There are a few points which require comments; thus on p.48 dkar-brgyud bstan-pa is rendered "la doctrine des bka'-brgyud-pa". On p.98 the author states that "L'usage du khar-gsil semble s'être perdu assez tôt au Tibet"; this is not entirely the case, as this object is still part of the equipment of a fully ordained Bonpo monk and is used by these monks on certain ceremonial occasions. On p.145 Bu-ston (1290-1364) is anachronistically referred to as "le savant dge-lugs-pa"; surely it is more correct to refer to him as a bka'-gdams-pa, and reserve the term dge-lugs-pa for the school founded by Tsong-kha-pa. On p. 221, stong-gsum is translated as "les trois mondes"; this expression refers, however, to the concept of "a thousand worlds three times multiplied", i.e. a billion, in other words, an infinite number. On p. 285 there is a reference to Liui and Kiggel 1988, a work which does not seem to be listed in the Bibliography. On p. 288 there is a reference to a Bhutanese instrument surlim, to which the author adds sic; the sic is, however, uncalled for, as the word surlim is the normal Dzongkha pronunciation of Tibetan zur-gling.

These details are, obviously, of marginal importance and do not detract in the least from the overall excellency of the book, both as an indispensable handbook and as an important contribution to the study of Tibetan culture. On the whole, the documentation is extensive and meticulous, and the use of illustrations generous. The inclusion of a compact disc is particularly praiseworthy.

Precisely because of the excellency of the present volume, the lack of comprehensive studies of other aspects of Tibetan musical traditions becomes all the more apparent. First and foremost, a study of the vocal traditions of ritual music is needed; these traditions can only be studied in conjunction with the relevant rituals. Likewise, the various regional traditions of folk-music should be studied and documented systematically. Mireille Helffer's book will serve as an inspiration for research in all these fields, and provides a standard of excellence and comprehensiveness against which all future contributions will be measured.

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Review by Mireille Helffer

This book is the outflow of a Swedish programme, "Music, modernity and the communication of a national identity in Nepal". The author's objective was the study of musical practice (performance and listening) and "mediatization" (assimilation of and accommodation to new resources) in the micro-society of a small Newar town in the Kathmandu Valley from 1985 to 1988.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter describes "everyday" and "extraordinary" situations in which musicians/performers practice various forms of music (religious festivals, processions, marriages, cultural programmes) or how the residents of a specific neighbourhood understand and listen to music. The second chapter focuses upon the Newar musical heritage and describes the diverse musical forms which have survived and the circumstances in which they are performed. The third chapter takes into consideration "modern" music (adhunik), transmitted by the media (radio, cassettes, film)—Nepali or Newari songs, songs adopted from popular Indian films or, among the young, western rock, pop or disco music. An interesting distinction is made between "love songs", predominant on the radio, and "societal songs", undoubtedly corresponding to the Nepali term sāmājik. The latter attract much interest in Newar society but do not appear on official programmes. The fourth chapter discusses the results of a neighbourhood survey of 27 out of 53 households which responded to a questionnaire. The analysis of these responses from a total of 61 individuals, from 12 to 72 years of age and nearly all men, reveals the role played by the presence of a radio and the programmes broadcast by Radio Nepal (which do not really allow much choice) and the marked preferences of the choice of cassettes. The fifth chapter analyses how the contemporary phenomenon of gradually substituting some repertoires for others has already manifested itself over the years and how

Translation: S. Keyes
some circumstances, such as jātra religious festivals, today favour the merging of diverse repertoires. The sixth chapter puts forth an interpretation of the observed facts by emphasizing the musical compatibility of repertoires marked by a common association with “Indian civilisation” or by the use of the same instrument (combination of harmonium and tabala, for example). Grandin also discusses the ideological currents which articulate Newar ethnic awareness today, within the realm of music, but also extend to the linguistic and political realms.

In contrast to his predecessors, who followed a more familiar approach to ethnomusicology, and were more interested in Newar music and instruments, Grandin deals with the subject from a new and justified sociological perspective. He clearly shows the turning point marked by the fall of the Ranas, the openings to modernity following the revolutionary movement in 1989-90; he always places such changes within the perspective of the Newar minority. The methodology employed, despite its extremely positive side, nevertheless has serious drawbacks; it assumes as a matter of fact that the reader without knowledge of Nepali will be familiar with the acoustic material in question or have on-site experience. I would have hoped that in addition to the very useful glossary of Nepali and Newari terms, a cassette of recordings would have been included to allow direct access to the sounds of the Newar of Kirtipur.

Besides the questions which the representativeness of the sampling bring up, one might also question the choice of the town of Kirtipur in relation to other Newar towns in the Kathmandu Valley, or even towns which are predominantly Nepali-speaking.

In conclusion, this text by Ingemar Grandin is a valuable source of information and most useful because of its numerous Nepali references (texts, records and cassettes, often unavailable in the West). However, it is likely to have greater interest for the sociologist and risks disappointing the ethnomusicologist anxious to better understand Newar music.


Review by Mireille Helffer

Pirkko Moisala’s book, dedicated to the music of an ethnic group in central Nepal, is a significant contribution to the knowledge of Himalayan music, as much for the novelty of the subject as for the methodology which combines anthropological, musicological and cognitive approaches.

The author, who has had several articles published in periodicals in Nepal and Finland, bases her work on solid fieldwork. She visited a village in the district of Lamjung with a majority Gurung population (in 1975-76, and more briefly in 1985); there, she collected music documentation to which 12 hours of videocassettes were added. She took advantage of the ten-year interval between her two visits to perfect her study of Nepali in London and ethnomusicology in the United States.

In the two introductory chapters, the author explains and justifies her choice of methodology by acknowledging her indebtedness to the late John Blacking, and other significant names in American ethnomusicology: Alan Merriam, Bruno Nettl and Norma McLeod. She also details the theoretical presuppositions which underlie her research and which aim at elucidating to what measure changes in musical order are concomitant with other observable changes in a given culture.

The following chapter places the Gurung ethnic group within the Nepalese context. There is a clear summary of data gathered by numerous English, Nepalese and French anthropologists during the last decades and a rigorous presentation of the conditions in which the study was carried out, at a time when the process of Nepalization was most intense.

The fourth chapter which deals with problems relative to the specificity of Gurung music takes up nearly half of the book: it is divided in six sub-chapters which successively examine the following points:

- village music, 1975-76
- Gurung and Nepalese musical concepts

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