

Les auteurs de ce livre se posent la question de savoir pourquoi tant de gens, scientifiques et non, croient en l'hérédité de l'intelligence, des comportements, de la criminalité. . . . C'est parce que c'est là ce qu'ils veulent croire. . . . C'est parce que cela répond à leur vision d'une société de classes. . . . Une société dans laquelle ils se placent au sommet de la hiérarchie. . . . Et qu'il est commode d'y demeurer quand les inégalités se perpétuent et que certains sont plus égaux que d'autres.

Les déterministes biologiques, n'utilisent dans leur recherches que quelques variables allant dans le sens de leurs préjugés, et ne rendant pas compte de l'énorme complexité du social qui ne se limite pas à quelques gènes, et cela d'autant plus lorsque ces études sont conduites pour des raisons nettement idéologiques.

Ce livre comporte une bibliographie impressionnante, qui permet aux lecteurs et aux chercheurs d'approfondir leurs connaissances. Ce livre est un manuel à utiliser dans des cours universitaires, en biologie, en psychologie, en sociologie, en anthropologie, en criminologie, en histoire et même en science politique. La traduction française est excellente et exprime bien la pensée des auteurs tout en évitant l'ésotérisme et l'hexagonal.

Four Villages: Architecture in Nepal

Katherine D. Blair

Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press co-published with the Craft and Folk Art Museum (Los Angeles), 1985. 71 pp. \$10.00 (paper).

Reviewer: Robert A. Paul

Emory University

This book is the result of a museum exhibition of the same name, and its layout and format reflect its origins: it is a slim but oversized paperback, with numerous black and white photographs and architectural drawings. The book is not just a catalogue for the exhibit, however, nor is it essentially a picture book or coffee-table volume. The author has attempted through a juxtaposition of photos, diagrams, and expository prose to capture the distinctive styles of architecture of four different ethnic groups and ecologies in Nepal, situating the houses and villages in cultural context.

After an introductory chapter, which does a creditable job of summarizing essential geographic, economic, and social aspects of Nepal in general, the book consists of four chapters, each divided into two sections. The first section of each chapter attempts a thumbnail ethnography of the group whose architecture is being discussed while the second section focusses on the design, use, and construction of a typical house in the village studied.

The four ethnic groups surveyed include Tharus of an Inner Terai Valley; Gurungs of the Modi River Valley; Marphalis of Panchgaon, a subgroup of Thakalis living in an inner Himalayan valley below Dhaulagiri, and Newars living in a village in the Kathmandu Valley.

The book is at its best explaining the suitability of house styles to the local conditions in which they are found. Factors as varied as climate, land use, raw material availability, transport, labor sources, balanced requirements for sunlight and protection against cold and wind, structural requirements, history, and aesthetic traditions

are shown to interact to determine the recognizably distinctive features of village and house styles in the different groups. Thus one learns, for example, that the absence of chimneys, leading to smoke-filled houses, has the advantage of reducing the threat of wood-boring insects by coating timbers with tar, and of keeping out malarial mosquitos. The lowland dwelling Tharus, hence, put up with the smoke; while the Marphalis, in their high and dry climate, have responded eagerly to the innovation of chimneys made out of flattened transport tins.

The idea of looking at cultures through their architecture, and at architecture as a cultural product, is a good one. Because of this, one wishes the author had pursued it in a somewhat more ambitious and systematic way. The anthropologist would have benefitted from more data on household composition, land ownership, and numerous other matters while the architectural reader, I would guess, will find technical information lacking. Likewise, the photos at present constitute a nice travel essay, but do not really constitute a disciplined approach to the subject.

The book's ambitions are, however, relatively modest. The author makes no effort to claim that these four villages represent anything other than themselves; and there is no unifying framework of theory or comparison. Within the limits of what it attempts, then, this book is a slight but attractive presentation of an interesting aspect of Nepali ethnography.

The Lowland Maya Postclassic

Edited by Arlen F. Chase and Prudence M. Rice

Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1985. viii + 352 pp. Photos, maps, charts, bibliography. n.p. (cloth).

Reviewer: Richard E.W. Adams

University of Texas at San Antonio

This is a valiant attempt to put together a coherent volume on the Maya Lowland Postclassic period (ca. 900-1540 AD). Unfortunately, it does not meet the tests of utility, comprehensiveness, or currency. Ten essays were taken from a 1979 symposium organized for the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association, others added, an introduction written, bridging passages inserted by the editors, and a final synthesis written by David Freidel.

The volume editors say that they aim at a state of the art assessment, interpretation, and explanation of the Postclassic. Most of the articles and papers are by researchers who have recently been or currently are engaged in work which bears on the questions of the Postclassic. However, the author list is selective and thereby omits important people, data, and ideas. Several themes of the Postclassic are identified by the editors and include those of long distance trade, locations of communities in coastal and riverine situations, and the emphasis on militarism. A space of 250,000 square kilometres, and a time span of 600 years are the framework. Five regions which comprehend some 50% of the total area are defined. The remainder of the lowlands are either unknown during the period or refuge zones.

The book largely consists of the specific and sometimes excessively detailed reports on recent project results. The lack of comprehensiveness is created by the fact that no effort is made to systematically review and integrate information on the