

To clarify this argument about the social and political aspects of low-intensity conflicts, Chadha repeatedly describes the difficulties of classifying and describing them. He is acutely aware of the nuance that his study requires and does not avoid the murky epistemological and moral questions that must be raised.

This is the real strength of the book. Chadha reflects, for example, that, ‘it is often said that one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter... definitions become misleading and instruments of national interest’ (p 402). According to Chadha, the use of terms like ‘terrorism’ does not clarify the precise character of diverse conflict situations across India (pp 420–421). He takes this even further by highlighting what he sees as a ‘the kaleidoscope of LICs... effervescent and volatile, presenting new challenges with each passing year’ (p 430).

India is obviously not the only country that has fought decades-long conflicts of this sort. But the Indian examples offered by Chadha are unusually well described: for this reason, his voice should be heard. Chadha’s analysis of the ‘contagion of LICs’ (p 430) leaves little doubt that the study of India’s diverse conflicts requires great sensitivity and experience.

Chadha also reminds us that holding together one of the world’s largest countries—beset, as it is, by powerful destructive proclivities—is not an easy task. The insight of this experienced Army officer helps to show how Indian ideas of nation and resistance can be explored from an official perspective. But important questions do remain unanswered. We are left guessing whether these conflicts pose a genuine threat to India or whether they are worth the cost in blood and treasure. In following its more conventional mandate, Chadha has, instead, expertly shown why some of India’s low-intensity conflicts will continue to fester for years to come.

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Tibetan Diary: From Birth to Death and Beyond in a Himalayan Valley of Nepal

Geoff Childs

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In this masterful ethnographic portrayal of Nubri, a remote ethnically Tibetan enclave of north-western Nepal, Geoff Childs has written a rich, contextual, unromantic and yet startlingly vivid monograph on the life trajectories of members of this poorly documented community.

The author, currently Assistant Professor of Sociocultural Anthropology at Washington University in St Louis, Missouri, USA, modestly describes his book as ‘a collection of stories, observations, and analysis culled from several research trips’ (p 2) he made to Nepal between 1995 and 2000, but in reality it is much more. His work is a healthy corrective to static depictions of Tibetan society that over-emphasise the role of religion. The individuals whose lives he documents are complex, multi-faceted and ever changing. The people of Nubri are, in his own words, ‘not trussed in cultural straight-jackets that inhibit creative development’ (p 2).

To set the scene, Childs offers us a pithy prologue and two introductory chapters that situate Nubri in the social and historical context of the greater Himalayas. Throughout, the author is our guide to the lifecycles of ordinary villagers in this overlooked enclave of Tibetan culture. In a nutshell, *Tibetan Diary* is ethnographic demography at its best, engaging the reader in the challenges faced by ordinary individuals and at once ‘situating the quantitative, demographic side of the analysis within an indigenous perception of the life cycle’ (p 3). A central character in this narrative is Tashi Döndrup, an unmarried older man whose wizened face adorns the front cover of the book and who welcomed Childs into his house and life. Other important *dramatis*

personæ are Pema Döndrup and Pema Wangdu, two compelling historical individuals from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, respectively, whose written biographies ‘contain a wealth of information about daily existence and the social context in which their struggles for spiritual insight transpired’ (p 16).

The structure of the book mirrors the passage of life, from birth, through learning, householder’s aspirations, marriage to eventual death. That *Tibetan Diary* is such a pleasure to read is in large part thanks to the expert interweaving of interviews, life stories, anecdotes, ethnographic observation and textual exposition of historical events. The use of sayings and proverbs to illustrate salient cultural traits at the opening of each chapter add to the effect, producing a beautifully written and memorable account of life in this region in the present as well as the past.

Entitled ‘Anticipating the end of the life course’, chapter eight is particularly powerful. In just 12 pages, Childs provides a nuanced depiction of the frustrations of the elderly, ‘recalling bygone days of status and authority that can never be recaptured, and becoming dependents of their children’ (p 129). The author is careful to show how the principles of religious action can become moderated by practical needs, as ‘the cultural ideal of reverence for the elderly is mitigated by the harsh pragmatism of economic reality’ (p 132).

Tibetan Diary can, and should, be read at several levels. For students of contemporary South Asia, it situates highland Nepal in the nexus of modern border studies, straddling Buddhist Tibet and largely Hindu Nepal. To scholars of Buddhism, this work offers a sorely needed level-headed guide to understanding the lives of villagers, with due respect to religious models, but without overly relying on them. Anthropologists preparing to depart for fieldwork would do well to read the narrative to see how gracefully an academic monograph can be constructed, jettisoning Shangri-La without losing the magic of discovery and intellectual exploration. Without reservation, this book deserves to be high on the reading list for courses that touch on any of these topics.

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Genealogy of the South Indian Deities: An English Translation of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg’s Original German Manuscript with a Textual Analysis and Glossary

Daniel Jeyaraj

London: Routledge, 2005

ISBN 04-1534-438-7

Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg’s *Genealogie der malabarischen Götter* is one of the most interesting early European works on Hinduism. A Lutheran missionary, Ziegenbalg was one of the first Europeans to write about Hinduism on the basis of a detailed knowledge of Hindu literature, and he is unusual in scrupulously recording his sources. Although not immediately published, the contents of his book appeared in a number of bowdlerised forms during the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Substantial sections of the book were used in Mathurin Veyssièrre de La Croze’s attack on the Jesuits in his *Histoire du christianisme des Indes* (1724). An anonymous edition of 1791 transformed Ziegenbalg’s book into an Enlightenment tract praising Hinduism as the oldest of the world’s religions. The work was reclaimed by a missionary edition (1867) and translation (1869), which recast it in the light of the more hostile missionary perceptions of the time. Finally Daniel Jeyaraj produced an edition based upon two extant manuscripts, submitted as his habilitation thesis at the University of Halle. The work