

Literature Review in Humanities and Social Sciences

*Sharad Sharma**

Abstract

The paper starts with a note on the differences between a Literature Review and a Research Paper followed by the focus and the details on the organization of the literature Review. Introduction, Body Text as well as Conclusions in the organization are discussed followed by a review of specific methods such as Chronological, Thematic and Methodological applied in the literature review in general. The next sections give narrations on the composition and the synthesizing of Literature Review. Some examples are also presented covering book reviews in a variety of subjects such as Economics, Demography, History, etc.

Introduction

This paper explains what a 'Literature Review' is and attempts to offer insights into the form and construction of a Literature Review in general, and in the Humanities and Social Sciences in particular with some examples.

The "literature" of a literature review refers to any collection of materials on a topic, not necessarily the Great Literary Texts of the World. "Literature" could be anything from a set of government pamphlets on democracy in Nepal to scholarly articles on Laxmi Prasad Devkota's poems. A literature review discusses published information in a particular subject area, and sometimes information in a particular subject area within a certain time period.

Literature Review and Academic Research Paper

While the main focus of an academic research paper is to support the researcher's own argument, the focus of a literature review is to summarize and synthesize the arguments and ideas of others. The academic research paper also covers a range of sources, but it is usually a select number of sources, because the emphasis is on the argument. Likewise, a literature review can also have an "argument," but it is not as important as covering a number of sources. In short, an academic research paper and a literature review contain some of the same elements. In fact, many academic research papers will contain a literature

* Dr. Sharma is Professor, Central Department of Economics, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu.

review section. But it is the 'argument' or the 'sources' aspect of the study emphasized that determines the difference between the two.

Writing of the Literature Review

A literature review is usually organized around ideas, not the sources themselves as an annotated bibliography would be organized. In this case, the researcher will not just simply list the sources but go into detail about each one of them. As the researcher reads widely but selectively in his/her topic area, the themes or issues to connect the researcher's ideas should be considered. If they present one or different solutions, is there an aspect of the field that is missing? How well do they present the material and do they portray it according to an appropriate theory? Do they reveal a trend in the field? The researcher can pick one of these themes to focus the organization of his/her review. This the basic part of the focus in literature reviews.

Organization of Literature Review

When a focus is set, and the researcher has narrowed it down to a thesis statement, the main concern here is: what is the most effective way of presenting the information? What are the most important topics, subtopics, etc., that the review needs to include? And in what order should the researcher presents them? Here the researcher has to develop an organization for his/her review at both a global and local level.

Just like most academic papers, literature reviews also must contain at least three basic elements: an introduction or background information section; the basic Text Body of the review containing the discussion of sources and the main findings where relevant; and, finally, a conclusion and/or recommendations section to end the paper.

Introduction: Gives a quick idea of the topic of the literature review, such as the central theme including the objectives and methodology and the organizational pattern.

Basic Text Body: Contains reviewer's discussion of sources and is organized chronologically, thematically, or methodologically (see below for more information on each).

Conclusion/Recommendations: Substances drawn from reviewing literature so far to indicate where the discussion might proceed?

Once the researcher has these basic categories in place, then he/she must consider how to present the sources themselves within the body of the Literature Review. It is important to create an organizational method to focus this section even further.

To help the researcher come up with an overall organizational framework for the review, three typical ways of organizing the sources into a review can be considered:

Methods of Organizing the Sources

Method 1 Chronological: Suppose the researcher has decided to focus the topic on the changing tourism sector technology in Nepal, he or she would focus literature review on materials dealing with the tourism sector and the information technology. This is because the researcher may have just finished reading the advanced Internet facilities and the researcher wonders if the site seeing and the air-tickets can be booked through the Internet service is really true. The researcher starts with some articles about the information Technology in IT journals on tourism service sector written in the 1980's. But these articles refer to some European and American service sector studies performed in the early 20th century. So the researcher checks those out. Then the researcher has to look up a book written in 1960s with information on how tourism servicing has been portrayed in other countries developed or underdeveloped. This makes the researcher wonder about European or American tourism servicing methods during the mid 1950s, so the researcher finds some academic articles published in the last years on how dramatically the service sector facilities in the tourism has improved.

If the review follows the chronological method, one could write about the materials above according to when they were published. For instance, first the researcher would talk about the European and American and the developing countries tourism service sector studies of the 18th century, then about 19th century, then the tourism service facilities, and finally the articles (1980s) and the recent articles on tourism facilities of the 19th century in these countries. Publication order may arrange the sources by publication chronology, then, only if the order demonstrates a more important trend. For instance, one could order a review of literature on tourism service sector if the progression revealed a change in the level of practices. The researcher should particularly consider this.

Another effective method to organize the above sources chronologically is to examine the sources under another trend, such as the history of banking. Then the review would have subsections according to areas within this period. For instance, the review might examine banking from pre-18th century, 18th to 19th century to 20th century and the recent years. Under this method, it is possible to combine the recent studies on European, American and developing countries banking system in the 19th century with the recent tourism industry itself in the above mentioned chronological order.

Method 2 Thematic: The thematic reviews of literature are organized around a topic or issue, rather than the progression of time. However, progression of time may still be an important factor in a thematic review. For instance, the tourism review could focus on the development of the hotels for tourists. While the study focuses on one topic, hotel industry technology, it will still be organized chronologically. The only difference here between a "chronological" and a "thematic" approach is what is emphasized the most: the 'development of the hotels' or the 'hotel technology'.

In this context, more authentic thematic reviews tend to break away from chronological order. For instance, a thematic review of material on tourism might examine how they are portrayed as "evil" in cultural documents or "boosting" in the documents of economic development. The subsections might include how they are personified, how their proportions

are exaggerated or undermined, and their behaviors narrated. A review organized in this manner would shift between time periods within each section according to the points made with regard to the materials for literature review.

Method 3 Methodological: A methodological approach differs from the two above in that the focusing factor usually does not have much to do with the content of the material. Instead, it focuses on the "methods" of the researcher or writer. For the tourism project, one methodological approach would be to look at cultural differences between the visitors in European, American, Japanese and other country tourists. Or the review might focus on the economic impact of tourism industry on a community. A methodological scope will influence either the types of documents in the review or the way in which these documents are purposefully analyzed. When a researcher feels to add additional sections that are necessary for the area of study, but does not find it easy to fit in the organizational structure, following options could be considered for inclusion.

Current Situation: Information necessary to understand the topic or focus of the literature review.

History: When the literature review is not already a chronology, the chronological progression of the area of research necessary to understand the literature review may be considered.

Methods and/or Standards: The criteria the researcher used to select the sources in the literature review or the way in which he/she presents the information. For instance, the researcher might explain that the review includes only peer-reviewed articles and journals.

Questions for Further Research: What questions about the field has the review sparked? How will one further his/her research as a result of the review?

Composition of Literature Review

When the researcher has settled on a general pattern of organization, he/she is ready to write each section. There are a few guidelines one should follow during the writing stage as well. Here is a sample paragraph from a literature review about gender and language to illuminate the following discussion:

Studies have shown that even gender-neutral antecedents are more likely to produce masculine images than feminine ones (Gastil, 1990). Hamilton (1988) asked students to complete sentences that required them to fill in pronouns that agreed with gender-neutral antecedents such as "writer," "pedestrian," and "persons." The students were asked to describe any image they had when writing the sentence. Hamilton found that people imagined 3.3 men to each woman in the masculine "generic" condition and 1.5 men per woman in the unbiased condition. Thus, while ambient gender accounted for some of the masculine bias, gender language amplified the effect. (Source: Erika Falk and Jordan Mills, 1995) "Why gender Language Affects Persuasion: The Role of Homophily, Intended Audience, and Offense," Women and Language 19:2.

In the example above, the writer refers to several other sources when making their point. A literature review in this sense is just like any other academic research paper. Researcher's interpretation of the available sources must be backed up with evidence to show that what his/her saying is valid and meaningful.

Be selective: Select only the most important points in each source to highlight in the review. The type of information one selects to mention should relate directly to the review's focus, whether it is thematic, methodological, or chronological.

Use quotes sparingly: Falk and Mills do not use any direct quotes. That is because the survey nature of the literature review does not allow for in-depth discussion or detailed quotes from the text. If the researcher wants to emphasize a point or if what the author said just cannot be rewritten in the researcher's own words some quotes may be necessary. Notice that Falk and Mills do quote certain terms that were coined by the author, not common knowledge, or taken directly from the study. If the researcher finds himself/herself wanting to put in more quotes, it is better to consult the dissertation supervisor.

Development of Summary and Synthesis

It is very important to summarize and synthesize the sources within each paragraph as well as throughout the review. Important features of the work are reviewed then synthesizing is done by rephrasing the study's significance and relating it to the researcher's own work. The researcher needs to keep his/her voice front and center while the literature review presents others' ideas. The sources support what the researcher is saying.

The researcher can use caution when paraphrasing. When paraphrasing a source that is not the researcher's own, it is important to be sure to represent the author's information or opinions accurately and in the researcher's own words.

Some Examples

Presented below are some examples of the book review covering different areas of humanities and Social Sciences e.g. Economics, Population, History, Sociology and the pattern on couple of books on Nepal in brief. The examples attempt to illustrate the characteristics of the literature review outlined above. The researchers are, however, suggested to try to follow the sequence of the rules described in details in the above sections first and in the second round, try a more refined presentation, as produced in the selective examples below. *The Economic Journal of Nepal*, a quarterly publication of the Central Department of Economics, Tribhuvan University, also regularly publishes Book Reviews on contemporary economics and Development.

Capitalism and its Economies: A Critical History Douglas Dowd,(2000), Pluto Press 319 ages, \$24.95 paper. (Methodological/Thematic)

In the opening sections of the book, the author argues that Mainstream economics,

particularly the neoclassical one, continues to flourish. Infatuation with "market forces" and hostility to the state seem to be all the rage. Most mainstream economists decry "rent-seeking" in the public sector and find theoretical justification through their theory of "public choice" for one of their most powerful pet ideas: The state should be stripped to the bare-bones. "Watchman State" advocated by Milton Friedman in his classic screed, Capitalism and Freedom. Rational Expectations Theory, an article of faith for the true believer of conventional economics, denies that either the Federal Reserve System or the Federal Government can help steer the macroeconomy. Dowd mentions that according to Rational Expectations theory, however, "rational" bets on the future earnings/prices of "new economy" stocks has yet to be explained by these gurus. Meanwhile, faddish as always, the mainstream has recently become enamored with "free trade"--as long as this means the free mobility of capital. Virtually all major mainstream economists in 1990s had, the aim to build a consensus to result in balanced trade (or a surplus in favor of the United States) which would be "win, win" for the United States and Europe. Conventional economists do not care about the distribution of income, or the fact that in the past thirty years income inequality has widened at a breakneck pace. Markets "reward" the deserving. Income distribution reflects effort, risk, prudence, "waiting," and the entrepreneurial ethos. As long as we "get prices right"--and "market forces" unrestricted by government regulation will get prices right--market outcomes will be optimal. Of course, there are some "market failures" which could necessitate a bit of control on the market.

The author critically points out that a "good economist" in the modern fashion is defined by the "economics profession" as someone with daunting mathematical skills. Where do "good economists" come from? More and more they are failed mathematicians who shift to economics after they have picked up a B.A. and maybe an M.A. in mathematics. If you cannot stuff "it" into an equation or a model, chances are the "good economist" cannot conceive of "it" as economics. Since most of what could be generously described as "macroeconomics" is extremely difficult to present in a sterile system of equations, mainstream economists are now impatient with it. They would prefer to get rid of macro and focus on "applied microeconomics," where one can answer stilted questions with the tools of constrained optimization. As the classical economists (Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Karl Marx) understood the matter, economic analysis depended upon a careful reading of history, the understanding of social forces, a shrewd assessment of political tendencies, and ultimately, a careful diagnosis of power. Power, history, political realities, social structure, and dynamics are the constituent components of economic analysis.

It is not just that most mainstream economists have not read, say, Karl Polanyi's towering masterpiece, The Great Transformation, or similar works. Rather, it is the case that they have never heard of such a study. Thorstein Veblen? Joseph Schumpeter's Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy? How many Ph.D. economists writing today have ever held in their hands a copy of J. M. Keynes' General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money? Precious few. But these few, prominent among them D. Dowd, are precious and they continue to point us, and economic analysis, in another direction.

The author has made several critical write-ups against the dominant current in economics

for a long time. At age eighty-one he has finished yet another great book, on Capitalism and its Economics, forming the third part of a recent trilogy along with *Against the Conventional Wisdom* (Westview Press, 1997) and the Dos Passos style *Blues for America* (Monthly Review Press, 1997). Dowd's achievement is sweeping--he has successfully written a highly readable book that introduces the general reader to the full panoply of economic greats, and not so greats, beginning with Adam Smith. But this is not a "beginner's history of thought." This book has higher aspirations: Dowd wants to weave the dynamics of history into his treatment of the key ideas of the major economic thinkers of the capitalist era. In this, the book is virtually unique. Dowd has spent a lifetime studying economic history, and it cascades across the pages. This is economic history as the study of power. Dowd learned this particular method, perhaps, from the unique, overwhelmingly detailed work of Robert Brady, the author of *Business as a System of Power* (1943).

Demography: Measuring and Modeling Population Processes Samuel H. Preston, (2001) Patrick Heuveline and Michel Guillot, Oxford: Blackwell. 291 pp. (Methodological)

As a profession, demographers are marked by the extent to which they are self-taught. We tend to pick up our technical knowledge through reading the work of others and, for the more innovative, by deriving new methods or approaches ourselves. There have been introductory texts like George Barclay's 1958 text, *Techniques of Population Analysis* that stood for an inordinately long period of time as the major text in the field and, later, the texts from the French tradition (Pressat 1972; Wunsch and Termote 1978). These gave us the basics of the discipline. Very recently, Andrew Hinde's 1998 text, *Demographic Methods*, has become the leading introductory text for demographic methods. There have also been reference books or practitioners' handbooks such as the compendium of methods gathered together by Shryock and Siegel (1973) and the ubiquitous UN Manual X (United Nations 1983) covering the range of incomplete data techniques. However, all over the world, people teaching demographic methods have their own sets of notes that extend the texts and present material that the individuals concerned feel is important knowledge for a 'card-carrying' demographer.

In general, the discussion in the book is initiated with the recognition of a tendency to teach demographic methods in a 'cook-book' style with the emphasis being upon how to calculate the measure rather than upon its theoretical or mathematical formulation. We stay away from the fact that demographic change is a continuous process and hence is more appropriately characterized by integral calculus than by algebra. And, indeed, there are practical reasons for taking this approach because our data are collected in an additive form. We observe and collate births and deaths by time periods not by the instantaneous rate at which they accrue. Fortunately, for most practical purposes in demography, the differences between the continuous and the stepwise additive approach of algebra are immaterial -- but this is not always the case. More importantly, the continuous mathematical formulation of demographic processes provides a superior description of demographic interrelationships and of population dynamics. As such, the continuous formulation is the basis of the demographic models that are vital to prediction or to estimation of parameters.

The book highlights that the more rigorous and mathematical formulation of demographic

processes has generally been avoided in the texts perhaps because this would limit the number of students or, more fairly, perhaps because most population specialists can function perfectly well without this knowledge. Nevertheless it is true that this knowledge is the very core of demography and there should be a subset of those who label themselves as demographers who carry this knowledge. This objective has been difficult to achieve in teaching in the past because the material required has been scattered across a wide range of journals and peripheral papers and reports. More significantly, the material has never been arranged in a systematic, teachable way. It is difficult, for example, even for the specialist, to have to adjust to varying notational forms and to changing levels of presentation from the basic to the highly advanced ones. This situation has been remedied with the publication of this excellent book by Preston, Heuveline and Guillot.

The blurb on the rear cover of the book states that 'this book presents and develops the basic methods and models that are used by demographers 'and that it will provide a comprehensive introduction to demographic methods for all students and researchers in this subject'. The description 'basic' can be accepted in its sense of 'fundamental', but not in its sense of 'simple' and, while 'comprehensive' is accurate; 'introduction' is a poor descriptor for a book that omits very little of what is important. Ken Hill, also on the rear cover of the book, more accurately describes it as 'really a graduate-level textbook of formal demography'. The book is brilliant in filling a gap that has always existed in demography for a comprehensive, mathematical formulation of the full range of demographic measurement. It is presented in a clear and consistent way from chapter to chapter. The chapters are linked to each other providing a sense of a common core of knowledge and method to the discipline of demography. The comprehension of the mathematics is aided by frequent diagrammatic representations and by worked examples. Each new section is placed within the context of the historical development of the particular methodology, including all the appropriate references.

The book is clearly not for the mathematically faint-hearted: the first integral equation occurs on p. 6. But for the mathematically competent, it is terrific. The coverage of the book is indicated by its 12 chapters: basic concepts and measures, age-specific rates and probabilities, the life table and single-decrement processes, multiple decrement processes, fertility and reproduction, population projections, the stable population model, demographic relationships in non-stable populations, modelling age patterns of vital events, methods of evaluating data quality, indirect estimation methods, and increment-decrement life tables (the chapter contributed by Alberto Palloni). As a text, the book could be used as a first course for those with particularly good mathematical skills but it is probably better employed as a successor to a simpler methods course in which the fundamental ideas of demography have been made clear. The most benefitted from this contribution would be those aimed for advanced study in demography.

World System History: The Social Science of Long-Term Change. Robert A. Denemark et al., editors. (1997) Routledge, Pound 50.00, 345 pages. ISBN 0-415-23276-7 (Thematic)

The movement towards a humanocentric history started during the 1970s when Social

Science academics began to question the three and a half thousand years of world history and the commonly accepted views of it. The new book, *World System History*, has formally instigated the rewriting of world history in order to demonstrate that a number of contemporary 'themes' such as globalisation and capitalism have actually been round for longer than one might think. The book's chapters were papers presented by specialists from various areas of knowledge at a 1995 conference hosted by the University of Lund in Sweden. Explaining the motivation for the book, Andre Gunder Frank of the University of Amsterdam, and Barry K. Gills of the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne criticise the major works in economic history for their European and/or Western bias. They provide evidence of the transfer of surplus between zones of the world system in ancient, pre-modern and modern times to support the idea that a world economy has existed for far longer than presupposed. To them a 'structuralist' approach can reveal themes, continuities and even patterns, the knowledge of which could help 'to rechannel the impulses of rebellion so prevalent in the present world crisis in a more positive direction' as highlighted in the book.

The editors raise the issue of why historians have taken long to replace the archaic Eurocentric world history with a humanocentric one. Andrew Sherratt attempts to answer this question in the chapter 'envisioning global change: a long-term perspective'. In his words, 'each generation has a fresh opportunity to understand the past, by perceiving it from a unique standpoint: that of the present'. Using a diagrammatic model to represent the eight thousand years of history Mr Sherratt shows how the traditional core-periphery expansion of the world system appears to be deterministic, and that by changing the scales, patterns appear of cyclical upturns and downturns

Up to the 1970s traditional studies of world systems cultivated the difference between 'the West and the Rest', and few academics believed that there were similarities between ancient and modern economies. The development of the idea of continuity within the world system is reviewed by Jonathan Friedman, while Kajsa Ekholm discusses the origin of the ancient city-estates of Mesopotamia and the transition from a one-level to a two-level system between the periods, Ubaid (4500-3500 BC) and Uruk (3500-3000 BC), pointing out that archaeological information was used about the period Ubaid and most of Uruk since writing did not appear until the Late Uruk. In a chapter entitled *State and Economy in Ancient Egypt*, David Warbuton reviews the work of the economist, John Maynard Keynes, who used many examples of the Egyptian economy that parallel modern economy, such as the building of pyramids, tombs and temples as a form of state intervention which stimulates the economy.

Each period of time is characterised by the ideas espoused at that time and these ideas compared with similar ones of the past. However, ideas, including the most brilliant ones of the great ages, travel slowly within the academic elites. Many academic disciplines and sub-disciplinary areas are insulated from one another by their different perception of reality. When scholars from two or more disciplines get together not only do they exchange ideas but they create the right condition for new ideas to emerge. Although such a structural approach can be attained by combining ideas from the disciplines of anthropology, human

geography and history it is also dependant on asking the right philosophical questions.

World System History analyses a set of ideas about human interaction as far back as possible, with most contributors acknowledging at least five thousand years of historical record. The book is organised into four parts. The first part discusses the principles and perspectives, whilst the second deals with case studies that illustrate the key processes discussed in the first. The third part looks at the global historical macroprocesses of information, war and urbanisation. Lastly, part four attempts to sum up what has been accomplished regarding the proposed theme of a world system history and to foretell where it can go in the future. World System History is not merely innovative and stimulating but is a positive manifesto towards cultural understanding and tolerance.

During the second half of the twentieth century there have been many attempts to explain why some countries developed whilst others remained in poverty. In *Development Geography*, Hupert Hodder reviews some of the most acclaimed approaches to development and exposes examples that are contradictory to each one. His intention is to warn against the tunnel-vision resulting from limiting one's view to the theory of the moment and to show that there is no straight-forward formula to promote development.

Sociology and the World's Religions, Malcolm Hamilton. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, xiii + 273 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), \$19.95 (paper). (Methodological/Thematic)

Given the immense literatures that now exist on the sociology of religion and on the world religions, it is perhaps surprising that this book represents the first volume which offers an overview of the sociological study of the world religions. Hamilton's way of putting this selectivity is to say that his book focuses on "macro-sociological approaches" that address what he calls "the broader issues," especially questions of "origins, main historical development, and social impact." (p.5) His paradigmatic example of such an approach is the work of Max Weber.

The organization and order of the chapters accurately reflect these points of departure. Yet beyond Weber and "the broader issues," readers acquainted with standard introductory world religions textbooks will notice a familiar sequence. Indeed, Hamilton's work has the look and feel of an introductory text, even though those who will benefit most from it are readers with at least some familiarity with the religions involved.

After an introductory chapter on the main historical social-scientific approaches to religion e.g. Marxian, Freudian, evolutionary, intellectualist, functionalist, the next chapter of the book deals not with one of the world religions, but with religion in tribal societies. Hamilton does not pretend that these religious expressions are world religions, although here (p.16) is the only place where he discusses the meaning of this concept at all. Instead, he treats them thematically under the headings of ancestors & ghosts, witchcraft, and spirit possession, surveying the large corpus of anthropological literature that has concerned itself with such questions. The issues of origin, development, and social impact are largely absent, however, leading this reader to wonder why exactly this chapter is included.

The remaining chapters are entitled, respectively, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese religions:

Confucianism and Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The order and the set of religions is that of many standard world religions texts, but the influence of Weber is more determinative. A good portion of the content of these chapters reflects Hamilton's conviction that "the sociology of religion of the world religions is still to a very large extent the sociology of religion of Max Weber," and that therefore "the world religions remain a seriously neglected field in the sociology of religion" (p.54). In fact, almost forty percent of the space devoted to Weber's primary non-Christian foci -- the religions of India, China, and ancient Judaism -- deals exclusively with Weber's contribution. A sizeable section of the chapter on Christianity also discusses the Protestant ethic thesis.

Beyond Weber, the overviews of other, more recent literature can best be described as defensible selections. Hamilton admits that they are incomplete, and different readers will undoubtedly notice different gaps. To some degree this has to do with the author's necessary judgement about what counts as sociology and what does not. Those included are mostly sociologists and anthropologists who have paid attention to one of the world religions; or other scholars of the world religions who have taken an explicitly sociological approach. Thus, to give but one example, the chapter on Islam includes discussion of those that one would certainly expect, especially Gellner, Geertz, and Turner. Yet among the great many historians whose work could be relevant, Lapidus, for instance, is present but Hodgson is not.

As regards content of the book, the chapters on the world religions vary according to where those relatively few sociologists and anthropologists involved have focused their attention. Leaving aside the sizeable Weberian portions, the chapter on Hinduism, for instance, concentrates on questions of religious diversity and hierarchy, reflecting the orientations of such authors as Dumont, Milner, and Babb. For Buddhism, the issues of karma, monastic vs. lay Buddhism, and political impact loom large, these being key issues for authors such as Spiro, Tambiah, Gombrich, Ling, Obeyesekere, Sharma, and Chakravarti. In the next chapters, discussions are included for Chinese religions, the focus is again on unity and diversity, and on the religious nature of Confucianism. Not surprisingly, Yang's work is central, given that it is still probably the only sociological work that attempts a complete overview.

The chapters on the abrahamic religions share an emphasis on origins or ancient times. All but a few pages of the chapter on Judaism deal with ancient Judaism. The long chapter on Christianity deals at length with the early period, reflecting the fact that here is one area where there now exists quite a bit of sociological literature, from earlier Marxian treatments by Kautsky, to the spate of recent scholarship. Interesting in this regard is that R. Stark's work is largely absent, probably because it appeared after this book was written. This is unfortunate; a comparison of the Marxian Kautsky and the "free enterpriser" Stark would have been intriguing. Finally, for Islam, the key questions are again origins, with some good attention to questions of the spread of this religion.

State of Nepal by Dixit, Kanak Mani and Shastri Ramachandaran. eds. 2002. Himal Books: Kathmandu. ISBN 99933-13-22-X. Price: NRs. 490.

Recipe: take sixteen of the most articulate and incisive Nepali minds, give each of them

around twenty pages to tell their story, stir very little, and publish immediately. Result: an exquisite book. It rather leaves one wondering why nobody had tried it before.

State of Nepal is an important collection of essays now into its third reprint, some previously published, others lightly reworked, but primarily new submissions which 'try and explain contemporary Nepal.

The Challenge to Democracy in Nepal: A Political History by T. Louise Brown (London: Routledge, 1996, pp.xi + 239, 40 pounds sterling.

This book provides an illuminating case study of a little kingdom's tryst with the forces of democracy. The author traces the political history of Nepal by way of explaining its continuing problems of national integration, social unrest and economic underdevelopment. She analyses the emergence of political parties in Nepal and shows how development issues, foreign relations and the country's often tumultuous experiences with democratisation.

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