

were contributed by Hugh van Skyhawk. Thus we are now in a favourable position to use the most comprehensive language study of Burushaski to date.

Burushaski still remains an unwritten language: although some efforts have been made by local scholars to provide it with a script, these are not widely accepted. This would be necessary for the further collection and preservation of texts and poems, for the provision of Burushaski classes to young students, and for the processing of material for transmission by the local radio station at Gilgit as part of the Burushaski medium programme. Although the release of the three volumes was greatly appreciated when they were formally launched in Gilgit recently, some expectations of the interested public (not necessarily only the academic public) should be mentioned. It was suggested that an English-Burushaski version of the dictionary would be more helpful than a German one, because the language of academic institutions in Pakistan, and increasingly the medium of instruction in schools as well, is English. Some professional advice and support for the introduction of a written form of Burushaski remains a desideratum. Obviously it was not the aim of the present publication; none the less, expectations are high. Now that it has finally become available it is to be hoped that Berger's contribution will provide a sound foundation for further publications on Burushaski which fulfill the expectations of the Burushaski speakers. They are the only ones who can preserve and develop their language and use it as their domestic medium of communication and for the maintenance of their cultural heritage.

Ascètes et Rois : Un monastère de Kanphata Yogis au Népal by
Véronique Bouillier. Paris: CNRS Editions, coll. CNRS
Ethnologie, 1997. 263pp.

Reviewed by Philippe Ramirez

At first sight, this book looks like a monograph about a Nepalese monastery occupied by Kanphata yogi renouncers. As such, the monograph in itself would have constituted a very respectable contribution to Indian and Himalayan studies. However, its bearing is much wider. The Caughera monastery, which was founded at an uncertain date by Ratannath, a follower

of Gorakhnath, played a major role in the history of the Rapti region, but has never been described before. Véronique Bouillier reveals its spatial organization, which reflects a ternary religious landscape wherein Gorakhnath, Siva's ascetic form, sits beside the terrifying Bhairav and the Goddess. The ritual life of the monastery, carefully reported hour by hour and day by day, occupies an astonishing importance, suggesting that ritual may well be the prime vocation of this institution. It is unfortunate that the density of the description leaves little room for individual figures and experiences; the reader would have liked to have read a couple of life stories, making him understand how the monastery's dwellers reached it, and the radical break with their previous life that was involved in the renunciation.

Starting from this ethnographic sketch of a regionally significant monastery, Véronique Bouillier has managed to raise a number of issues which pertain to fundamental aspects of the anthropology and history of Nepal and India: the figure of Ratannath, the position of renouncers in a Hindu kingdom's ritual complexes, land tenure history—these three themes constantly interweave.

The saint ascetic Ratannath, the founder of Caughera monastery, is the hero of a rich mythology which provides evidence for relations between the Hindu monarchy of the so-called medieval period (14th-18th centuries) and the disseminators of Sivaite tantrism. A fascinating aspect of Ratannath, which is brought to light remarkably well by Bouillier, opens some very promising perspectives: this figure is situated on the boundary between Hinduism and Islam, in a position which greatly blurs such a boundary and inspires renewed approaches to the religious as well as the political history of the subcontinent. Going from myth to ritual, the Ratannath figure puts on the clothes of sovereignty. The author suggests in fact that he might be none other than "the real sovereign of a territory under the authority of the monastery and the symbolic sovereign of Dang valley whose administration he delegates to the king..." The staging of the sovereignty reaches its climax when, following the annual election of the monastery chief (*pir*), a procession of all the yogis walks through the Dang-Dekhuri area to finally reach Patan Devi shrine, in the Indian district of Gonda. This visit, which is important not only for the yogis but for Dang Tharus as well (Giselle Krauskopff has given a major contribution on this question) inverts the political configuration prevailing elsewhere where the one who comes to see the Goddess is the subordinate. One may wonder if the procession as it exists today is not an adaptation or a reinterpretation of a similar ritual which formerly signified the submission of Dang to an authority centred on the Indian side of the present border.

Finally, the book contains a well-documented section dedicated to the temporal role of Caughera monastery, i.e. its economic and administrative relations both with the Nepalese state and its own dependants, particularly in the framework of the *guthi* attached to the religious institution. Bouillier emphasizes that the very particular religious situation of the monastery did not result in a juridical exception, as compared with other religious institutions. Considering the formulation of the numerous legal documents presented here, my feeling is that they do not differ from those concerned with secular circles. Thus it seems to me that the political status of this particular monastery in Gorkhali and Rana Nepal may be compared not only to the status of other *guthis* but also to that of the dominant Bahun-Chetri lineages, on which the Nepalese state definitely lay.

Development, Society and Environment in Tibet: Papers presented at a panel of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies edited by Graham E. Clarke. Vienna, 1998. 199pp.

Reviewed by Perdita Pohle

The proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies held at Schloss Seggau in Graz in 1995 are published in a total of seven volumes which contain a selection of the total of 228 papers read at this conference. Apart from the general volumes (Vol. I - II, ed. by H. Krasser, M.T. Much, E. Steinkeller, H. Tauscher, 1997) the papers presented at special panels are published in five separate volumes (Vol. III - VII) edited by their respective chairpersons. Graham E. Clarke of Oxford University was one of the organizers of a panel session which focused on economic, social, and environmental changes in Tibet. He prepared and edited the volume reviewed here.

Because our knowledge of contemporary Tibet is still very modest and the country itself is only partially open to international researchers, the papers presented in this volume are of an extraordinarily high value. They introduce original case studies of social and environmental change in Tibet undertaken by experienced Western, Tibetan, and Chinese scholars. In addition to empiri-