

LEWIS, Todd T., RICCARDI, Theodore, Jr.: *The Himalayas. A Syllabus of the Region's History, Anthropology and Religion*. Association for Asian Studies Occasional Papers Series. Ann Arbor, Association for Asian Studies 1995. XII + 240 pp.

The publication under review is a useful educational tool for all those teachers and students who are engaged in the study of the Himalayan region (i. e. the territory east of Kashmir and west of Arunachal Pradesh). This region is characterized by great cultural diversity, historical complexity and religious variety, which offers a huge amount of topics to be included in any syllabus focused on this region. The authors have already published two other related volumes (*The Himalayas: Essays and Readings* with Richard English and *A Bibliography of Himalayan Studies* with Bruce Owens) and so are well-qualified for the arduous task of preparing this syllabus.

The syllabus is divided into five parts which are further subdivided into chapters and it deals with the history, religion, culture, and society of the region under study. Each chapter is concluded with a bibliography. Together with the numerous maps and charts it helps the interested reader to get a qualified overview of the various discussed issues. The first part (pp. 5-48) is devoted to some general issues related to the Himalayan region, especially the section on the role of the Himalayas in the Indian and Tibetan traditions (other traditional sources – Mongolian, Chinese, Ancient Greek, Burmese – are also briefly mentioned) is very interesting. The second part (pp. 49-116) deals with the history of various subregions in the Himalayas and the question of the effect of modern state formation on the traditional polities and ethnic groups is presented. The largest part of the publication, part three (pp. 117-180), focuses on the subsistence and trade patterns, settlement patterns, social relations and cultural continuities in the four ethno-geographic regions of the Himalayas (namely submontane region, mid-montane region, mid-montane Tibeto-Burman region and the Tibetan highland region). The fourth part (pp. 181-208) is focused on the two cultural centres of the Himalayan region: the Kashmir valley and the Kathmandu valley, which makes an interesting comparison. The last part (pp. 209-240) deals with some other issues important for the whole region, e. g. the problem of frontier versus core cultural practices in the Himalayas, the problem of ethnic group names, or the patterns of pan-regional change.

The publication under review is organized very lucidly which enables the reader an easy orientation. It brings together many important information and presents them in the context of the specific Himalayan region. Specialists for individual cultures or religions may find some small mistakes (e.g. the use of both transliteration and transcription of Tibetan terms, pp. 172, 173; the official name for Tibet in the PRC is Tibetan Autonomous Region, not Zone, p. 172 ). However, this cannot diminish the valuable contribution of this publication. It is a very useful research tool for historians, anthropologists, and religionists. It will be used not only by specialists who deal solely with the Himalayan region but also by researchers, teachers and students who approach this region through the study of its neighbouring cultures (e.g. Tibetan, Indian) and are interested in the interplay of these cultures in the Himalayan region.

*Martin Slobodnik*