

BOOK REVIEWS

IUCN, Coral Reefs of the World (Vol. 2): Indian Ocean, Red Sea, and Gulf.
Edited by Susan M. Wells, C. Sheppard, and Martin D. Jenkins. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, U.K., and UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya, 1988, 1 + 389 pp., 36 maps.

The above volume is one of three reference works on the *Coral Reefs of the World*. It is the first global survey of the status of one of the world's most diverse and threatened natural ecosystems, and was launched at the 6th International Coral Reef Congress in Townsville, Australia in August 1988.

Coral Reefs of the World is useful because it covers the status and distribution of reefs in 109 countries where they occur, their current condition, and prescriptions for their conservation and sustainable use, and because coral reefs are important for global biogeochemical cycles, fisheries, and tourism. Volume 2 covers 41 countries in the Afrotropical and Indomalayan regions, extending from East Africa to the Philippines, Indonesia, and Western Australia.

The descriptions of the reefs are arranged according to country and according to a format: geographical location, area depth and altitude, land tenure, physical features, reef structure and coral reef zonation, noteworthy flora and fauna, scientific importance and research, economic and social benefits, disturbance or deficiencies, legal protection, management, and recommendations. While this format may be useful to students of coral reefs and to park managers, it is deficient particularly in the following aspects that pertain to management and research.

1. There is little or no information on the functional dynamics of a coral reef that would be useful for enhancing its management, protection or sustainable use, or for signifying its global importance in relation to biogeochemical cycles.

2. There is no information on the regeneration or successional dynamics of coral reefs that would be particularly useful for this management, restoration, and rehabilitation.

3. There is no information on community differentiation in a reef or methodology on it.

Coral reefs are vulnerable to natural hazards, and 80% of the countries covered report reef damage due to natural causes. Under such circumstances, reefs can survive such perturbations by regrowth. However, human interventions can seriously hinder or even prevent such regeneration. In more than 90 countries out of the 109, there is reef deterioration due to over-exploitation of reef resources, fishing methods, coastal development, and sewage disposal. About 50% of the countries report reef damage due to tourist-associated activities. Information on ecological processes maintaining and regenerating these reefs is scant in relation to these perturbations.

While there is a legal basis for protecting coral reefs in most countries, only about a third of the proposed reefs have a legally-protected status. There is no information on the kind of monitoring and skills needed for managing coral reefs, which is of critical importance for government and non-government organizations in developing countries. The human ecological approaches for conserving coral reefs and using reef resources on a sustainable basis are poorly discussed. While attention is given to intergovernmental international efforts in conservation and management of coral reefs, there is no mention of non-governmental international efforts apart from IUCN and WWF, such as the work of the Western Society of Naturalists which sponsors the International Coral Reef Congresses, the Pacific Science Association's Marine Sciences Subcommittee, and inter-university collaborative research and training programs. Although the coral reef directory originates from the pioneering work of Professors Bernard Salvat (France) and the Coral Reef Working Group of IUCN's Commission on Ecology, the role of this group in reviewing the format and the drafts seems to have been overlooked.

The coral reefs directory has involved international collaboration on a massive scale. Although acknowledgment is given to these contributors, their contributions do not materialize in some form of multi-authorship of the country sections. This potentially undermines the authoritative basis of the sections, particularly since there appears not to have been a scientific advisory committee for the project and since the volumes have been compiled and edited by staff of the Conservation Monitoring Center.

Each volume is well produced and illustrated. At £25 (U.S. \$45) per volume, this important reference work is affordable to institutions but not to individual scientists or conservationists in the developing countries where these reefs are located.

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Bovine Economy in India. By A. Vaidyanathan. Center for Development Studies Monograph Series, Oxford, and IBF Publishing, New Delhi, India, 1988, iv + 209 pp., tables, references, index, Rs 96.00 (hardcover).

This book contains interesting and revealing statistics on bovine population composition relative to land and agricultural productivity. By means of coefficients of multiple regressions and comparisons of various ratios, the author seeks to document the fact that bovines in India are managed in a logical manner, based more on environmental imperatives than religious sentiment.

The book is organized into five chapters and a substantial appendix. Besides the chapters devoted to an introduction and a conclusion, the chapter titles include: "Bovines as a Source of Motive Power in Agriculture," "Milch Animals," and "Changes over Time." *Bovine Economy in India* definitely contributes toward a better understanding and appreciation of the valuable and essential role cattle and buffalo play in Indian agriculture. The bulk of the data presented in the many tables is derived from the National Sample Surveys and district livestock censuses. One major problem with the data is that with rare exception, none are from the 1980's. Therefore, some of the associations presented may not have as strong a relevance to the current situation in India. The appendix contains a great deal of valuable information concerning bovine numbers and feed stuffs of historical interest.

In Chapter 1, Vaidyanathan reviews the literature on the central question of surplus cattle in India and the role that religion may play. He emphasizes that the villagers tend to make decisions on the rational utilization of available resources rather than religious leanings. He states three major propositions he hopes to support by the arguments presented in this book: (1) animal power for field cultivation is the first priority of farmers, (2) cows are kept for bullock replacement, and milk production is only incidental, and (3) feed for work animals and breeding stock takes precedence over others.

Chapter 2 deals with bovines as a source of motive power in agriculture. A great deal of information is presented relating the number of working bullocks to land size, number of humans, mechanization, etc. Tables show various aspects of cattle number relative to other parameters at the national, state, and district levels. Numerous ratios and regression coefficients are calculated. The central message is that India is unique because the monsoon rains make it necessary for most landowners to have their own bullocks so that they can begin to cultivate the ground as soon as possible upon the initial rains of the season.

Chapter 3, "Milch Animals," presents some actual cost figures, but most of the data are from the 1960's and 1970's. Vaidyanathan also compares the value of buffalo and cattle as milk producers. He argues that the buffalo produces more than half of the total milk produced in India and appears to do it more efficiently. However, the preference for bullocks as working animals means that many more female cattle are needed to provide the replacement stock than would otherwise be needed.

Chapter 4 discusses the changes over time with regard to the cattle numbers and relative merits of buffaloes vs. cattle. Vaidyanathan spends considerable space comparing various ratios and correlation coefficients. The significance of some of these exercises is not clear.

Chapter 5 contains conclusions and implications. The major conclusions are: (1) animal power is necessary, (2) each farmer wants his own bovines, (3) small farmers carry a larger number of animals per unit of cultivated area, (4) land-holding size determines work animal density, (5) buffaloes as work animals are significant, (6) cows are mainly to produce bullocks and only incidentally for milk, (7) buffaloes are kept mainly for milk, (8) there is a wide inter-regional difference in milk consumption, and (9) buffaloes are more prevalent where feed supply is abundant and large farms exist. In closing, Vaidyanathan explains that he did not present more material and calculations on bovine costs and productivity because information on these subjects in India was limited. He did present data having to do with number and sex of bovines during the period covered (mainly 1951–1972) because more information was available. Unfortunately, the censuses from 1977 and 1982 were incompletely analyzed at the time he prepared the book.

A critical appraisal of the format reveals editorial inaccuracies. Some articles cited in the text are not found in the reference section. There are errors in the references and a number of typographical errors in the text. Some of the tables have no date or use abbreviations that are not explained. Terms like "Lorenz ratio" (p. 84, table 3.9) and "Loreny ratio" (p. 91, table 3.12) are not defined. Editorial errors may occur, but it is exasperating to be unable to find key references cited in the text in the reference section (such as Rajapurohit, 1979, and Nair, 1981).

A sage once stated, "One can make no generalizations — including this one." This statement illustrates the danger of implying profound meaning to associations obtained by manipulations of national statistics, where many regional differences have been ironed out. Conversely, extrapolation of regional association to the national level may be just as dangerous. In this regard, Vaidyanathan has tried to temper his conclusions with cautious qualifications. Nevertheless, some of the points he makes are dulled by the fact that recent changing situations do not corroborate the findings based on the 1970's data. Perhaps a more appropriate title for this book might have been, *Historical Perspectives on Indian Cattle Statistics Between 1951 and 1972*.

All in all, the book does present some interesting points of view and contains considerable information for those interested in bovine management in India. For these reasons, I certainly would buy the book myself and recommended it to others.

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The Real and Imagined Role of Culture in Development: Case Studies from Indonesia. Edited by Michael R. Dove. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1988, xiii + 289 pp., illustrations, tables, references cited, notes on contributors, index, \$32.00 (softcover)

This book's central thesis is "that traditional culture is intimately bound up with and directly supports the basic social, economic, and ecological processes of society" (p. 1). As a result, the editor wisely argues, government efforts to develop Indonesia's diverse regions must begin by examining local institutions so as to appreciate their role in social and economic life. Rather than regarding "traditional systems of knowledge and belief . . . as obstacles to development," Indonesia's leaders must regard them as "resources for development, to be studied and utilized wherever possible" (p. 8).

Non-Indonesianists will not be shocked by this plea for a culturally-sensitive approach to development. Indeed some may be disappointed that the argument is formulated so particularistically, with little comparison to other world areas, and little discussion of larger debates on the nature of modern development. The editor, however, has chosen a narrow focus, in part, no doubt, because the volume is aimed as much at Indonesian officials as it is an academic audience. Among the former, Dove rightly argues, the idea that indigenous peoples may have a rich understanding of the natural environment, or skillful techniques to enduringly exploit it, is indeed unfamiliar. Given the speed of development in Indonesia's periphery, this is a timely and compelling message.

Nine ethnographic studies convincingly illustrate this general theme in varied contexts. Twice-published in other collections, Jane Atkinson's superb study of Wana (Sulawesi) religion shows that, in the face of government policies that require all Indonesian citizens to profess one of five official world religions, the Wana have defended inherited ways by adopting many of the idioms of Indonesian civil religion. In this sense, tribal religion shows little

of the stasis or ignorant parochialism government officials attribute it. Drawing on materials from rural Central Java, Adrian Rienks and Purwanta Iskandar show that another aspect of popular religion, curing, is also characterized by dynamism and practical utility. By stereotyping traditional curers as charlatans, the government has missed a vital opportunity to link its programs to extant patterns of popular health care.

Three essays, Jeffrey Brewer's on East Sumbawa, Reimar Schefold's on Mentawai, and P. M. Laksono's on the Mt. Merapi region of Central Java, address disputes between the government and native communities over land rights. Blending ethnography with social history, the first two essays show that the problem reaches far back into colonial times, when the Dutch, in the interest of political control, sought to resettle villagers in accessible, sedentary communities. Today, the matter has been complicated by agreements between foreign transnationals and government elites that effectively ignore native swidden rights so as to facilitate massive deforestation. Laksono's discussion of government efforts to relocate Javanese villagers in the aftermath of Mt. Merapi's devastating eruptions presents a more complex picture, in which the government's role appears more benign.

Carl Hoffman's essay on the Punan, the legendary "wild people" of the Kalimantan bush, addresses this same problem of land rights from the perspective of ethnic ethnogenesis. Disputing characterizations of the Punan as a separate, autochthonous people of the interior, Hoffman argues that the Punan are in fact merely the "forest wing" of a larger population that includes sedentary Dayak. Efforts to resettle the nomadic Punan overlook their longstanding role in a lucrative transregional trade in forest products. Though controversial, Hoffman's engaging essay deserves to become a classic in Kalimantan ethnography.

The chapters by Hans Daeng and Michael Dove draw on cultural materialist arguments to explain the rationality of feasting traditions that, from an individualized market perspective, appear irrational. As he himself acknowledges, Daeng's article on feasting in Flores is the more speculative, drawing as it does on intriguing, but incomplete historical materials. Dove's essay on the Kantu' of Kalimantan is more accomplished. The author argues that government efforts to suppress traditional drinking festivals overlook the vital role of feasting in integrating otherwise small, dispersed populations. Though some may dispute his functionalist thesis, Dove's essay represents an important contribution to cross-cultural literature on drinking, and, more generally, the social functions of ritual festivity. The final case study, Victor King's essay on social hierarchy among the Maloh of Kalimantan, is only distantly related to the book's development themes. In linking the changing contours of inequality to political articulation with the outside, however, King demonstrates that for almost two centuries Maloh social hierarchy has been influenced by external trade and polity. This brilliant essay deserves to become a classic of Southeast Asian ethnohistory.

Though the quality of individual contributions is superb, there are gaps in the larger logic of the book. The "traditional" cultures included in this survey are for the most part those of the Indonesian periphery. Had the editor paid more attention to larger ethnic populations such as the Minangkabau, Acehnese, or Javanese, the claim that the government views culture as "excess baggage" (p. 1) would be far less tenable. Similarly, the religion of most Indonesians, Islam, receives almost no attention here, despite the fact that its political demands have played a large role in shaping national policies. In this sense, despite ambitious overview essays by George Appell and Michael Dove, the book suffers from a lamentable lack of understanding of the broader cultural and political forces that have shaped elite Indonesian culture. Though, when viewed from the periphery, these may look like the product of sheer ignorance or Javanese "chauvinism" (p. 33), most such policies bear the imprint of a long struggle between rival interest groups, with complex ties to Indonesia's rural populations. In this sense, modern policies reveal the all-too-apparent influence of "indigenous" culture, even though it is not that of the tribal margins. On this point, the volume would have benefitted from exposure to the abundant literature inside and outside Indonesian studies on the genesis, organization, and ideology of the modern nation-state.

Given the editor's laudable desire to speak to Indonesian administrators, these theoretical omissions are perhaps understandable; whatever their source, moreover, they in no way represent fatal flaws. The ethnographic reporting in this book is first-rate, and the volume as a whole makes an important contribution to our understanding of the impact of development on Indonesia's imperilled periphery.

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Lands at Risk in the Third World: Local-Level Perspectives. Edited by Peter D. Little, Michael Horowitz, and A. Endre Nyerges. Westview Press, Boulder, 1987, 416 pp., \$25.85.

Arid Land Use Strategies and Risk Management in the Andes: A Regional Anthropological Perspective. Edited by David L. Browman. Westview Press, Boulder, 1987, 335 pp., \$41.50.

The two edited volumes reviewed here deal critically with issues related to development policies and the perspectives and actions of the peoples subject to these policies in rural areas of the Third World. *Lands at Risk in the Third World* is global in compass, while *Arid Land Use Strategies* focuses on one region and a narrower (but varied) range of environmental situations.

Both, however, consider political, economic, cultural, and environmental issues, and both juxtapose "local-level" perspectives with "externally imposed" policies. Further, as is evident from their titles, the issues of "risk" and its perception are central to their concerns.

Browman's introduction to *Arid Land Use Strategies* lays out a set of specific "environmental parameters" or problems posing risks to production: tectonic movement, el Nino/Southern Oscillation, and drought. Development programs, he points out, approach their task in four ways: developing carrying capacity, improving plant and animal species, improving delivery of services, and developing local socio-economic institutions.

These approaches, however, often disregard or conflict with local-level strategies of adjustment to the hazardous environmental conditions enumerated and others, with the result that they achieve only limited success at best, or, at worst, exacerbate already deteriorating conditions for local populations. This point is not a new one for human ecologists, nor is the recommendation that future development policies take care to appreciate the reasons for and effectiveness of indigenous "coping strategies." The contributions this volume makes are in the particular instances in which local "risk management strategies" are illustrated.

The volume is divided into two sections, one on animal management and one on water and land management, but the two intersect in many places because herding and agriculture are integrally combined in the Andes. Perevelotsky's chapter on the Piura desert, for example, illustrates the dynamic interchange between goat herders and farmers in an unpredictably changing environment. McCorkle raises issues of labor disjunctions between cultivation and herding for mixed farming households, illustrating a point made by Lees and Bates (1974); spatial demands of herding and farming place intense conflicting labor pressures on households attempting to integrate the two. Guillet addresses problems in the process of intensification of agropastoralism in the central Andes in the context of proletarianization of herding. Similarly, Brown locates traditional strategies of environmental adjustment in the current changing political economy. Brownman also looks at attempts at intensification of pastoralism, showing a disjunction between development-oriented and risk aversion-oriented models. West examines the role of a technical innovation, the introduction of trucks for transport, in the exploitation of firewood for exchange.

Eling, in turn, looks at a traditional technology, the *boca toma* (canal intake) system, as a device needing more attention by developers, Benfer, Weir, and Enriquez describe ancient water control technology on the Peruvian coast, while Enriquez gives a detailed account of *hoya* cultivation, a prehistoric technology with considerable contemporary potential. Ochoa looks at another technology, the *gocha* (sunken field) system. Diaz gives an overview

of complex organization of inter-ethnic exploitation of vertical ecological zones in Northern Chile. Druss returns to the issue of environmental uncertainty, including short- and long-term climatic change as well as geomorphic uncertainty. The collection ends with a discussion by Kent of periodic aridity and pre-Hispanic settlement patterns in the Titicaca Basin.

Overall, the collection is an excellent source of information about the material basis of subsistence in the Andean region and a useful set of illustrations of rural ecology in general.

Lands at Risk in the Third World, on the other hand, looks more directly at the issue of development itself. It challenges repeatedly the assumption by development agencies at various levels that environmental decline is caused by "traditional practices" themselves, and sharply criticizes development practices and policies that ignore current trends that are the source of environmental degradation. The volume is the outcome of a 1985 conference in Binghamton, New York.

While in Browman's collection, risk was understood as the problem of potential economic failure in the face of unpredictable environmental factors (such as drought), risk is understood in the Little, Horowitz, and Nyerges volume as the potential for permanent damage to environmental resources as well as people, as the outcome of human actions. Because the concerns here are more diffuse and the perspectives more varied, it is difficult to summarize the volume or do justice to the chapters. The editors have divided them among four sections: "Models of Resource Management," "The Role of the State," "Changing Rights to Land and Other Resources," and "Local Management Strategies." Underlying all these is a notion of "mismanagement" resulting from global process (such as demographic change and the spread of capitalism) and resultant state and agency policies. The second major theme is the assertion that local-level processes, critical to an understanding of environmental problems, have been mistakenly ignored, and need to be taken into account. These processes include socio-political relationships such as changing land and other resource rights. While indigenous resource management practices need to be appreciated, they are not a "solution" in the face of pressures which are non-local in origin.

In the section on resource management models, Collins looks at the problem of rural labor scarcity and its effects on conservation and environmental degradation, Schmink and Wood point out that degradation of the Amazon results from capitalist expansion (itself a product of state policies), Spooner argues for a recognition of local cultural values generally, with Baluchistan as a case in point, and Moran looks at variation in the effects of cultivation in the Amazon. Each of these makes a strong case for understanding differences in the situations of different human groups (classes, ethnic, or occupational groups) as well as local environmental circumstances. In the section

on the role of the state, similar points are made. Horowitz and Salem-Murdock show that the practices of Sudanese herders leading to desertification are the result of effects of a development scheme for irrigated agriculture. Whitney also looks at the Sudan to understand the impact of fuelwood use and policies to ameliorate deforestation. T. Painter turns to the West African Sahel to look at the negative impact of the application of a standard development approach to non-uniform conditions, and M. Painter shifts to lowland Bolivia for a look at "settler impoverishment and environmental destruction" and how they are related as an outcome of unfavorable exchange with the regional capitalist economy.

Little starts off the section on changing rights to land and other resources with the case of conflict between pastoralists and farmers in Kenya, particularly looking at cultivating herders and absentee herdowners. Ibrahim follows with an examination of why the Sudan is "prone to the disaster of famine in the wake of a drought." Lopez moves to the Philippines to show how "long-term environmental management cannot be separated from problems of tenure," while Anderson, still in the Philippines, is concerned with development's threats to the cultural survival as well as ecology of Filipino groups in "marginal resource areas." In the local management strategies section, however, Brush tells us that in the Peruvian Andes, agricultural intensification sometimes results in greater complexity without degradation, and useful traditional practices sometimes persist. Garland points out that degradation does occur with intensification in the Peruvian upper jungle, where deforestation is increasing exponentially. Nyerges criticizes current development policies to increase population in the Guinea Savanna of West Africa because its productive potential is limited and efforts to overcome these limitations will lead to accelerated loss of soil and vegetation resources. We return again to the Sudan in Salem-Murdock's chapter on the progressive deterioration of an irrigated agriculture scheme and efforts to rehabilitate it doomed by failure to recognize the strategies and interests of participants. Merrey uses a systems theory approach to account for how Pakistan has arrived at a food deficit despite (or because of) massive investments in irrigation for over a century; organization rather than technology appears to be culprit. Finally, Messerschmidt takes us to Nepal to understand and appreciate traditional forest management and changing national policy using the "village dialogue" methodology.

The various articles are extremely rich in documentation and local details. Overall, the volume seems to me an ideal text for a course in rural development or rural ecology, as well as an excellent resource for scholars in this field.

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The Dynamics of Polyandry: Kinship, Domesticity, and Population on the Tibetan Border. By Nancy E. Levine. The University of Chicago Press, appendix, glossary, bibliography, index, \$17.95 (paper), \$47.50 (cloth).

Fraternal polyandry, that rare marital institution in which brothers share a wife or multiple wives, is one of those unique social practices which has a special place in ethnology because of its strangeness to Western ways. Early European visitors to Tibet, such as the early eighteenth-century Jesuit Ippolito Desideri, were frankly repelled by the custom even though they explained it with reference to its adaptive value. Polyandrous marriages, they reasoned and were told, reduced family fissioning and kept estates undivided in the marginal agricultural environment of the plateau. Indeed, most subsequent investigators stress this same domestic adaptation along with the societal corollary that it moderates population growth in a natural fertility population.

Nancy Levine's book enters this discussion from a slightly different perspective. Her unusually detailed study, based on repeated fieldwork spanning 15 years among a remote ethnically Tibetan population, accepts the economically and demographically beneficial effects of polyandry. She is unwilling, however, to accept these correlations as the primary explanation for the practice. Levine's interest is less in arriving at the origin of polyandry, one of the motivating issues for earlier economic and ecological research, than in exploring the mutual reinforcement of kinship ideology, local historical events, politics, and polyandrous marriage within a particular social strata of Nyinba society. For Levine, "treating kinship and marriage systems as artifacts of economic and demographic exigencies and individual marital relationships as governed by material calculations impoverishes our understandings" (p. 266).

The population with which Levine seeks to enrich our understanding of polyandry is the Nyinba, a group of 1332 ethnic Tibetans whose ancestors settled four nucleated villages between 9,500–11,000 ft in far northwestern Nepal. This group is distinguished (as are many of the ethnic Tibetans in Nepal) from more general Tibetan society by a distinctive dialect, preference for cross-cousin marriage, and the importance of Nepali political developments in local history. Neighboring villages at lower elevations to the south and west of the Nyinba are settled by high-caste Hindus (p. 24), some of whose ancestors moved up from the Indian plains. The Nyinba, among whom every man with brothers enters a polyandrous marriage which is rarely broken, are also distinctive for their extremely high rates of stable polyandrous unions. But in spite of the differences, Levine emphasizes that "Nyinba arrangements of polyandry, certain features of their system of ranking by descent, and their household system are unequivocally Tibetan" (p. 20).

The 11 chapters give well-organized attention to theoretical and substantial themes (1 and 2), kinship and social organization (3 and 4), individual and domestic group processes (5 through 8), and economics and demogra-

phy (9, 10, Appendix C). Chapter 11 provides a very useful summary and defense of an analytic strategy that inverts the usual order of things by beginning with kinship and ending with economy. Levine begins here “because Nyinba . . . speak of kin ties as pre-existent and as conditioning conduct, and because a majority of transactions occur between kin – or between those for whom the absence of a kin is the significant fact” (p. 268).

Given that, it comes as no surprise that some of the finest and most ethnographically-textured discussions in the book are in the roughly two-thirds devoted to features of domestic, kin, and social organization. Levine’s treatment of Nyinba kinship categories and the ideology of descent, for example, will remain a primary source with implications beyond the study of Tibetan and related populations. Part of its value is in the clear demonstration of how an apparently rigid kinship ideology can be made flexible, allowing for clan statuses to rise in an explicitly hierarchical system. Similarly, the discussion of slavery among the Nyinba represents an important treatment of a once widespread Himalayan institution.

Subsequent chapters on domestic group organization and processes are among the best descriptions of these levels of organization in the literature. Levine’s detailed account of corporate households strongly committed to inter-generational continuity and central to village social organization and politics is an important addition to the comparative literature on household and family. Nyinba cultural emphasis on this unit, called *trongba*, is an important example of domestic groups organized to resist variations across developmental cycles.

Here, too, Levine nicely shows how the ideology of inheritance allows one to predict the lines of fission that do occur. Thus, she distinguishes among three types of polyandrous union: simple polyandry in which one wife is shared by multiple men, polygynous-polyandry in which two or more wives are shared, and conjoint marriages in which multiple wives are legally married to brothers but are sexually exclusive within the brother group. Conjoint marriages are highly discouraged and are seen as a prelude to fission. Levine’s discussion (p. 143-171) demonstrates that these marriages are most likely to occur when brothers are half-sibs through different mothers, even when sib group size is held constant. The family discord leading to these marriages is likely to occur exactly where Nyinba decent ideology would predict: between half-sibs who differ in their culturally perceived inheritance from mothers.

By itself, the rich ethnographic material is sufficient to make and illustrate Levine’s main points: ignoring kinship and descent, ideology, and local history impoverishes our understanding of a people’s adaptation. In fact, most cultural ecologists would find this noncontroversial. Levine’s further point that equilibrium models misrepresent empirical conditions in small-scale

social formations is also less controversial than she implies although few have applied these lessons to studies of polyandry (p. 273-278).

The full picture of Nyinba adaptation would integrate Levine's analysis of social organization and ideology with economic and population processes. Yet, although the discussion in Chapter 9 provides an excellent outline of economic strategies, it fails to achieve this integration. Scatterplots demonstrate the widely-established relationship between land and livestock holdings and household size, for example, but no representative processual analysis is attempted. This is also true of the demographic material relegated to Appendix C. Levine indicates that she collected retrospective fertility histories from 126 women (p. 285); in spite of a possible sample problem, it would have been extremely enlightening to view women's fertility with respect to life course experiences, types of marriage, and in relation to *trongba* histories. Such analyses would truly have enlarged our understanding of the *dynamics* of Nyinba polyandry. Moreover, this integration would strengthen Levine's conclusion: "economy is no more compelling of marriage, household, or family organization than any other feature of the sociocultural system is" (p. 279).

These are a specialist's complaints, however, and they do not detract from the overall value of this ethnography. On the whole, this book is an important, wonderfully textured, and sound account of social dynamics in a polyandrous society. Its value is both theoretical and substantive for comparative social demographers and researchers into the household and family. For area specialists, it is part of the trend toward more theoretically-sensitive and empirically-grounded treatments that have come to be the rule rather than the exception in Himalayan studies.

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