

RESEARCH REPORTS

Group Projects

Gulmi & Argha-Khanci Inter-disciplinary Programme

Since late 1985 the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique have been conducting inter-disciplinary research in two districts of mid-western Nepal: Gulmi and Argha-Khanci. The programme was undertaken under a general Cultural Cooperation Agreement between the Nepalese and French governments. Further, the CNRS team was affiliated to the Royal Nepal Academy. The research was supposed to help in the preparation of an EEC development project scheduled in the same area. The decision to choose these two particular districts was taken by HMG.

For the CNRS and INRA, this project was their second inter-disciplinary endeavour in Nepal, following a joint programme conducted in 1981-83 in Salme village, Nuwakot District. However, Gulmi and Argha-Khanci was the first undertaking at a regional level. The Salme and Gulmi programmes were both conducted under the GRECO-Himalaya, an inter-disciplinary structure involving numerous French researchers working on the Himalayas.

Till now, some 30 persons have contributed to the Gulmi-Argha-Khanci programme, for various lengths of time. Six major fields of study were covered: geography, ecology, agronomy, rural economy, history and social anthropology. Moreover, specialists in remote sensing helped in the collection of data, and the Topographical Survey Department (HMG) issued a "Baseline survey",

a set of maps displaying the basic geographical features of the districts.

Twelve junior researchers spent between 6 and 18 months in field surveys and provided the bulk of information on the area. In addition, they used these materials for their doctoral degrees in Ecology (L. Redaud, C. Michaud), Social Anthropology (M. Lecomte-Tilouine, P. Ramirez) and Agronomy, Water-management and Agro-economy (J. Assié, O. Aubriot, J.P. Fontenelle, C. Knepfler, P. de Verdieres, J. Andrieu, N. Sibelet, F. Segala). Furthermore seven post-doctoral and senior scholars undertook studies in particular fields: J. Smadja (human geography), G. Krausskopf (study of the Kumhal potter-fishermen), C. Panter-Brick (labour relations), Y. Houdard and J. Bonnemaire (agriculture), J.P. Deffontaines (land use) and G. Toffin (Dasain). C. Jest extensively toured the districts and monitored the work of junior researchers. R.R. Subedi of T.U. History Dept. collected available manuscripts and historical data.

Gulmi and Argha-Khanci (600 000 inhbits., 2500 km²) are situated in the heavy populated middle hills (800-2000 m) to the west of the Kali Gandaki, inhabited mainly by Nepali-speaking Hindus: Bahun, Chetri, Thakuri, Kami, Sarki, Damai, Gaine. Tibeto-Burmese groups, Magar and Gurung, represent less than 15% of the total population, and they generally use Nepali as their mother tongue. Before 1804, the area was divided into six Thakuri principalities, founded in the early 16th century and more or less under the suzerainty of neighbouring Palpa.

Documents dating from the pre-unification period are very few, but the emphasis put on diachronic studies was particularly fruitful concerning changes which occurred in the last 150 years in certain domains: the Hinduization of the Magar, ritual geography, distribution of power, internal migration and the evolution of land-use.

Joint field-work and analysis conducted by small teams of two researchers proved to be quite productive. However, the synthesis on a higher level, involving numerous disciplines and people, did not reach original expectations. The reason lay not only in the difficult harmonization of various methodologies but also in very simple problems: for example to make people meet regularly when they belong to different institutions, live in different areas and keep commuting between Europe and Asia.

Another disappointment for some of us is that our work was of little use to the EEC development project. This project started later than initially planned, so that development experts and researchers were not in the field at the same time. On the other hand, it must be confessed that, when they are not part of a codified agreement, exchanges between the two parties generally seem not to take place.

A number of memoirs on Gulmi and Argha-Khanci are already either in print or available in the library of the "Centre d'Etudes Himalayennes" (Meudon). An edited volume presenting the results of different researches is expected to be published before the end of 1992.

Philippe Ramirez

Nepal-Italian Joint Project on High-Altitude Research in the Himalayas

The Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (RONAST) and the EV-K2-CNR Committee have agreed on a joint project on high altitude research in Himalayas that is to begin in 1991. The research programme is under the patronage of the Italian Ministry of University, Scientific and Technological Research, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Commission of the European Communities. Topics to be investigated include:

Biological Sciences: physiology 1: Cardiovascular and gas exchange readjustments to exercise at high altitude; physiology 2: - Study on the effect of strength training at high altitude. - Muscle strength at fatigability in chronic hypoxia. Physiology 3: - Human muscle adaptations at high altitude. An electromyographic and soundmyographic study. - Heart rate variability during muscular exercise at high altitude. Physiology 4: Functional and metabolic studies at high altitude. Respiratory Physiology: Measurement of respiratory work at high altitude. Physiology: Respiratory function tests and bronchial hyperreactivity in asthmatic subjects at high altitude. Zoology: Reproductive behaviour of the Himalayan that (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*).

Environment Sciences: Atmospheric Deposition and Circulation of Pollutants. Environmental assessment of long range pollution in high elevation and remote areas. Atmospheric Pollution. Evaluation of atmospheric pollutants in remote areas.

Human Sciences: Ethnography and Human Geography. Human geography and ethnology. Material and spiritual culture of Kanchanjunga (Kanchend-

zonga).

Earth Sciences: Geodynamics. Geodynamic evolution of the highest peaks of the Himalayan chain. Geophysics. A broad band seismic station in the Himalayas. Sedimentary Geology. Sedimentary geology in Manang Area Crystalline Geology. Geology and Petrology of the Crystalline rocks of the Himalayan belt. For further information: K2-CNR Representative Office: P.O.Box 5109, Kathmandu, Nepal

Development Strategies for the Remote Areas of Nepal

The objective of this project is to delineate appropriate short-term and medium-term strategies for development of the areas classified as "remote" in Nepal, based on the thorough investigation of some representative localities. Field research is being conducted in five districts (Taplejung, Dolakha, Dolpa, Jumla, Darchula) and focusses on the traditional economy and resource utilization as well the impact and problems of development programmes, the role of the state, and the specific implications of "remoteness".

The research group consists of five senior researchers (one anthropologist, one sociologist, one geographer, one economist and one cultural historian) and 16 research assistants. For each district one team has been formed headed by a senior researcher. The project started in August 1990 and is scheduled to be completed by July 1992. It is financed by the IDRC (Integrated Development Research Center), Canada. Coordinator: Dilli Ram Dahal

Individual Projects

Project: The dynamics of interethnic relations: the Dom of Hunza (Northern Areas of Pakistan)

Researcher: Anna Schmid, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University

Sponsored by: Gottlieb Daimler- und Karl Benz-Stiftung and South Asia Institute

When the Dom immigrated from northern India some 300 years ago they were given land by the local ruler in the central part of Hunza, where they form now approximately 2% of the population. In return they had to perform services as musicians and blacksmiths. As musicians, the Dom were situated at the core of the local culture; as blacksmiths, they were set apart from the rest of society and relegated to the lowest social stratum. Due to their ambiguous social status and their ubiquitous presence at musical performances, they are frequently mentioned in the literature on the Northern Areas of Pakistan - scientific and others. Yet so far they have not been investigated in any detail.

Fieldwork was conducted from March to October 1988 and from April to July 1990. It concentrated only on the Dom village of Momina-bad, and a few dispersed households in other villages of Hunza. In addition, comparative data were collected in their village in Nagar, the adjoining district and in the urban center of the Northern Areas, Gilgit.

The aim of the research is to clarify the interethnic relationship between the Dom minority and the

wider society, i.e. the significance of ethnic identity in social interaction and the structural characteristics (economical conditions, power relations etc.) of this interaction. To elucidate this topic three problems are being examined.

First, the domains (religious, political, economical etc.) in which the Dom act as specialists are being analysed with regard to the roles they play, the positions they take up, their possibilities to manipulate and enlarge the scope of their acting, and the space for interaction created by themselves. Moreover, the domains from which they are excluded (e.g. by rules of endogamy) as well as the implications of the various restrictions on their interaction are being taken into account.

Second, the ways by which the Dom are qualified to articulate central societal and cultural values of the wider society are being investigated: namely by their musical apprenticeship, their intimate knowledge of the wider society's requests, the skill to control this knowledge, etc; and secondly their low status and social exclusion.

Third, the ideas and concepts by which the Dom are categorized and perceived and by which the Dom perceive themselves are being analysed. This implies the study of the

local mythology and the numerous stories about the Dom.

Since Hunza underwent a dramatic change after the removal of the local ruler in 1974 the study has to account for both, the diachronic and synchronic perspective. It will be argued that the analysis of the interethnic relationship shows a specific pattern of integration and segregation which varies in historically and situationally different contexts.

The data will be presented as a Ph.D. thesis.

Project: Sociolinguistic Survey of the Jirel Community

Principal Investigator: Nirmal Man Tuladhar, CNAS, Tribhuvan University

Sponsored by: UNESCO

Since a motorable road reaches up to Jiri (Dolakha district), the Jirel community - in and around Jiri - is increasingly subject to social change. The aim of the project is to study the impact of this on the Jirel language. This will be done by collecting data on bilingualism, the domains and patterns of language use, attitudes towards the native language and towards the other languages spoken in the community.

The project is scheduled to be completed within one year.