

*The Anthropology of Development in Nepal: A Review Article
on Foreign Aid Projects in the Kathmandu Valley*

Todd T. Lewis¹
Columbia University

Bhaktapur: A Town Changing by Ane Haaland (Kathmandu: Bhaktapur Development Project, 1982), 130 pages, photographs.

Kirtipur, A Newar Community in Nepal: Development in Debate by E.P. Davies, R.W. Davis, W.R. Flinn, et al. (Bristol, 1980), 119 pages.

Expatriate Assisted Community Development as a Possibility in Kirtipur by the Kirtipur Programme (Kathmandu, 1982), 87 pages, appendices, in mimeograph.

International development in third world countries represents one of the most important forces of modern change across the globe. Motivated both by humanitarian and political considerations, vast resources are being marshalled to eliminate disease, poverty, and ignorance, especially in the world's poor hinterlands. The Kingdom of Nepal has received foreign aid for over thirty years, a sum which amounted to over \$ 82 million in fiscal 1978-79 alone (National Planning Commission 1982). Measuring the results by standards such as population control, literacy, or industrial production reveals that progress in most areas has been very meagre (Johnson 1983).

There are, of course, many interlocking reasons for this: the legacy of Rana era underdevelopment, limitations on a land-locked country, constraints imposed by the mountain terrain, and the socio-cultural complexity of the country. There are also other factors, and not the least of these is the poor performance of international development projects. Despite large expenditures and sincere intentions, the legacy of planned development endeavor since 1951 has often been marginal.

In this article, my goal is to shed light on why this has been so by articulating an anthropological viewpoint of the development process. I seek to demonstrate the importance of addressing the full panoply of human factors that condition every foreign aid endeavor in Nepal. To this end, I examine a number of recent publications on development projects done in Newar communities in the Kathmandu Valley to reflect on these issues and to comment specifically on their content.

My own background in anthropology informs this effort and should be mentioned at the outset. I have chosen this particular literature because of my familiarity with Kathmandu Valley society. I did exten-

sive ethnographic research there from 1979 to 1982, and frequently visited Bhaktapur and Kirtipur, cities where the development projects considered in this review were located. In 1980, I also worked briefly as a consultant to the Bhaktapur Development Project, where I did applied research and worked with the staff, including the author of *Bhaktapur*, to develop their cultural awareness. I found this to be an extremely valuable but ultimately disillusioning experience and this article is, in part, my summation of it.

My long-term residence in Kathmandu also led to extensive contact with all types of development workers and their projects. I developed a broad network of acquaintances within the expatriate community and also with professional Nepalis. With both, I often talked as friend and anthropologist about their work. Some encouraged me to write this article because they felt the need for serious perceptions in the development world. While this article is fully my own, it must speak for them because it would be hazardous to their careers if they were to speak openly on some of the culturally and politically delicate issues raised in this review.

It is my conviction that investing in an anthropological perspective can help change the pattern of underperformance in Nepal's attempts to modernize. Referring development analysis and action to the common man's perspective, carefully defining social networks and processes, being clear on the cultural assumptions of donors and recipients, and focusing on the individual human factors that move international bureaucracies -- all these must be addressed for development efforts in Nepal to be successful. The time should long be past when projects can be naive about socio-cultural realities or send in amateurs to design and implement critical efforts involving human survival. Poorly conceived or administered development projects should no longer be an excuse for the persistence of underdevelopment.

Books that describe development project case studies are rare indeed. All too often, international agencies in this field do not make their project documents available to outsiders, and this hinders one from discovering an organization's working definition of a development problem, their assessment of the accuracy of projections by their experts and consultants, or how well their plans were then implemented in reality. Recently, three books have appeared that report on development efforts in Bhaktapur and Kirtipur. Although each is different in scope and intention, they all point to the obstacles faced in the planned modernization of Nepal and the problems involved in shaping worthwhile development programmes there.

I

In 1974, the Federal Republic of Germany sponsored the first major development effort in Bhaktapur, a project designed to "tackle the economic and social problems of the town and to preserve the valuable cultural heritage (BDP 1979: vii)." In its early years, the Bhaktapur Development Project (hereafter "BDP") concentrated primarily on restoring

important architectural monuments, temples, resthouses, and historic buildings in the northeast section of the town, and began constructing a modern water and sewerage system. Ane Haaland's book, *Bhaktapur: A Town Changing*, was written to document the BDP's transition from technical restoration to a community development project, a move forced, in part, by the local populations' protests against aspects of the first phase of its performance. The author describes this transition as "what happened to a town where neither change nor status quo was an acceptable path to follow (p. 2)."

The BDP deserves praise for at least the impulse to publish such a document and thereby share its learning experience. As the author says in the preface, the book reflects the collective wisdom of the project, and this must be kept in mind while evaluating her description of Newar traditions in Bhaktapur and her presentation of the project's efforts there. The goal is noble and some of the questions raised are important, but the book is neither accurate with regard to the Newars and Bhaktapur, nor is it candid when describing the project itself. We are left instead with little more than a project's public relations document.

One important theme woven through *Bhaktapur* is its criticism of projects that are run by technocrats who see development in simplistic mechanistic terms. No one disputes the author's plea for projects sensitive to their specific community, though this straightforward proposition has for decades been propounded as common sense by applied anthropologists (e.g. Foster 1969). When Haaland applies herself to this very task in Bhaktapur, however, she consistently fails to understand the Newar community or to describe accurately the project's attempts to involve it. These failures are instructive.

When providing the historical background or describing the nature of local society, Haaland is often inaccurate. The book attempts to synthesize Nepalese history, Hindu-Buddhist culture, and Newar society, but there are many historical inaccuracies: e.g., Newars did not invent the pagoda temple (p. 11), the Malla dynasty cannot be dated back to the eleventh century (p. 11), nor the Buddha to "2525 BC" (p. 44), nor is it known that "Newars were originally Buddhist" (p. 14), nor did the Ranas "overthrow Prithivi Narayan Shah in 1846 (p. 12)." In addition to the sheer factual sloppiness of the text, misspellings, bad syntax, and a poor bibliography also discourage the reader.

The presentation of the Bhaktapur Newars is even more misleading. The author suggests that Bhaktapur farmers do not support vocational training (p. 35); that all craftsmen in the community have low status (p. 15), ignoring the high caste of metal workers; and she asserts that Newar children "suffer the absence of toys (other than selfmade)" (p. 16), a strange ethnocentric statement.

More troubling is the treatment of women and religion. As recent studies have shown (Pradhan 1981), farmer caste Newar women enjoy a level of freedom and power rarely seen in the Indian subcontinent. Haaland, however, drearily recites old South Asian development stereo-

types: "women do not have much to say; it is expected that they know their place...(p.14)." Newar Hinduism receives similarly simplistic treatment with the author stating that, "material progress is secondary. Spiritual progress is the most important, and the purpose of living is personal evolution" (p. 44). This elitist assertion stands in contrast to behavioral data she herself cites which shows Newars to have "a here and now society" (p. 25) characterized by individual enterprise. But we should see these portrayals for what they are: surviving colonial explanations held in readiness by development workers for the moment when they must account for their failures by shifting the blame back to the alleged ideological intransigence of the local population.

Carelessness in these matters is not trivial. When sketching the large picture or recounting the small details, the author displays the BDP's misperceptions and cultural biases. Getting a people's history and culture right reflects a certain measure of respect and appreciation for them and their world view. What is doubly disconcerting here is that the author did not utilize the Bhaktapur project's own documents in these very fields(2). This illustrates the troubling fact that development workers are not always willing to make the effort to understand local society, even neglecting the work done within their own institutions in the very place they are working. Not to use the legacy of insight represented by a project's collective historical experience, i.e. its culture, is a serious handicap. Lacking such memory, later planners and administrators often "reinvent the wheel," wasting time and undermining project efficiency. There is also little excuse for anyone's ignorance about Nepalese society and culture, given the vast literature of published studies that is now available.

Perhaps the most striking failures of understanding are found in the discussion of economic changes at work in Bhaktapur, a topic one would assume to be clearly understood in the collective wisdom of a "development project." Haaland attributes the economic decline of Bhaktapur to "the closure of the Tibetan border in 1959 (p. 8)," whereas trade with the north through Bhaktapur had effectively declined over fifty years earlier.

The author also underplays the fact that Bhaktapur's former prosperity was dependent on its role as an economic center for surrounding village areas, especially those to the east, and that this position was undermined by the new road-transportation networks that favored Kathmandu. The BDP itself recommended that the southern outskirts of town where the main highway passes *not be developed*, a fact that undoubtedly contributed to the city's failure to exploit its location as a trade center (BDP 1978). Stopping the natural economic evolution of the city because it violates the "museum approach" to the town was a recurring error in the BDP logic. Its planners failed to comprehend that unless enough new local wealth is generated, the local economy can never maintain the temples, houses, and monasteries which it has so carefully restored.

In this same area, the author states that commuters represent a problem for Bhaktapur's growth because they are "exporting innovative talent that is badly needed for the development of its own city" (p. 36). This distorted perception -- which is also reproduced in cartoon form on page 28 -- contradicts her statement elsewhere that cites unemployment as a major problem in Bhaktapur (p. 36). It is highly misleading to portray Bhaktapur's older generation as being hostile to the young finding employment in Kathmandu, as is suggested here. The Project apparently failed to see these commuters' wages as a resource and their success in the capital's labour force as an indication of their effective adaptation to modern political-economic change in the Valley. These examples, chosen from a list of many more, reveal gaps and distortions in the Project's awareness, although in some places they are magnified by the author's factual sloppiness.

Bhaktapur does not improve when it turns to documenting the change in focus from restoration to community development. Haaland asserts that there was a fundamental alteration in the Project's mission: from domination by foreign experts in all crucial decision-making, to designing BDP assistance centered on the priorities of local neighborhood communities. There are passages that assess the Project's problems with refreshing candor. However, Haaland's brief "analysis" of these is merely a list of the possible reasons for failure, rather than the articulation of a convincing critical assessment. Notably lacking is a coherent representation of the Bhaktapur community as a politically organized entity responding to the BDP, a fundamental fact of life that cannot be ignored when discussing the reality of development project work, however sensitive the topic might be.

When reporting on the departmental adjustments in the "revamped project," the language turns to bureaucratise and the full picture is not presented. In many places, the author omits critical details from the presentation. Because of this, I have selected case studies mentioned in the book that require additional information and commentary to complete the reader's understanding of the development reality in Bhaktapur.

1. *Housing*. In housing, the BDP put its prestige on the line by having the local government pass ordinances that legally limited the Newars' freedom to rebuild their houses with new designs and with newer building materials -- corrugated iron, cement, etc. (BDP 1978). The project thought that town residents could be coerced into foregoing architectural change by legally relegating them to their own past. Despite these laws, residents have continued to rebuild using the proscribed designs and materials because they refuse to live inefficiently or as if in a museum. The BDP, of course, had to back down on such unrealistic demands and as a result, all involved in the process looked foolish.
2. *Restorations*. Local regard for the project was also undermined by the BDP's initial restorations, done *gratis* on the most historic houses in town, for the most part buildings owned by the richest

people. Both of these matters represented flagrant -- but seemingly unrecognized -- assaults on the principle of fairness to the middle and lower classes of Bhaktapur. This type of class insensitivity hindered other areas of BDP work, especially in school building and in commercial development. Haaland refers to the problem here as a "large communication gap" when in fact they represent an "understating crevasse", the natural result of a poorly conceived Project policy.

3. *Water Systems.* The most distorted impression Bhaktapur gives is in the area of public works (i.e. "infrastructure"): the drinking water and sewer systems. Although the author focuses on the public health problems and the heroic efforts made by those who dug up the streets, we find little exploration of the BDP plan's logic or its implementation. In this domain we can see how the Project, when it finally got out of the drawing room and onto street level, so often misread the situation and failed to interact successfully with the realities in Bhaktapur. Because this particular failure provides a valuable case study in ethnocentric development design, implementation, and systemic failure, I will discuss it at greater length.

Unacknowledged is the fact that the public works design erred in channeling rainwater into the sewer system, thereby depriving an essential resource from farmers owning some of the best rice fields just outside town. And nowhere is it mentioned that the affected farmers soon remedied the situation by breaking open the waste pipes, making a mockery of the basic public health principles -- endorsed by subsequent official project statements (see page 85 ff) -- of separating people from their parasite-contaminated water. In 1982, when the city had over 50% of the Project's water system intact, most taps ran for shorter periods than before the BDP work began. Nor have expensive group toilets, imposed initially without consulting local women, been accepted. Nor is there room for an adequate waste treatment facility south of town, an omission that compromises the entire sewerage system. Those neatly repaired streets of Bhaktapur that delight the tourist cover a most illconceived public works infrastructure.

Still other important questions arise. One would like to know why such a costly and energy-inefficient sewerage system that uses large quantities of groundwater was emphasized instead of methane ("bio-gas") systems that produces usable cooking gas and safe natural fertilizer. This is an especially important issue for two reasons: first, Himalayan deforestation -- caused partly by the need to supply cities like Bhaktapur with wood fuel -- poses a cataclysmic threat to the region's eco-system (Wallace 1982); and second, chemical fertilizers have become a burdensome expense for the average Newar farmer(3). Rather than address these issues, the BDP planners chose the easiest, most conservative and ethnocentric option: building a Western-style system that does not even work on its own terms and ignores the long-term issues of ecology,

energy, and survival in the region. Contrary to Haaland's account, the Bhaktapur public works is perceived as a success only by those engineers who were employed in designing and implementing it.

By omitting these facts and considerations, *Bhaktapur* shows itself to be a public relations document, not an objective work of factual reporting. Although the book frequently speaks of the ideal of the BDP's "cultural sensitivity," here too it is hard to accept the author's portrayal of this commitment. Evaluating the Project's performance, one finds a legacy of insensitivity and a persistent failure to interact well with the community. For example, Haaland conveys an inflated image of the BDP's commitment to learning the Newari language, an obvious step that would have helped build greater rapport with the community. From the Project's inception, no one on the project's regular "foreign expert" staff learned to speak Newari, and few even spoke Nepali. Throughout its history, the foreign staff of the BDP was forced to rely on translators and various middlemen to know the town. Language is an essential component in cross-cultural interaction and is easily the best medium for knowing a place and its people. In her discussion, however, Haaland exaggerates the BDP's accomplishment(4) and overlooks the implications of this most fundamental "communication gap."

4. *Intra-Project Relations, Bhaktapur* does not really analyze the crucial issue of relations between foreigners and their Nepalese counterparts, i.e. Nepali staff assigned to work alongside the foreign experts. From my experience, the importance of this aspect of development projects in Nepal is clear if one speaks to Nepalis who have worked alongside foreign development workers. The job disparities and miscommunication between foreigners and Nepalis figure prominently in their analyses of why development projects often operate poorly or turn to folly. For years now, educated Nepalis have observed very highly paid Westerners come into Nepal who do not learn to speak their language and who hardly understand the society in which they are working. As a result, cultural differences cause misunderstandings that hinder institutional relations, distort project planning, and handicap implementation. In the Bhaktapur project's history, this was a very important issue, but the author does not explore it seriously(5).

One key question that *Bhaktapur* does address is what kind of background is suitable for development workers. Haaland shows the difficulties a project encounters when it is dominated by technocrats, and she reaches some valuable conclusions as to why professionals with technical expertise are not necessarily suited for assuming leadership roles in development projects. Whatever else the BDP legacy teaches us on development, this lesson is secure.

But who, then, should be directing these projects? Here the author exemplifies the standard development establishment response, paying lip-service to the ideal of socio-cultural awareness while

whowing that she does not really understand what this commitment means. Haaland states that it is "dogmatic" to think "that understanding the basis of how the religion functions... is a prerequisite for doing a good job in development (p. 48)." To understand a people and their culture, how could religion not be a central concern? To appreciate a community's ultimate values, its ethos, and the underlying bases of its social norms -- the very things that development projects must grapple with -- requires nothing less than a thoroughgoing awareness of the local religious tradition.

Bhaktapur refuses to endorse social scientists as key actors in development and ignores one of the chief reasons for the BDP's poor performance. Given their very ambitious plans for this vastly complex town of over 50,000 inhabitants, it is really astonishing that the BDP virtually ignored social scientific expertise in designing and implementing their work. The Project's ignorance of the local society and culture and of the Newar notion of "common sense" caused many blunders that undermined relations and cooperation: garbage receptacles were placed too close to temple precincts, normal Newar ceremonial conventions were not followed when project restorations were begun, and early project plans were made without establishing relations with the most fundamental community groups, the *guthis*. The key lesson of the BDP experience is that social scientific awareness should be at the centre of development projects, from start to finish, for these are literally the facts of life that affect the entire development interaction. For projects not to base their plans accordingly is both foolish and irresponsible. The misconceptions that pervade Ane Haaland's book dramatically illustrate how serious this problem was in *Bhaktapur*. The profound troubles experienced in *Bhaktapur* indicate that projects can quickly exhaust the generous measure of initial trust that the Nepalese population grants to their employees and their well-intentioned plans. I wonder if the legacy of insensitivity and failure may alter this and hinder future efforts.

Another major problem area in international development that *Bhaktapur* hardly mentions is the internal functioning of the sponsoring agencies. The bureaucracies of projects such as the BDP are run *de facto* by balancing two competing agendas: one imposed by foreign consultants desiring to sustain lucrative contracts and another dictated by conditions "on the ground" that require expertise in local matters. All too often, the institutional agenda controls and dominates a project's performance, and the way project work is pieced together through time produces an institutional fragmentation that makes it possible for no one person to take responsibility for the process. When one group formulates plans and succeeding waves of programme officers proceed with implementation, each can shift the blame for shortcomings to the other. Rarely do real performance evaluations, coming years later, affect the individual careers of the planners or the field workers(6). In the oral lore of international development in Kathmandu, there are many

such examples of the individual ambition of consultants overriding the reality of project needs.

In conclusion, *Bhaktapur* provides neither a coherent account of a great Newar city nor the full story of this well-known development project. The shortcomings and omissions do provide case studies in why projects fail and reveal what the ready legitimations are that development workers so often provide to account for them.

II

Kirtipur, A Newar Community in Nepal: Development in Debate (hereafter "Kirtipur"), the product of a research team from Bristol University, is a socio-cultural reconnaissance of the Valley's fourth-largest city. In full contrast to *Bhaktapur*, this small volume is meant to be a reflective preface to any development efforts undertaken there. It is modest in content, provides a general overview to life in Kirtipur, and is illustrated with fine photographs and well-rendered drawings.

The volume is most successful at giving the reader a sense of place and at sketching the rich texture of Newar society in Kirtipur. As such, it is a notable contribution to the field of Kathmandu Valley studies. The "surface ethnography" is as good as one could expect from a six-month research project. For example, the map overviews of Kirtipur's architectural monuments (12.13) and caste settlements (52.3) provide important ethnographic documentation. Although limited to a small sample, information on several Kirtipur *guthis* reveals how these central institutions have fared in modern times. Finally, the research group investigated local production and the town's complex economic networks, the proper foundation for planning development work. The economic profile moves from agriculture to the many subfields of small scale production -- carpentry, smithing, weaving, tailoring -- to inform us as to how the town sustains itself.

As with *Bhaktapur*, the historical information provided on the Newars is embarrassingly incorrect in places: there is no data to support the assertion that the Kiratas ruled the Valley in the seventh century B.C. (p. 15), nor is Gupta rule in India (320 - 540 A.D.) dated correctly or linked by any evidence to the "introduction of the monarchical system of government and Hindu rule [in Nepal]" (p. 16). When the authors assert that Nepali "bears no linguistic relation to Newari," (p. 104), they ignore the mutual overlap in vocabularies and the common influence of Sanskrit. Here and in other places, *Kirtipur* overemphasizes the separateness of Newar culture from Pahari society and culture.

But this book is not to be judged by the strictest scholarly criteria. Although at its weakest when recounting Newar history and attempting broader socio-cultural analyses, *Kirtipur* succeeds in constructing a useful overview. In efficient, summary fashion, it informs us about Kirtipur as town, home, and community in order to make recommendations on how life might be enhanced there. At the end of each section

describing these aspects, the authors make specific suggestions on what the most important changes could be. The content here is pragmatic, idealistic, sensitive to socio-cultural preservation, and committed to maximizing local decision-making.

Kirtipur's emphasis on the town's economy allows the authors to speak authoritatively on what the nature of development work there should be. The only exception I would take to their analysis is in their regarding local residents' employment in Kathmandu and Patan as a problem (p. 88), a misconception also found in *Bhaktapur*. Isolated, self-sufficient communities are inappropriate models both for depicting the Valley's past and for guiding modern development. Commuting seems to be an inevitable aspect of economic development, and the only way for settlements which are now off the main trade arteries -- like *Bhaktapur* and *Kirtipur* -- to survive is to pursue economic strategies that link them firmly to the employment networks in a changing Nepal. Transit links should be strengthened since commuting will certainly help *Kirtipur* retain these salaries in the local community.

The refreshing thing about *Kirtipur* is that it approaches development holistically, free from any donor's pre-existing institutional framework. The weakness, though, is that the recommendations seem unrealistic at times, especially in political terms. The book shows what a sound social science foundation can do to inform the debate about how to shape the process of modern change: it is the survey and assessment that the *Bhaktapur Development Project* ought to have done, but never did. Because of its sensitivity to the need for well-informed development initiatives attentive to the local milieu, *Kirtipur* is an important statement on what projects should know and what integrated development can be in modern Nepal. The statement "issues of Development" (p. 5) should join *Planning for People* (Stiller and Yadav 1979) as required reading for all involved in development projects in Nepal.

III

Although the least fancy of the three publications (lacking pictures, in mimeograph form, and without careful stylistic and editorial refinement), *Expatriate Assisted Community Development as a Possibility in Kirtipur* (hereafter "*Kirtipur II*") gives the best sense of what development really entails "on the ground." The book narrates the efforts made by a team of four young graduates from Bristol, U.K., who followed in the footsteps of the authors of *Kirtipur*. Because of its fearless honesty, especially when recounting the team's blunders, this book takes the reader effectively into the local reality of development work and helps him identify with the team's learning process.

For one year, the group lived in a Newar household in *Kirtipur* with two objectives. First, they sought to evaluate how expatriates could act as motivators for community development and serve as middlemen shepherding outside monies into town. Second, they also aimed at assessing a number of specific avenues in which a development project could

move, such as irrigation, school building, water supply, latrines, weaving, etc.. The book consists of 153 statements organized under these two objectives and follows the group through its year.

In places, *Kirtipur II* reads like a novel, as good intentions crash into hard realities. The authors thoughtfully offer many issues to ponder, ones that underline the need for a better understanding of the human elements in the development process. A number can be discussed here.

1. *Caste and Community*

The team realizes that caste settlements are not single communities, that high and low castes have different powers, interests, and perceptions, and that cross-caste class consciousness cannot be assumed to exist among the disadvantaged. Despite national laws that have outlawed caste discrimination, the legacy of caste hierarchies profoundly conditions the actualities of development project endeavor in South Asia. A number of recent studies have underlined just this point for Nepal (e.g. Schuler 1985; Justice 1983; Justice 1981).

2. *Political Realities*

Another important insight in *Kirtipur II* is that development workers are necessarily aligned with existing political authorities in a locality and that their projects cannot escape from being involved in local politics. Unlike *Bhaktapur*, where this critical fact of life goes virtually unmentioned, *Kirtipur II* chronicles the team's slow awakening to the fact that to be effective they must coordinate their work with the *pradhan panchas* of the town. They realize that ultimately their project's presence falls under the government representative's jurisdiction and that his role can either be to assist project work or to crush it.

3. *The Development World as Frontier*

In their report, we also find a good case study in the individualistic, often idealistic, "frontier mentality" that many development workers commonly enter the Third World with, a mindset that is often ill-suited to the necessary task of channeling outside money and expertise into a local community. The team initially assumes that it is "above" the local political arena, that they are actors somehow free to remake local destiny. This turns out to be an illusion. Through their account, we can see that great attention must be paid to how development workers practice "impression management" (Berreman 1972) with the local society, and to the fact that projects impose new institutions in a society. *Kirtipur II*'s message is clear: each development initiative represents a social experiment that planners ignore at the risk of compromising their entire operation.

4. *Commitment to Research Foundations*

Old hands in development will doubtless find naive the authors' recommendation that extensive research precede actual development project work. The team calls for a minimum of two years' research on the local situation, longterm commitments by both foreign and Nepali personnel, and the staff's residence in the local community. They also call for the greatest possible fluency with the local culture, especially in language. Their case study presentations on an irrigation canal, schools, latrines, and their research on the possibility of marketing traditional weaving designs illustrate the point convincingly that an outsider's common sense is not enough. Each of these examples show how multi-layered old traditions are and how difficult it is to change a complex society. They also undermine the old hand's derision of extensive research as a prelude to development planning and long-term conduct. In the long run, of course, this approach is the most cost-effective, although it may be inconvenient for international agencies.

5. *Development Workers as Middlemen*

Perhaps the most important insight to be derived from *Kirtipur II* is that those working in development must be regarded as *middlemen* who mediate between the common people and the institutions of both the central and donor governments. This is an especially difficult role as it entails living in two (or more) worlds, requires knowledge of both sides, and involves simultaneously advancing two or more often separate agendas. True balancing here is especially difficult: the institutional arrangements may hinder an individual's engaging the local society effectively, or, at the other extreme, foster unrealistic urges to reform local society overnight. The danger of overplaying the local side of the middleman's role lies in establishing ineffective or unrepresentative linkages with a community. Becoming too identified with any one group, especially the wealthy elite, can undermine any development initiative and invite failure. It takes insight and skill to walk the middleman's line.

One final valuable discussion in *Kirtipur II* concerns the difficulties the authors faced as foreigners living in a different cultural milieu. The team estimates that illhealth cut their productivity by at least 25% and that in the course of their work they often felt personally disoriented. Development agencies should pay great attention to the issue of persistent culture shock and the psychological stress of living simultaneously in multiple worlds, for it is common for individuals residing for long periods in a foreign culture to experience periods of personal vertigo. Very often, the institutional policies of international agencies heighten this sense, as individuals must move daily between two different worlds in language, at the office, and at home(7).

IV

In this review, I have identified a wide spectrum of anthropological concerns on the development process that point clearly to the need for projects to acquire a thorough awareness of local society and culture, understand the legacy of recent history, devote attention to their institutional arrangements, and show great concern for the human variables that make every development worker a crosscultural mediator. Agencies and governments must deal with the fact that when they intervene in a society they are facing deeply entrenched socio-cultural realities. These must be fully comprehended, just as project work must proceed with empathy, insight, and sympathetic imagination. Development is a cross-cultural interaction, from start to finish, and often this entails a clash between older cultural wholes and new innovations. The anthropological perspective on development asserts that the more we attend to the human variables present on all sides of this interaction, the better and more humane the result will be.

NOTES

1. The author is a Research Associate at the Southern Asian Institute, Columbia University. Special thanks go to those who reviewed and criticized the manuscript, especially Theodore Riccardi, Jr., David Rothman, Peter Montiel, and Robin Jared Lewis.
2. Background information on Newar society and on Bhaktapur is presented in a more coherent form by the Project's *Bhaktapur Twon Development Plan* (BDP 1979) and *Cultural Handbook* (BDP 1980), an extensive anthology (33 pages) of historical, social, and cultural studies begun in 1980. Many of the factual errors could have been avoided had the author read these documents and utilized them.
3. A recent study by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization estimated that the Kathmandu Valley used over 120,000 tons of firewood annually.
4. The Newari language study programme that the author lauds was in fact discontinued before *Bhaktapur* went to press.
5. There are even cultural insensitivities in this book itself: several line drawings in *Bhaktapur* insulted Nepalis who had seen them. The caste characterizations on page 16 and the portrait of the dishonest doctor on page 40 should never have been published in any book, much less this one. One wonders whether the author was even aware of the misguided messages conveyed by these inappropriate images.
6. Nor do agencies routinely support critical follow-up studies to measure the successes and see what can be learned from the past. As a result, feedback is often short-circuited and projects learn little from past errors.

180. CNAS Journal, Vol. 13, No. 2 (April 1986)

7. Those in the development field concerned with this issue should consult the rather extensive literature in anthropology that deals with the personal difficulties of coping with fieldwork (e.g. Berreman 1972; Arensberg and Niehoff 1964; Francis and Saberwal 1969).

REFERENCES

- Arensberg, Conrad M. and Niehoff, Arthur H. 1964. *Introducing Social Change*. Chicago: Aldine Press.
- Berreman, Gerald D. 1972. "Behind Many Masks: Ethnography and Impression Management," Prologue to *Hindus of the Himalayas*. University of California Press.
- Bhaktapur Development Project. 1978. *Bhaktapur: Planning System and Plans*. Bhaktapur.
- *Bhaktapur Town Development Plan*. 1979. Heidelberg.
- 1980. *Cultural Handbook: A Sourcebook on Newar Culture and Society*. Kathmandu.
- Campbell, J. Gabriel, Shrestha, Ramesh and Stone, Linda. 1979. *The Use and Misuse of Social Science Research in Nepal*. Kathmandu: CENAS.
- Foster, George. 1969. *Applied Anthropology*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co.
- Francis, Henry and Saberwal, Satish. 1969. *Stress and Response in Fieldwork*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Johnson, B.L.C. 1983. *Development in South Asia*. New York: Penguin.
- Justice, Judith. 1981. *International Planning and Health: An Anthropological Case Study of Nepal*. Berkeley: Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California.
- 1983. "The Invisible Worker: The Role of the Peon in Nepal's Health Service," *Social Science and Medicine*, 17(14), 967-970.
- National Planning Commission. 1982. *Statistical Pocket Book*. Kathmandu: Gorkhapatra Corporation.
- Pradhan, Bina. 1981. *The Newar Women of Bulu*. Kathmandu: CEDA.
- Schuler, Sidney R., McIntosh, E. Noel, Goldstein, Melvyn C., and Pande, Badri Raj. 1985. "Barriers to Effective Family Planning in Nepal," *Studies in Family Planning*, 16 (5), 260-270.
- Stiller, Ludwig F. and Yadav, Ram Prakash. 1979. *Planning for People*. Kathmandu: CENAS.
- Wallace, Michael B. 1982. "Deforestation in Nepal," *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, 6 (2), 21-22.