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 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 (rearranging 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.
different ways in which people may belong to different social categories at different times, and the plurality of perspectives on group membership. He stresses the difference between the social categories used by the local people in their daily lives and theoretical abstractions applied from outside: the step from observations or talks with individuals in the field to a generalization must be reconstructable.

Consequently, the three chapters which follow focus on identity processes and discourses in Gilgit. By meticulously evaluating the ethnographic material collected during his field work, Sökefeld characterizes social categories along the lines of indigenous notions. He divides his material regarding the processes of identity into three parts. In the first part (Ch. 3), he discusses differences between people from Gilgit and people from outside. He starts with accounts of the 'original settlers of Gilgit', who claim to have undertaken the difficult task of first cultivating the barren land; they had the power to integrate newcomers by sharing land and arranging marriages. Due to historical events—i.e. the arrival of the Kashmiri Dogras and the British colonizers—the ownership of land changed and waves of migration into Gilgit took place, turning the 'original people of Gilgit' into a minority. The chapter proceeds to describe various categories, such as descent groups, groups living in the same area, kinship groups, craftspeople of low status (including their noteworthy attempts to improve their social standing), and people migrating into Gilgit from adjacent valleys. In the discussion of all these categories the author convincingly shows the multi-layered process of identity formation, which is both a personal matter—with perspectives depending on the single person narrating and elaborating on the respective subjects—as well as a matter of integration and segregation on a higher level.

In the second part (Ch. 4), he deals with the conflict between religious groups, namely between the Twelve-Shia and the Sunni. After outlining the process of different waves of Islamization, the author discusses accounts of the so-called tensions between the religious groups in the area, which culminated in the massacre of 1988, or, as Sökefeld himself puts it, "the Kerbala of the Shia in Gilgit" (p. 218). These events had a strong impact in that they further polarized the groups in spite of the ties which had existed between them (e.g. through intermarriage) and changed the political environment (elections were fought along religious lines, for example). Identities were re-examined and religion became a dominant factor in the ascription of identity, although individuals from both sides expressed their regret and chose to act on categories of identity other than those defined by religion.

In the third part (Ch. 5), the author explores the Kashmir conflict with regard to the formation of a political identity. Due to the Kashmir conflict the Northern Areas are under the sole administration of Pakistan. Today its inhabitants are still deprived of fundamental civil rights such as the right to vote in the elections for the National Assembly. This unsatisfactory political situation led repeatedly to insurrections in the area, to reforms in the 1970s, and finally to various demands by different people and political parties. One is for the integration of the area within the state of Pakistan as a fifth province, another is a call for an independent state. In the process of the new political mobilization since the mid 1980s, different categories of identity which are supposed to support the creation of a political entity, such as language and local culture, are being discussed; but one may doubt whether the pluralistic political culture with its differing aims and ideologies can be united into one force against the domination of the Northern Areas by Pakistan.

In the final chapter (Ch. 6), Sökefeld summarizes his central point: Individuals cannot and should not be seen as representatives of a group but rather be taken seriously as those who speak, act, and interpret events on their own account. Citing Giddens, he stresses the mutual influence of actors and structure. Throughout the presentation of his ethnographic material, Sökefeld shows that the positioning of the actors and the practical logic of daily life can only be understood if one takes seriously the flexibility of mutual ascriptions.


Reviewed by Michael Hutt

Pallav Ranjan divides his English adaptation of the Swasthani Vrat Katha, the 'Story of the Fast to the Goddess Swasthani', into twenty-two short 'readings'. Two thirds of these deal with characters and myths from the Hindu Puranas. Readings 1 and 2 deal with cosmology and the creation of the world. The main theme of readings 3 to 7 is the story of Shiva's marriage to Sati Devi, daughter of Daksha Prajapati, Daksha's insulting of Shiva, Sati Devi's self-