it protects the king and is accessed through priests. It is interesting to note in this respect that the old royal palaces of the Malla kings always contained the temple of their kul devata, Taleju, who was served by the Rajapadhyaya Brahmins (p. 189).

Another controversial issue is the question of whether ‘Indianization’, i.e. the transformation of a ‘tribal substratum’ through continuous influence from the south, is crucial for an understanding of Newar society. While Toffin in particular stresses the non-Indic elements of many contemporary Newar customs, both Gellner and Quigley are sceptical that this is of much relevance. It is true that the transformation of Newar culture has been a complex and long-term historical process, and so one has to be very careful in making general statements about ‘tribal’ and ‘non-tribal’ elements. But at the same time it emerges from the contributions to this book that this transformation is not only a matter of history and that certain tensions between different cultural orientations can still be recognized. Emulation of a high-caste Hindu model, for example, is still an important strategy (though not the only strategy) in the construction of a cultural self-identity (e.g. in terms of marriage practices, use of priestly functionaries, religious orientations, etc.). And so one has to ask: What kind of choices are taken by individual actors, and what are the reasons for such decisions? I think there is still considerable scope for future research on such issues, especially if more fieldwork is done among the Maharajans outside the big cities.

All in all, the volume is a very impressive documentation of Newar culture, on a high level of ethnographic and theoretical standards, and excellently presented (the book is well illustrated and has a carefully prepared index, for example). Moreover, it opens up a space for dealing with matters of agency, contestation, and cultural change without falling into the traps of an impressionistic ‘psychoethnography’ (S. Parish). It is an important contribution to the anthropology of South Asian culture and society, and so one can only hope that it will also receive due recognition and debate among scholars with comparative interests.


Reviewed by Marie-Christine Cabaud

Michael Hutt is Reader in Nepali and Himalayan Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, and a specialist on Nepali language and literature. One of his recent publications (1997) is a reader for those who already know some Nepali, which provides extracts in both prose and verse, with numerous grammatical notes and a sizeable word index. Abhi Subedi is a professor of English, a historian of Nepali literature, and a writer. Among his many articles and works in Nepali and English, one should mention in particular his history of Nepali literature, which remains a fundamental reference book despite being twenty years old.

As to content, the two authors combine their respective expertise and aim to guide the beginner through the language of everyday verbal exchanges. They adopt the classic method: 34 short texts (only two of which are not dialogues) progressively introduce grammatical difficulties. The texts cover many aspects of life in Kathmandu, as well as providing a little on villages (identity, times of day, means of transport, shopping, numbers, the calendar, the doctor, airport, marriage, religion...). At the same time, most useful grammatical forms are also covered, from inflections of the verb to subordinate clauses. At the beginning of each text the context is explained in English; then one finds the new vocabulary in a box, followed by the translation of the dialogue, and grammatical explanations. This is in turn followed by exercises. The authors deliberately avoid linguistic jargon (explanations "are intended to be as clear and jargon-free as possible"). A few illustrations provide a little Nepalese atmosphere. There is an accompanying cassette tape of the dialogues.

The book is well in keeping with the Teach Yourself series. It permits solitary study, without the help of a teacher. No new difficulty is introduced.
without the key to resolve it. The book uses a middle level of the language, with occasional incursions of more elaborate or more elementary forms, all the while respecting social hierarchies. The result is a very contemporary Nepali which at the same time satisfies academic standards. It also provides, by means of the very dense dialogues, a great variety of tools. A regular and methodical learner has a good year of work, perhaps more, within two covers. At the end of it, he or she should be comfortable experiencing total immersion.

None the less, it is perhaps regrettable that the roman transcription appears in the body of the lesson, but not in either of the two vocabulary lists. This may have been from a commendable wish not to rush students or to force them to learn a good system of Latin transcription, which is always useful to know.

The tables and grammar explanations could be a little more comprehensive. For example, the 3rd person forms of ho appear in a separate table six pages after the 1st and 2nd persons. Why not group them all in a single table, even if the 3rd person is not used at once? For cha, why not group the personal pronouns, the affirmative and the negative forms together, so that all three forms can be seen on the same line? Why show the contingent future and the complete future in two different tables, so that one has to turn the page to go from one to the other?

One may also regret the profusion of translation exercises, which have forced out more entertaining kinds of exercise (rarranging sentences that are mixed up, filling in the blanks...). Of course these mild criticisms do not refer in any way to the quality of the Nepali used in this book. They simply express concerns about the balance and progressivity of explanations, and about ease of acquisition.

To conclude, this book represents an innovation among texts on Nepali in English. The existing books of an academic sort (by Clark and Matthews) begin with the grammatical rule and move on to show its application. Karki and Shrestha's Basic Course in Spoken Nepali addressed itself to people already immersed in a Nepali context and privileged the practical side of learning language to the detriment of grammatical explanations. In this book, by contrast, the authors use grammar in order to assist a solid acquisition of the spoken language.

Questions of identity and ethnicity represent a broad field of study in anthropology and other disciplines such as political science and human geography. In the present study, the author focuses on processes of identity formation in Gilgit, the urban centre of the Northern Areas of Pakistan with approximately 40,000 inhabitants. In doing so, he aims to present and analyse a vast body of material gathered during his 15 months of fieldwork in Gilgit. The final aim of his analysis is to contribute to an understanding of social relations in the area, both with respect to characteristics which the acting groups or individuals ascribe to themselves, and in relation to attributes which other groups and individuals ascribe to them.

In his introductory chapter, Sökefeld outlines the aims of his study and gives a broad overview of the colonial and anthropological literature on what is today the Northern Areas of Pakistan. He then goes on to describe the situation in the field and to introduce Gilgit from three different perspectives. These are: (a) the multiple connections between Gilgit and the surrounding areas; (b) the history of Gilgit as the administrative centre of the region; and (c) an account of the town of Gilgit with its hamlets, its economy, etc.

Before presenting the ethnographic material, the author discusses major theoretical concepts (Ch. 2) relating to his analysis, such as ethnicity, plurality, culture and interpretation, culture and discourse, and culture in the making. He argues against the extensive use of analytical concepts such as ethnicity which do not have an equivalent in indigenous contexts. According to Sökefeld, to employ the concept of 'ethnic group' would be effectively to misrepresent the actual relationships and distinctions found in Gilgit and would therefore not contribute to a true understanding of the situation. Following Barth's concept of plural society, as elaborated in his study Sohar: Culture and Society in an Omani Town (1983), Sökefeld highlights instead the