

The Himalayan Review : A Perspective

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I. Introduction

Geography that deals with space and history dealing with time have both been early fields of knowledge. While the frontiers of geography was much widened by the age of exploration, it became an important discipline particularly following the colonial era. And many of the earliest geographical journals were published in countries with some colonial heritage. The first professional geographical journal, *Erde* (Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin) was issued from Berlin in 1853. The then Austrian empire soon followed with *Geographische Gesellschaft* in 1857 from Vienna. The Russian *Geograficheskoe Obshchestvo S. S. S. R. Izvestiia* came out in 1865 (Leningrad) and the Italian *Societa Geografia Italiana Bollettino* in 1868 (Roma). In the last decade of the 19th century appeared the Japanese *Chigaku Zasshi* in 1889 (Tokyo), the French *Annales de Geographie* in 1891 (Paris) and the British *Geographical Journal* in 1893 (London). The first American geographical series, *National Geographic Magazine*, commenced publication in 1889 (Washington) followed by the *Journal of Geography* in 1902 (Chicago). In India, the *Indian Geographical Journal* was first published in 1926 (Madras) while in China, *Acta Geographica Sinica* commenced publication in 1934.

By 1971, there were 310 geographical journals published in 66 countries¹. Of these countries including Nepal, 35 had only one geographical journal. In conformity with its pioneer contribution to geography Federal Republic of

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1. Chauncy D. Harr, *Annotated World List of Selected Current Geographical Serials in English, French, and German*. [University of Chicago, Research Paper No. 137, Chicago, 1971].

Germany had the largest number with 47 geographical serials. Next came the U.S. with 28 serials, France 25, U. K. 19 Poland 17 and U.S. S. R. 14. Eastern Europe with a total of 63 serials led as block: Poland (17), Yugoslavia (11), Hungary (10), G. D. R. (7), Czechoslovakia (7), Rumania (7) and Bulgaria (4).

The Nepal Geographical Society was established in 1962. It started the publication of the first geographical journal in Nepal in 1968 and the annual was appropriately titled the **Himalayan Review**. The inaugural volume was issued as a special number for the 21st International Geographical Congress held in New Delhi in December 1968. Since then the H.R. has been published regularly but for the two breaks in 1969 and 1973. It must be considered a noteworthy effort in the light of the high mortality and morbidity of most professional journals in Nepal. The present article is an attempt to review the progress and content of *The Himalayan Review* during its first decade of publication.

II. Shape and Size

The H. R. has seen three changes in its editorial board: covering the periods 1968-72, 1973-74 and 1975 to-date. It has also undergone changes in format from the initial pocket-book size to a larger one and since 1973-74, and native Nepalese paper has replaced polished paper as the cover page. The size of the journal had decreased in the number of the pages. The first five volumes had an average of 64 pages while the last four average only 53 pages. The number of articles has similarly decreased with an average of only four in the last four issues. The under-nourishment of the H. R. will probably be accentuated by the appearance of another serial, *Geographical Journal of Nepal* since August 1978. The contributors to the later journal are not only those who were long associated with H. R. but two members of editorial board are common to both journals. There is also some correlation in the progressive loss of size of the latter volumes with substantial decrease in the advertisement material. Compared to nine items in the first volume, there is only one advertisement in the last volume. Another interesting feature is the constant price of the journal although paper and printing costs have gone up by nearly four times over the last decade. The original price of Rs. 10 quoted in the first issue has remained unchanged but for the foreign countries (\$ 1 to \$ 2.50).

2. Published by Geography Instruction Committee, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur.

III. Contributors

The nine volumes of **H. R.** published during the ten yearperiod 1968-78 include 45 articles and 16 book reviews along with news about activities of the Nepal Geographical Society. In all 25 contributors were responsible for the articles and book reviews. Among the contributors, seven were foreigners and the rest were Nepalese. And five contributors were non-geographers representing other disciplines such as anthropology, architecture, meteorology ornithology and archeology. Among the most frequent contributors to the journal were C. B. Shrestha with 6 articles, S. L. Amatya (5), Harka Gurung (4) and U. M. Malla (3). Ratna S. Rana, Mohan N. Shrestha, S. H. Shrestha and R. K. Shrestha had two articles each. U. M. Malla and Harka Gurung ceased to contribute articles beyond 1972 and S. L. Amatya followed suit in 1973/74. The pioneer Nepalese geography teacher, J. B. S. Burathokey, published only one article (1968) and he passed away in 1974.³ Nine other younger geographers contributed one article each. Among the Nepalese contributors, five each were trained in India and U. S., four in U. K. and one in Nepal. Of the 25 contributors, 17 were Ph. D.'s while six had no teaching association.

IV. Content-by theme

The articles published in **H. R.** have been classified by theme and aspect in Chart 1. Each article is given acumulative number and placed under the relevant aspect according to its emphasis. They have thus been categorised into sixteen major and minor geographical aspects. From the point of view of major aspects of geography, 11 deal with Cultural and Social Geography, 10 deal with Economic Geography and only seven pertain to Physical Geography. If we examine the 45 articles by further systematic aspects, the pattern is as follows. Regional description and planning lead the field with 10 contributions. These include 4 countrywide and 3 local descriptions and 3 regional planning studies. Urban geography and theoretical model come next with five articles each. Among the articles in urban field, one refers to urbanisation trend in Nepal and only one deals on a specific Nepalese town (Bhaktapur). Three other urban studies concern places as distant as Sultanpur in U. P. and Coatbridge and Glasgow in U. K. The contributions related to methodology are all in the nature of theoretical models and remain the exclusive preserve of geographers trained in U. S.

3. Obituary by M. S. Manandhar in **H. R.** vol. VII (1975), p. 46-47.

They deal with game theory, stochastic model, diffusion of innovation and simulation of energy crisis.

Of the four articles in field of agricultural geography, three are by the same author. The aspects described are crop distribution, cash crops, crop combination and factorial analysis of agricultural pattern. Land Use, Geomorphology, Settlement (rural) and Cultural aspects have three articles each. Contributions on land use refer to Nepal in general and Nala and Khandbari in particular. Geomorphology is represented by articles on landscape pattern of Nepal and details of Pokhara and Kathmandu valleys. Articles on Matwan Chhetris, rotating credit and Kathmandu architecture all with cultural emphasis are contributions by non-geographers.

There are two articles on climatology. One deals with Nepal in general and the other refers specifically to Kathmandu valley. There is one article each representing physical zoogeography, transport, commerce, populations, political and historical geography.

V. Content by-area

Description of various geographical aspects of Nepal as a whole is the recurrent theme of most articles published in H. R. There are 19 articles that pertain to different aspects of Nepal ranging from landscape to foreign trade. While those dealing with crops, birds, education and socio-economic imbalances yield a definite regional pattern other themes such as population, transport and geopolitics provide a more general overview.

There are only seven articles that deal with specific areas. These studies are plotted location in Chart 2 representing Nepal in a regional matrix. The chart is the summation of geographical-planning regions whereby M stand for Mountains, H for Hills, P for Plains and FW for Far West. W for Western, C for Central, E for Eastern and KV for Kathmandu valley. Thus the area studies by regions comes to:

FWM = 2

WM = 1

WH = 1

CH = 3

KV = 6

EH = 2

The chart clearly shows great disparity in coverage among the regions. For example, the entire Plain or Tarai region still remains *terra incognita* as far as Nepalese geographical research is concerned. Even regarding the Mountain region, the three contributions deal not with orography or glaciology but social anthropology. The largest number of area specific articles deal with Kathmandu valley which covers only 0.4 per cent of the total area of the country. The articles on Kathmandu valley are related to climate, geomorphology, settlement, agriculture and architecture.

The next area of concentration is the eastern part of Central Hills coterminous with Kathmandu valley. It has three articles dealing with land use in Nala, description of Palanchok and system of central places along the Arniko Highway. The Far Western Mountains and Eastern Hills have two articles each. While the contributions on Chaudhise Dara and Matwali Chhetri of the Far West were the by-product of a mountaineering expedition to Kanjiroba Himal, the two articles on Khandbari in the Eastern Hills were the result of an in-depth study in small area development. The lone article about Western Mountain (rotating credit) and Western Hills (Pokhara geomorphology) were both the outcome of field studies for doctoral dissertation. One article dealing with agricultural pattern covers the entire Far Western region.

VI. Observations.

Most of the contributions in the H. R. belong to the category of economic and cultural geography. Among the numerous articles that deal with economic aspect, there are at least seven that may be classified as applied geography or are related to development planning. There are, however, no articles on other important economic themes such as production, internal trade, manufacturing or tourism. Another glaring omission is medical geography or human ecology in which aspect one of the latest scientific geographical paper on Nepal was published.⁴

The various aspects of Physical Geography are not only poorly represented but many are entirely lacking. For example, there are no studies on geology, glaciology and plant geography in which field foreign researchers

4 C. E. Taylor. "A medical survey of the Kali Gaudaki and Pokhara Valleys of Central Nepal", *Geographical Review*, vol. XLI (1951), p. 421-33.

Chart 1: Classification by Aspect

Geographical Aspect	Vol. 1968	Vol. II-III 1969-70	Vol. IV. 1971	Vol. V 1972
1. Regional	1. Nepal (General) 2. Palanchok (description)	7. Nepal (Regionalisation)	12. Nepal (crop production) 13. Chaudbise (description)	20. Nepal (education) also item 21
2. Physical	3. Nepal Himalayas			
3. Geomorphology		8. Pokhara valley	14. Nepal 15. Kathmandu valley	
4. Climatology	4. Kathmandu			
5. Zoo-geography			16. Distribution of birds	
6. Land Use		9. Nala		
7. Agriculture	5. Crop distribution		also item 12	21. Cash crop distribution also item 23
8. Settlement				
9. Urban	6. Bhaktapur		17. Coatbridge	
10. Transport				
11. Commerce				
12. Population				
13. Political				
14. Cultural			18. Matwali Chhetri	22. Rotating credit
15. Historical				23. Agriculture (Kathmandu)
16. Theoretical Model		10. Game theory 11. Stochastic model	19. Spatial choice	
No. of Articles	6	5	8	4
Book Reviews	5	3	1	-
Pages	88	96	84	72

Chart 1 : Classification by Aspect

Geographical Aspect	Vol VI 1973-74	Vol. VII 1975	Vol. VIII 1976	Vol. IX 1977	Vol. X 1978
1. Regional	24. Arniko Rejmarg area 25. Growth		34. Khandbari(planning)		42. Nepal 10 (Socio-economic)
4. Climatology		30. Nepal			
6. Land Use		31, Nepal	35. Khandbari Far West		
7. Agriculture	26. Crop combination also item 23				
8. Settlement	27. Isauli	32. Sultanpur			43. Kathmandu valley
9. Urban	also item 24	33. Nepal		38. Sultanpur	44. Glasgow 5
10. Transport					
11. Commerce			37. Nepal highways	39. Foreign trade	
12. Population	28. Nepal migration				
13. Political	29. Nepal				
14. Cultural					40. Architecture
15. Historical	also item 28				41. Diffusion of innovation
16. Theoretical Model					45. Simulation 5 (energy)
No. of Articles	6	4	4	4	4
Book Reviews	1	1	1	2	2
Pages	80	48	54	60	5

Chart 2 : Locational Studies by Region

FW	W	C	E
FWM 13, 18	WM 22	CM	EM
FWH	WH 8	CH KV 4, 6, 15 23, 40, 43	EH 34, 35
FWP	WP	CP	EP

Note : The article numbers are according to Chart 1.

have done much work in Nepal. In spite of the numerous contributions on land use and agricultural subjects, there is no article on pedology or irrigation. It is understandable that geographers in a landlocked country have not dealt oceanography. But it is surprising that in a country imbued with some of the largest Himalayan rivers of tremendous hydropower and irrigation potential, geographers have yet to turn to hydrography or water resources.

Although the H. R. has published numerous maps related to various articles and even including a map supplement, there is no article on cartography. Many regional and thematic maps of Nepal have been published during the period under review and yet there are no references to these in the articles or reviews. Similarly lacking are any contribution related to field method or methodology concerning the discipline.

VII. Suggestive Note

The Himalayan Review has undergone various transformations in format since its first publication. The size and format should be kept uniform and the average of four articles since vol. VII (1975) needs to be considerably expanded. The size of the journal can be increased by incorporating a separate section that gives summaries and news of significant current researches in fields related to geography. This may involve translating some materials in foreign languages.

There has been over-emphasis on contributions regarding Kathmandu Valley while other larger regions have been neglected. This situation needs to be rectified by publishing more articles on other areas. The editorial board should not only publish what it receives but also pursue or even commission contributions on important themes and lesser known areas. Although the frequency of articles on applied geography seems satisfactory, there should be more avenues for articles concerning current issues such as water resources, environmental stress, land use change, population dynamics and air transportation. More contributions by scholars in related fields need to be published in order to affect cross-fertilisation while articles of joint authorship among researchers in different disciplines could be encouraged to promote inter-disciplinary approach.

The Himalayan Review does not refer to many books on Nepal of much geographical significance published since 1968. The section on book reviews should be considerably expanded. Similarly, there should be more reviews and notices regarding new maps of Nepal.

