

absence of discussion on issues of political economy, individual or community-based discourses concerning resource use and any reference to economic and political networks impacting on the environment. Clemens and Nüsser (p. 179 and note 27) for example mention how, due to growing demands, livestock are brought up to the mountains.

The reader would have liked to learn something about comparative (and eventually competitive) prices and whether middlemen or trader networks with local political leaders and/or army procurers exist that perhaps encourage such imports. Similar networks exist, no doubt, in the spheres of tourism, that probably go well beyond these high mountain valleys, drawing them tighter and tighter into a rapidly globalising context. All the chapters would probably have benefited by drawing more, not only on the studies done by anthropologists within the framework of the 'Culture Area Karakorum' project itself, but also, for example, on the studies of H.M. Sidky on Hunza ('Irrigation and the Political Evolution of the High-Mountain Kingdom of Hunza', *Asian Affairs* 80 (1993), and 'Subsistence, Ecology, and Social Organization among the Hunzakut: A High-Mountain People in the Karakorams', *The Eastern Anthropologist* 46 (1993)), and of A. Knudsen on the on-going conflict concerning the creation of national parks ('Coercive Conservation in the Karakorum: Khunjerab National Park, Pakistan', *Journal of Political Ecology* 6 (1999)).

These criticisms notwithstanding, many of the general conclusions drawn in these chapters and complemented by excellent illustrations, are applicable to most, if not all, high altitude regions of the world where mobile pastoralism is practised. *High Mountain Pastoralism* is a major contribution to the field of studies on high altitude societies, and is a must for all those interested not only in Asia, but also in the Andes and other comparable environments.

Aparna Rao

DIPAK GYAWALI, *Rivers, Technology and Society: Learning the Lessons of Water Management in Nepal*. London & New York: Zed Books, 2003. XV, 281 pages, 13 figures, 8 tables, £ 45.00/\$ 75.00. ISBN 1-84277-276-7

The debate on water use and especially the development of hydroelectric power was the major political issue in Nepal in the 1990s, though it is muted today by the Maoist insurgency. Before and during the 1990s, water was perceived as one of the most important natural resources of Nepal, and hydropower as the key to the economic development of the kingdom. The focus was on state development of large hydropower projects with huge financial support from donors for the export of power to India as a source of revenue and a panacea to Nepal's economic ills. This course of development was epitomized by the Arun-3 project in eastern Nepal, which created a controversy between proponents of large- and proponents of small- to medium-sized projects. Arun-3 was eventually

brought down in 1995 by the withdrawal of its main donor, the World Bank. Its collapse and the change in Nepal from absolute monarchy to party democracy in 1990 helped to provide more scope for the planning and establishment of small- to medium-sized hydro-development projects with the participation of communities and the private sector.

The controversy over the development of water resources in Nepal is the subject of the book by Dipak Gyawali, a member of the Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (RONAST), who has been involved with this issue in various capacities. He was a government engineer from 1979 to 1987 in a wide range of assignments – urban and rural power supply projects, water resources negotiations with India and Bangladesh etc. – and was also nominated to the board of directors of Nepal's Electricity Authority (NEA), from which he resigned because of his opposition to the Arun-3 project. The climax of his government career was serving as Minister of Water Resources between November 2002 and May 2003. Apart from his official assignments, since 1987 Dipak Gyawali has pursued independent interdisciplinary research on water development topics, and built a reputation as Nepal's leading intellectual on water issues with a large record of publications to his credit.

A selection of his contributions spanning the period 1983 to 2000 is collected in this volume, published in Nepal in 2001 as *Water in Nepal* by Himal Books in Kathmandu, and outside Nepal by Zed Books in 2003: the edition here under review. The book's centerpiece is the study "Water in Nepal", which was originally published in 1989 as a monograph of the East-West Center. It is preceded by an introduction to Dipak Gyawali's thinking on and involvement with water issues, and supplemented by book chapters and journal or newspaper articles published in Nepal.

Dipak Gyawali's central argument is that hydroelectric development is an interdisciplinary issue, which cannot be tackled by the engineering or physical sciences alone, but requires the input of economists, social and political scientists, and anthropologists. Problems have been caused by dealing only with the technical side of hydro-development, and neglecting socioeconomic and political matters. The view of water resource development as a social rather than a purely physical issue was first made public in his 1983 article "When does falling water become a natural resource?" and later elaborated more broadly in the East-West Center monograph which is divided into two parts: "Water as a physical resource" is an exploration of the many deficits in our knowledge of water in Nepal; "Water and the social system" discusses water against the backdrop of the traditional Nepalese view of nature and the utilization of natural resources, of the history of water resources development in Nepal and the role of the state in water resources development, and finally of Nepal's economic development and the nature of demand for water within this context.

These issues recur in the other chapters. The Arun-3 project as a focus for conflicts over scale and stakeholder participation occupies center stage and is

given full treatment in "An autopsy of Arun-3", written after the World Bank pull-out, and "Arun-3 Impasse: is there an escape from this blind alley?", published in 1990. Another major issue is the Mahakali treaty of 1991 between Nepal and India, which Dipak Gyawali decries in the chapter "Mahakali treaty: what next?" as a continuation of deals over shared development of water resources between Nepal and India, to the detriment of the former "Water conflicts in southern riparian lands" extends the perspective on Nepal's water resources even further beyond its borders, by analyzing the implications for Nepal of water conflicts in the Indian state of Bihar on its southern boundary that have been created by inappropriate river regime modifications as well as by squabbles over water allocation between the state governments of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, and the central government in Delhi. The other chapters "Contesting hydropower policy", "High dams for Asia", "Three legged water science for Nepal", and "Troubled politics of Himalayan waters" deal with Dipak Gyawali's central concern – water resource development misguided by too narrowly informed and focused policies – from various perspectives. Other recurrent themes are: Nepal's donor dependency, which has led to institutional distortion, i.e. the government monopoly over power production and the dominance of a single government agency: the NEA; the neglected potential of the private sector and of communities as players in the field of energy supply; and finally Nepal's ambiguous and troubled relations with India over water.

*Rivers, Technology and Society* is not a "balanced" scientific inquiry, but provides the partisan view of one who has taken a clear stance in the controversy over hydro-development. As such it is extremely worthwhile reading, and supports Dipak Gyawali's reputation as leading expert on water in Nepal. Its broad perspective, the wealth of facts and figures, the author's erudition, and – last but not least – his elegant, lucid and richly metaphorical prose make this book a pleasure to read.

In sum, this is an excellent book written by one of Nepal's most original minds. It is a must for anyone interested in water development in Nepal, and highly recommended reading for those interested in the emerging trends of interdisciplinary thinking on natural resources management.

Dietrich Schmidt-Vogt

NORBERT PEABODY, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Pre-Colonial India*. (Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society, 9). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. XIII, 190 pages, £ 40.00. ISBN 0-521-46548-6

A book published under such a general title as *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Pre-colonial India* – and even more so if it does not have any qualifying subtitle – surely raises certain expectations. Any good introduction to the history of South Asia shows that the idea of royal authority in the subcontinent is by no means