as well as continuity in its history which Jackson's researches have more than amply proven. This fact did not fail to impress even the rulers of Nepal in Kathmandu who decided to confer the title of rājā (local king) on the Mustang ruler--a practice which still continues. Second, Mustang's poverty and relative backwardness in comparison to some of the other Himalayan regions of Nepal is obvious. Jackson has not dwelt long on this problem except in making a cursory note of it (p. 4). He quotes a passage from Gene Smith who also hints at this problem (p. 18). Gene Smith comes up with some reasons for explaining it but, I believe, he has succeeded in answering the problem only in part. He and Jackson pinpoint three main reasons to it. The first is Mustang's internecine war with its neighbours; the second, the redirection of the lucrative Tibetan Trade route through some other passes; and third, the passing of the trade initiative into the hands of the Thakalis during the 19th century. While all these reasons played their respective parts, it still does not answer why Mustang should continue to be so backward even after its incorporation into Nepal in 1788. A greater share of the blame for this continuing situation, as also for

the historical past, in my opinion, should go to the Mustangi Raja, who exercises his authority among his subjects even now in the manner of a feudal lord of mediaeval times. In his exploitative presence, his people have little freedom and opportunity to reap advantage through individual skill and enterprise they may wish to undertake. The endorsement of the Mustangi Raja's authority by HMG of Nepal leaves the common people there little option to seek redress outside. Jackson, surprisingly, has failed to take note of this fact in his book.

A greater merit of Jackson's work lies in the fact that he could write such an authentic account of Mustang without ever setting foot on its soil. The territory of Mustang above Kagbeni has for quite some time been a restricted zone for foreigners. Notwithstanding this, Jackson has been extremely successful in his endeavour even with the use of his 'remote-sensing' method, as it were. We can well imagine what the quality of this book would have been had he had a chance to visit the heartland of Mustang.

- Prayag Raj Sharma

Book Review

The Newari Language: A Working Outline (Monumenta Serindica No. 14). 1983. Kamal P. Malla. 104 pages + Bibliography. Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Tokyo. Price not given.

Foreign scholars who have read and used Jørgensen's pioneer work on A Grammar of the Classical Newari (1941) may have often wondered why this is the only authoritative grammar that is available in the language. While classical Newari is obviously an essential tool in the study of the development of the Himalayan languages, there is now an increasing need for a comprehensive and useable reference grammar of contemporary Newari. The native writers and scholars who have attempted various grammatical descriptions of the language show widely divergent approaches and these are neither comprehensible nor accessible to non-native scholars working in Newari linguistics and the socio-cultural systems of its speakers. Malla's present Outline of Newari serves in many ways to fill this gap. He has chosen to call it a 'Working Outline' and a step in compiling a reference grammar of the Newari language. The approach to the preparation of this work is made explicit in the Preface where Malla states that "its main purpose is to get the facts of the language straight" and goes on to add that "it is by no means a complete or final statement". While no grammar can claim to be complete or final, Malla's Working Outline represents a concise and meticulously prepared State-of-the-art report on our present knowledge of the Newari phonology, morphology and syntax.

The book consists of six chapters on Phonology, Morphology, Inflection, Morphophonology, Morphosyntax and Syntax. The inclusion of the chapter on Phonology is significant in that Malla recognizes the sound system of the language as an integral component of a total grammar. The T-G bias that this hints at however is not ruled out by the traditional phonemic approach of listing and classification that constitutes the chapter. The section on syllable structure, for example, can be misleading without co-relative reference to the morpheme structure of words from which various syllable shapes have been derived. The task of the phonology is to predict syllable structure and syllable boundaries from the morphological information. It is therefore necessary to say how syllable relates to morpheme within a grammar.

The second chapter on Morphology analyzes a variety of compounding, affixation and reduplication in root words and provides a revealing picture of the productive processes in word morphology of both nominals and verbs. It is not clear why a separate chapter is devoted to inflections since these are normally considered to be morphophonemic processes and could very well have been incorporated under that chapter. It gives one the impression that the alternations involved in inflections have quite

distinct morphological conditions. The approach to the Morphophonology of Newari verbs, for example, is a logical continuation of Verb inflection in that they both deal with inflections of the five classes of verbs. The analyses of finite and non-finite verb forms perhaps need not be assigned to separate chapters. Similarly, Noun inflection and the Morphophonology of nouns cover basically the same ground. It is to be noted that the historical development of Newari nouns sketched in the latter chapter (44-46) applies to noun morphology in general. In any case, the segmentation problems relating to the morphological and syllable structure of Newari words need to be quite explicit. The inconsistencies in the segmentation of morpheme breaks may lead the reader to some confusion: words such as manu:ta 'men', kijāpi: 'brothers', jimisā: 'by us' etc (31-32) do require morpheme breaks, while the lost final syllables of words such as ku-thi 'spade', saphu-li 'book', bha-ti 'cat', etc. (45) belong properly to the stem nouns and not represented as separate morphemes (assuming, of course, that the hyphen is the convention adopted to indicate morpheme boundaries). This problem is partially remedied in the sections on the morphophonology of verbs (43-44), but the sections on nouns and stem alternation in morphological cases (44-46) may have left the reader utterly confused as to the morphemic status of words, i.e. what constitutes a morpheme and what does not. If dhola-e 'on the line' is correctly segmented, dhola 'by/from the line' is not. It is difficult to defend such irregular representations since morpheme boundaries do not coincide with syllable boundaries in every instance in Newari. This problem applies especially to oblique case forms where one may well, have to posit innumerable locative/ablative suffixes if the morphological composition of the old stem nouns is not recognized. Needless to say, every writer has his own transcriptional preferences, but we do need to state the values of the symbols used and whether the transcription is phonetic, phonemic, orthographic or some combination of these. Morphosyntax is happily free of ambiguities that detract from correct interpretation of the given data. This chapter is basically classificatory in approach and covers a wide range of morpho-syntactic facts in nominals, verbs and particles. The treatment of these individual items of grammar is neither detailed nor exhaustive, but gives one the impression of conciseness and neatness.

The final chapter on Syntax forms the essential core of the book. It is, as it were, the syntactic component of a Newari grammar containing within it a complex but highly ordered system of rules that generate sequences of words at the phrase level, the clause level and the sentence level. While Morphosyntax focuses on grammatical categories and functions, Syntax is by far an exhaustive exposition of the mechanics of Newari sentence structures. The survey of phrase types, clause types and sentence transformations (causativization, nominalization, eventivization, stativization, etc) provides a clear insight into the syntactic rules and constraints that are implicit in contemporary Newari. All such rules are subject to fairly strict constraints on their application. The rules of sentence embedding in Newari, for instance, require specific embedding markers depending on the nature of the embedded clause, and word order at the phrase and clause levels is peculiar to a SOV language where nominal

and verbal modifiers have restricted movements within any sequence to indicate semantic focus. The section on causativization brings out the interesting point that at one stage Newari may have been a language with prefixes and the Proto TB sibilant *s, as posited by several TB linguists, is evident in what has been called the 'suppletive causatives' that have survived in present-day Newari (97-99). The book concludes with a preliminary note on Ergativity and the notion of 'subject' in Newari. Following Kölver (1976) and Hale and Watters (1973), Malla rightly concludes that Newari is partially ergative and that it is an 'Actor - Undergoer' rather than a 'Subject - Object' language.

The book will be of immense benefit to linguists as well as teachers. It could in this sense be used as a reference manual for linguistic analysis and also serve as course materials for discussion of practical problems in the classroom. A noteworthy aspect of the book is the importance the writer has given to linguistic argumentation and judgements of grammaticality. Such judgements are always supported by data that are well selected, organized and analysed. Language data for its own sake however are of limited interest, but Malla has handled them judiciously and with perspective. The descriptive statements made in the book characterize the rules of the language-rules that are made explicit by the intuition of the writer as a native speaker. In the final analysis, this fairly short Outline has focussed with remarkable clarity the syntactic and semantic properties of modern Newari sentences and provided a solid base for a more comprehensive reference grammar of the language. One can only hope that the process of compiling and updating the grammar of Newari will not stop with this book.

- Tej R. Kansakar