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Alpina

A semi-annual review of mountaineering in the greater ranges

Nepal Himalaya

It is not customary to provide endnotes for Alpina, but the complexity of recent events in Nepal and the confusion in media accounts of them make it useful to document some of the information sources used. First, I list a little-known source for the early twentieth-century in Nepal and then general sources of data for the country just before the tragic earthquakes of 2015.¹ Other notes are added as needed.

The place of Nepal in mountaineering. Alpina has closely followed the development of mountaineering in Nepal because this relatively small country—56,827 square miles, a little larger than Alabama—has dominated “mountaineering in the greater ranges” since it was opened to climbing in the late 1940s. Eight of the mountains on the list of the fourteen highest in the world lie in Nepal or on its borders. Routes to seven of these 8,000ers (so named because they measure higher than 8,000 meters) are often climbed from Nepal. The eighth, Cho Oyu, is a difficult climb from Nepal and is ascended via a usually tolerated small trespass into Tibet. The number of available lesser mountains varies with political and other pressures and with matters of definition. The most recent list of “permitted peaks” comprises 414 summits from Mt Everest on down, not counting the many trekking peaks. Another list makes the surprising claim that 112 mountains in the country remain unclimbed. Many of these might be better characterized as unclaimed or unnoticed.²

Not only does Nepal have the mountains, but Nepalese authorities recognized early that mountaineering parties, if properly handled, would bring in needed foreign exchange. Throughout the various government changes, shifts in alliance, and even the costly and bloody “Maoist” insurgency, all parties recognized the need to protect the geese yielding the golden eggs. Mountaineers were subjected to ever-increasing fees and were sometimes held up for a little genial banditry, but few or none were killed, injured, or held for ransom—in pleasant contrast to other Asian mountaineering venues.

Despite the bloody nature of some of the power struggles, none were driven by the irrationality of religious warfare. The country is largely Hindu (of a not very rigid type), followed by Buddhists, then smaller numbers of Moslems, Animists, Christians, and a few none-of-the-aboves. There is a long-standing tradition of religious toleration.³

The sums derived from mountaineering are considerable. If we take as a measure of foreign expenditure the number of members above base camp and look at the years from 2000 to 2014 (a period including a severe economic recession) for the pre-monsoon season, the annual count varies from a high of 851 to a low of 565 with no particular pattern until 2014 when it is only 336. The sometimes-overlooked post-monsoon season count varies from 529 to 935, again with no pattern until 2014, for which year we have no post-monsoon data. Of course, the summer (monsoon) and winter mountaineering seasons are economically unimportant. The spring 2014 loss of sixteen Nepalese, mostly Sherpas, preparing the Everest route through the Khumbu Icefall caused the first of recent interruptions in this mutually beneficial economic arrangement. Subsequent mishandling of the grief of the Sherpa community led to a Sherpa strike and the probably unintended closure of Everest from the Nepal side.⁴ The Everest closure and Sherpa boycott had no effect on other mountaineering in the spring except, of course, for the peaks usually accessed through the Icefall, Lhotse, and Nuptse. Neither had an ascent, and only seven members climbed above Base Camp before the closure. It is possible that the quarrel had an adverse effect on the post-monsoon season, but any such effect was overwhelmed by a natural event—a huge storm.

The effect of Cyclone Hudhud in post-monsoon 2014. Predicting the course of Indian Ocean cyclones is typically no easier than predicting the course of Atlantic hurricanes. However, Hudhud was detected early and followed a fairly straightforward path to its landfall in India at Andhra Pradesh on October 12. With high winds and heavy rainfall, it was a deadly and costly storm.⁵ As it moved across India, the storm lost a clear center but retained much moisture as it approached Nepal. When it rose into the cooler mountain areas, the moisture fell as snow, quite widely distributed in Nepal, but with a major concentration in the Annapurna Dhaulagiri area. On October 14, an estimated 1.8 m (nearly 6 ft) fell there in twelve hours accompanied by high winds. Unfortunately, the area of maximum snowfall corresponded to a popular autumn trekking venue, and the problem was described in the media and perceived by the tourism authorities as largely a threat to inexperienced,

poorly equipped, and poorly led trekkers. An extensive if clumsy rescue effort was made. The reported consequences, conceded to be incomplete, are these: At least 43 persons including 21 trekkers died; as of the formal ending of the rescue operation, 400 had been rescued, 175 with injuries, mostly frostbite; 50 were listed as “missing.”⁶

The area of heaviest snow is also an important mountaineering district, and mid-October is the height of the post-monsoon climbing season. Expedition mountaineers are on average better equipped and trained than trekkers, but some, in all likelihood, were among the reported dead and injured. Others would have had their expeditions disrupted, if not by the snow or administrative closures, then by the pressure of the massive rescue operation on transport, housing, and supplies. (Modern-day expeditions, particularly small ones, count on the many guest houses along the approach roads and clustered around base camps for food, housing, and other support.)

The opening of the 2015 pre-monsoon season. In what a cynic might call a triumph of hope over experience, climbers were back in force to attempt **Everest** (8,850 m) at the beginning of the season. There were 358 individual members signed on for Everest, 114 for Lhotse, and 56 for Nuptse. On the Tibet side, about 200 “foreigners” were booked. Counting support staff, media representatives, and generalized hangers-on, about 1,200 people were collected around the two major base camps. As good as or better than the old days.

Media representatives were numerous on the Nepal side—the Chinese do not encourage them in Tibet. Everest is always news. Most representatives probably hoped to report on the successful rejuvenation of Everest climbing; perhaps a few hoped to be the first to witness and report on a new Everest disaster. The latter got more than they bargained for.

There was a pleasant absence of rancor in Nepal. The Sherpa Icefall doctors were back on board, having the promise of a new and supposedly safer route through the Icefall. Previous quarrels and misunderstandings were forgotten or at least forgiven. The usual Pujas (Sherpa placatory rituals) were observed. Base Camp weather was typical for early spring: some snow fell each day, and the nights were mostly crisp and clear. In early April, however, route preparation fell behind schedule. The new route, nearer the center of the Icefall, was substantially more difficult to climb, and the snow was often deep. Just past mid-April parties of members and Sherpas had reached and partially stocked Camps 1 and 2 above the Icefall—late but manageable with

some luck on the weather. April 25 was a fine day with more good weather in the forecast.⁷

The April 25 earthquake in the Everest region. Shortly before noon Nepal time on Saturday, April 25, the first shock of a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal, lasting less than a minute. The effect on an observer in the Everest area depended heavily on his or her location. High above the Nepal side Base Camp at a 6,350-m saddle between Pumori and Lingtren, a multiton ice block detached and plunged down the 790-m drop toward Base Camp. The falling ice did not reach the camp but the resulting air blast caused much of the ensuing death and destruction. The blast may also have tumbled massive boulders about or they may have moved by ground motion. The zone of death and destruction was limited to the higher portion of Base Camp; the lower section suffered little damage beyond a chill coating of snow or pulverized ice.

After a short period of panic, a rough triage and rescue effort by the survivors in the Nepal Base Camp revealed that the camp was the site of a major disaster, possibly even worse than the spring 2014 disaster. The total number killed may always remain uncertain, but it is now known that it must exceed twenty.⁸ So far it appears that all the dead were killed in Base Camp or died later from injuries suffered there. Base Camp was located where it has always been, though expanded to accommodate the large crowds of today. Rather bleak and inevitably grubby from the effects of large groups camping out at high altitude certainly, but always in the past considered a haven of safety below the mountain.

The climbers and Sherpas working above the Icefall escaped the earthquake practically unscathed. They were marooned there, though, unwilling to descend through the fall because of the frequent aftershocks. Only a few miles away on the north side of Everest, the initial quake and the aftershocks were strong enough to cause avalanches, but the camps, the climbers, and Sherpas working on the route were in the relatively broad trough before the N Col, well away from the avalanches, and no one was killed or seriously injured.

Those marooned above the Icefall had adequate stocks of supplies brought up to Camps 1 and 2 before the earthquake. The first thought for rescue was to send the specially trained Sherpas called the Icefall doctors back up to restore the route through the fall. The doctors declined—the work was obviously very dangerous because of aftershocks, and several of the doctors had decamped to check on the damage to their houses and the welfare of their families. They were quite right. Later helicopter overflights

showed that reconstruction of the route would have taken many days if not weeks. Eventually, helicopters evacuated the stranded climbers and Sherpas.

Confusion and inept leadership continued at Base Camp. Some diehards, unfortunately encouraged by the Nepalese mountaineering authorities, still believed they could climb the mountain. On the Tibetan side, the Chinese authorities were more realistic. After a conference with expedition leaders, the Chinese decided to close the mountain on April 29. They cited the continuing risk of aftershocks, and the desire to support Nepal by returning the Sherpas and other high-altitude workers to help with the Nepalese recovery. (Typically, many of the support staff on the Tibetan side are hired from Nepal.) Gradually realism grew on the south side. For the first time since 1987, no one would climb Everest in the pre-monsoon season. Climbing Everest and Nepal mountaineering in general were unimportant in face of the earthquake effects in Nepal. The death, injury, and destruction in the Everest area were negligible compared with what was going on elsewhere. Even media representatives left Everest to report on far worse situations.

By early May the base camps on both sides of Everest were largely evacuated. Foreigners on the Nepal side faced and mostly solved the problem of getting out of the area and eventually out of the country through the initial post-earthquake chaos. A few who possessed the requisite skills and courage stayed to help the Nepalese people. Realism was not universal. As I write these notes in July, several commercial outfits are promising to conduct their climbing and trekking expeditions in the Nepal autumn 2015 season just as originally scheduled before the earthquakes. One can only say, “good luck with that.”

Earthquakes in Nepal 2015 and earlier. Seismology is a complex scientific discipline, which has seen major development recently with a corresponding elaboration of technique and terminology—the last sometimes nearly impenetrable. Unfortunately, those who respond to natural disasters, if they hope to save more people, would need more precision in forecasting earthquakes’ time, place, and severity than technology can yet supply. Nevertheless, it is useful to construct a layperson’s narrative of the major seismic events in Nepal from the nineteenth century through today. That coupled with comparisons between Nepal in earlier times and today may help evaluate the difficulty and practicality of the recovery being undertaken by the people of Nepal and their helpers.

The same tectonic collision that heaps up the wall of high mountains on the northern border of Nepal has, as shown in the 20th and 21st centuries, created a line of seismic instability running roughly from east to west through the eastern two-thirds of the country. The instability is not a single line of activity—a glorified San Andreas Fault—but shows laterally varying epicenters. Severe earthquake shocks can be felt at substantial distances from these epicenters, particularly in the lowland Indian state of Bihar on Nepal's SE border. Effects can be notable but less severe in Tibet north of the great mountain barrier.

The tectonic collision has, of course, been operating for ages, yet earthquakes and earthquake effects are rarely mentioned in Nepalese history before the twentieth century. That long and bloody history is heavily colored with legend. From about 1833 until the partition of India in 1947, the British raj maintained a resident at Kathmandu who apparently never reported major earthquake effects at any time in the nineteenth century. One major exception to this paucity of record was the earthquake measuring between 7.5 and 7.9 in magnitude with an epicenter near Kathmandu in 1833. With this exception, the list of well-described major earthquakes centered in Nepal is as follows: Nepal-Bihar 1934, Nepal-Bihar 1988, and Nepal 2015; the 2015 earthquakes also affected Bihar.⁹

The reports of 1934 damage within Nepal are questionable—the country was still forbidden to westerners except for a few in regions near the Indian border and the residency staff in Kathmandu. Most of the country still had no roads suitable for wheeled vehicles (up-country transport moved on the backs of men, women, and children or on pack animals from yaks and ponies down to sheep) and no telegraph lines, so communication even with Kathmandu was slow and inaccurate. Percival Landon's photographs of structures from the 1920s when compared with images from the 1950s show that many important structures in the Kathmandu Valley either survived largely undamaged or were reconstructed from the rubble. (Tall towers and the upper regions of tall temples excepted.) The residential structures away from the valley were of two or three stories, built with brick or stone walls covered with stucco and roofed with rough-sawn boards or even thatch. They were less prone to collapse and could be rebuilt from the rubble by local effort. Restoration of transport routes to a state passable by porters and pack animals would also be relatively easy for local people using materials in place and techniques familiar to them.

Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf tells an interesting restoration story based on traditions among the Sherpas of Khumjung:

Gula Lama encouraged by the abbot of Rongbuk in Tibet founded a monastery, Thyangboche, on a spur high above the Dudh Kosi. The Sherpas provided labor and funds. Ten years after the foundation, in the great earthquake of 1933 [sic] the main temple collapsed, and the 85-year-old Gula Lama died of shock shortly after. The villagers of Khumbu came to the help of the young monastery, giving money and free labor, and making it bigger and better than ever before. The best painters were employed to paint the frescoes adorning its great halls and the porch before the entrance”¹⁰

The funds the Sherpas provided were probably gained by working on the British Everest expeditions of the 1920s. This story summarizes the requirements met at thousands of times and places after 1934. There must be labor and money; the experienced artists and artisans needed must volunteer or be hired. And the will to rebuild must be there.

The 1988 Nepal-Bihar quake struck at 4:54 A.M. Nepal time on August 21 with a magnitude of just under 7 on the Richter scale. The epicenter was 150 km SE of Kathmandu toward the border with Bihar. Casualties were 282 dead and 3,766 injured in Bihar and 721 dead and more than 5,000 injured in Nepal. Most of the Nepalese casualties were concentrated near the epicenter and were caused by the collapse of two- or three-story residences of rude stone or masonry construction. Because of the early hour, people were still asleep or just rising. About 100,000 residences suffered total or partial collapse. Oddly, few rural wooden houses collapsed. Kathmandu and the other major cities and towns of the valley suffered little damage. Mountaineering went on without significant interference. Because tourists did not frequent the area where people died, media coverage was minimal despite the substantial death and injury toll.¹¹

Comparison of the 2015 quakes with the 1934 quake. The earthquake of 1934 and the 2015 series of earthquakes were the most severe of those documented since 1900. So far as measurements made during the 1934 quake can compare with today’s measures of magnitude, the initial shocks in 1934 and 2015 were essentially equal. The locations of the epicenters differ, but both lie in eastern Nepal. It seems likely that the same broad belt of seismic activity caused them. Aftershocks in 1934 were not recorded. Surely they occurred, but they may not have been as bad as the May 2015 aftershock. In both 1934

and 2015, more people died and more damage occurred in eastern Nepal. The first shock in 1934 came on the afternoon of January 15, so initial survival and recovery then was in cold weather. Recovery continued into the heat and rain of the monsoon, as was the case in 2015.

The populations affected are far different: In 1934, the population of Nepal was 5.77 million, roughly one-fifth of today's 26.37 million.¹² Modern Nepal, particularly the Kathmandu Valley, is more urbanized, although surprisingly, the 2011 census lists only 17 percent of the country's population as urban. Using presumably final statistics for 1934, the total number of deaths in the earthquake in all of Nepal was 8,519, and the total number of "houses" (which must mean residential buildings) suffering "complete destruction" or "much fracture" was 185,414. The death number released on June 5, 2015—far from complete—is 8,712. (Little data on residences destroyed is currently available.) Thus, the number of earthquake deaths per 100,000 people in 1934 was 147.6, while the corresponding ratio (so far) in 2015 is 33 per 100,000. It is unlikely that the final 2015 ratio will approach that for 1934. In 1934, modern medical aid was almost never available in Nepal. A serious earthquake injury was close to a death sentence. Before the quake, present-day Nepal had 102 hospitals with 8,084 beds, thousands of health centers and health posts, 12,500 doctors, and many nurses and aides. Of course, the earthquake destroyed or weakened some of this medical infrastructure, which in any case was straining to meet normal population medical needs before the earthquake.¹³

The nature of major infrastructure and the manner of its repair are different now. In 1934, most of Nepal was roadless; transport of goods was primarily on the backs of humans or pack animals. Repairs of ways of communication could be accomplished by the local population with materials and techniques available to them. Most of "roadless Nepal" is now gone. Cars, buses, and trucks crowded the pre-earthquake roads, bridges, and overpasses. To fully restore their carrying capacity will require major construction projects. Again, in 1934, the country had no electric power or power transmission structure. Water supplies and drainage all were primitive or left entirely to nature. The infrastructure of contemporary civilization that the earthquake of 2015 damaged or destroyed was nonexistent in 1934.

Effects of the 2015 earthquake in Nepal. This was the first of the major Nepalese earthquakes to be extensively reviewed and illustrated on the web. Although much of the textual coverage suffers from the authors' lack of familiarity with Nepal, the visual coverage is often superb. The best approach is simply to Google "Nepal Earthquake 2015 Images." The before and after

coverage by the *New York Times*, ABC News, and BBC News is particularly fine—and sobering. Individual web accounts often suffer from lack of professional objectivity, and as discussed later, an integrated report prepared by the responsible Nepalese agencies will be long in coming and suspect when it does come.

Mountaineering, trekking, and tourism in Nepal after the earthquakes.

These activities by foreign travelers have typically yielded well more than a billion dollars of much needed foreign exchange to the Nepalese economy annually. Obviously, the immediate effect of the earthquakes was to sharply reduce this flow in the usually lucrative pre-monsoon travel season. The scale of the reduction is not reported, but was surely catastrophic financially. Summer (monsoon) tourism is not particularly active because of the weather, but unless the foreigners return in force for the post-monsoon peak travel season in October, the year will show an abysmal loss.

By the middle of July, the tourism authorities had collected their thoughts and, after weighing the political and economic issues, adopted a more or less concerted approach. They could emphasize the damage and destruction in the hope of increasing the charitable contributions of foreign countries and organizations, or they could minimize them in the hope that foreign tourists would be encouraged to come, bringing their money. The tourism authorities apparently believed that the charitable commitments had already peaked, and that a forecast of a normal-as-credible Nepal post-monsoon season was in the country's best interest.

And how credible is that? As well as can be determined—obviously government ministries will take care with the nature and timing of damage reports—it is true that major damage in the western portion of Nepal, say west of Annapurna, was less than in 1934. An optimistic-sounding report notes that of the 75 Nepalese districts, only 14 suffered major damage. (Unfortunately, many of the 14 are major tourist destinations.) Even though a remote district may have facilities open and be eager for business, the heavily damaged area around Kathmandu is the most important hub for travelers to the country. In July, the airport was said to be open and operating nearly normally, and roads into and out of Kathmandu were reported to be largely undamaged or adequately repaired. In Kathmandu, the authorities have allowed 90 percent of the hotels to reopen, and apparently, there was plenty of room in the off-season monsoon summer. The policy “tourism first” does not benefit everyone. Many less wealthy and influential residents whose houses were severely damaged in April or May were still sweating out the monsoon

summer in tented camps on the outskirts of Kathmandu. To escape, they must wrest promised subsidies and permits from a notoriously inert and corrupt bureaucracy. Even with permits and subsidies in hand, their chances of successful competition with hotels and businesses for scarce materials and skilled construction labor will be poor to negligible.

More than half the hoped-for tourists come for the cultural and religious sites of the country. Most of these sites were concentrated in the Kathmandu Valley. Of the UNESCO-listed World Heritage sites in the valley, more than 700 suffered structural damage, and more than 100 were destroyed completely. Over the vigorous objections of UNESCO, the Nepalese have reopened most of the sites. Some of the most famous such as the Kathmandu Durbar Square and Swayambhunath will severely disappoint the visitor. And many of the historic charms of Kathmandu and the valley can never be replaced.¹⁴

A personal view. Perhaps I may be allowed a personal note on tourism in Kathmandu and the valley. I was there twice, in the falls of 1972 and 1992. In 1972, Kathmandu was already spoiled enough to possess a new and quite luxurious hotel and to see the occasional arrival of a tour bus over the recently opened motor road from India. Other westerners were indeed present in the city. Most conspicuous (and adding to the exotica) was the coterie of aging flower children from the late 1960s in native dress—they seemed to have washed up onto an island of sanctuary. That sanctuary provided a hosting population with a tradition of charity to the indigent, and a cheap and readily available supply of ganja. Tourists did not crowd Kathmandu (then a very walkable city of about 150,000 residents) and the valley's bazaar streets, temples, monuments, and public squares. One could maintain the illusion of discovery felt by the first visitors of the 1950s. Overall, a panorama of varied interest and often-remarkable beauty—unique in the world.

Twenty years later in 1992, I was initially dismayed to find the streets crowded with noisy, polluting, and dangerous small motor vehicles. Thamel, a new district devoted to the tourist trade, had been built, and the ratio of tourists to local people had increased everywhere. The monuments, temples, and squares of Kathmandu and the valley were, if anything, in better repair and more beautiful, but now sometimes veiled by a screen of jostling tourists. The local people were still involved, certainly in the ceremonies at the burning ghats,¹⁵ and one day I witnessed an orderly queue of locals, eight abreast and a half-mile long, patiently shuffling forward to receive the blessing of a king they still believed to be a demi-god.

Fortunately, I did not see Kathmandu just before the earthquakes. It was a city of more than a million people who were driving 150,000 autos and motorcycles on a network of new streets and motorways. An active building program was filling in available spaces with new multistory construction—primarily reinforced concrete. Far too much like other developing Asian cities.¹⁶

I fear that a successful restoration project as presently conceived will change the many World Heritage sites of Kathmandu and the valley to a series of sterile museums unconnected to the daily life of the local Nepalese. These museums will play a role in that life no better than that now played in the lives of the people of Athens by the Parthenon.

An important factor affecting Nepal's recovery from the 2015 earthquakes is the lengthy, divisive struggle for a new constitution. Many ethnic and religious groups feared discrimination in the new document. The September 20 version was criticized by devout members of the substantial Hindu majority as too secular, and by members of other religions and the irreligious as not secular enough. The document also proposes, controversially, dividing Nepal into seven or more new provinces, which would receive some local control power and funds devolved from Kathmandu.

An unintended but adverse effect was that very little of the roughly \$4 billion donated by various governments and organizations for rebuilding has been put to use. The Nepalese government has fed those living in miserable temporary shelters and has provided enough medical services to avoid a major epidemic, but cold weather is coming. Some private charities in Nepal have helped rebuild a few residences and schools, but elsewhere the local people themselves must now do the work, using materials scavenged from the ubiquitous rubble piles.

The spring mountaineering season was a physical and economic disaster. The monsoons worsened already damaged roads and mountain slopes. Mountaineering and trekking income in the summer is usually negligible, but in early October, autumn mountaineering activity this year is estimated to be between a third and a half of that for a typical autumn. The Nepal mountaineering authorities have maintained a sturdily bright outlook. The China Tibet Mountaineering Association unambiguously proclaimed it would issue no climbing permits this fall, which means the 8000ers Cho Oyu, Shisha Pangma, and the north side of Everest are off limits. It also means no jobs for Nepalese high altitude workers in Chinese territory. Many climbers flocked

to Manaslu (8,163 m) the default option for those seeking an 8,000er climb in the fall. Otherwise activity on Nepalese mountains will probably be closer to the one third than to the one half level. A good autumn season depends on the hoped for but latterly usually absent mild weather period between the end of the monsoon rains and the start of cold, high winds, and snow in mid or late November. This year weather in the mountains was bad starting in mid-September.

Everest (8,850 m) is not typically climbed in the autumn season (the last successful climb was in autumn 2010), but this fall, the Nepalese authorities in a transparent publicity stunt, authorized an attempt on the Normal Route by Nobukazu Kuriki. The long-suffering Icefall doctors prepared a route through the damaged Khumbu Icefall just for him. Kuriki previously made four attempts on Everest all in the cold autumn season, and in 2010, he was rescued by helicopter, suffering the loss of at least the tips of nine of his fingers to frostbite.

In the cold of late September foreign-based commercial expeditions forced a route partway up Manaslu, then withdrew in conditions they deemed dangerous. Kuriki reached about 7,000 m on Everest, then in extreme cold and heavy snow descended and abandoned the climb. The weather warmed in early October. Nepalese-owned commercial groups on Manaslu persisted, and by October 3, 54 of the 106 foreign climbers with permits made the summit, together with 29 Sherpas. An Austrian climber died on the descent. Kuriki changed his mind and headed back up Everest for another try. Now, as we go to press, Kuriki reports he has finally given up his Everest climb for this year. A project for a climb and ski descent of Makalu has been abandoned, as was a French attempt on Annapurna South Face. As the season becomes later and colder, the hope for further successes wanes. Little is known about the extent of the economically important trekking effort this autumn. The “third most important” venue, the Langtang area, remains closed; otherwise everything appears to be at least nominally open. The best guess is that the trekking season will also be one-third to one-half of normal.

It will be a cold winter in Nepal.

Acknowledgment: This review is based in part on the documents cited. The efforts of the authors and those who keep them freely available on the web are gratefully acknowledged.

Erratum: On page 122 of the Summer/Fall issue of *Appalachia* (LXVI no. 2), the second sentence in the final paragraph should read: Nine of them, or 69.2 percent, succeeded, versus 79.5 percent for both sides in 2013—roughly comparable given the small sample size in 2014.

—Jeffery Parrette
Alpina Editor

Endnotes

1. Percival Landon, *Nepal*, Vol. 1, 2 (London: Constable and Co., 1928). Reprinted in facsimile in *Bibliotheca Himalayica* Series 1, Vol. 16, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu, Nepal 1976. [Landon] A unique assembly of otherwise unavailable information on the then-forbidden country. Landon was permitted to travel extensively in Nepal and obtained hundreds of photographs. The two volumes contain more than 800 pages of text, with many appendices, maps, family trees, etc., Landon, a British writer, journalist, and traveler, reflects many of the prejudices of the British Raj and takes a far too favorable view of the Rana prime ministers then in power. Nevertheless, his pictures of the people, temples, houses, palaces, cities, roads, trails, and backcountry villages are an invaluable record of how things were in the 1920s—and things probably changed little in the 1930s.

Nepal in Figures 2013 (English version), Central Bureau of Statistics, National Planning Committee Secretariat, Government of Nepal. Kathmandu. [Figures] A compact summary of a wide variety of recent statistics available on the web as a PDF. Much valuable statistical information is also available in the *National Population and Housing Census 2011*, Vol. 1, Central Bureau of Statistics, Kathmandu, November 2012. [Population and Housing].

2. The list of new mountains opened is a press release from the Government of Nepal Office of Tourism and Civil Aviation signed by the Joint Secretary on 2016-05-21 [sic]. The list of unclimbed peaks is a PDF post on the tourism.gov.np website.

3. The population percent religious split as given in [Figures] for 2012 is as follows: Hindu 81.34, Buddha 9.04, Islam 4.39, Kirat 3.05, Christian 1.42, and other 0.76. (Kirat is a poorly defined group of varying faiths. They are said to compose one of the oldest religious groupings in the country.) On the long-standing tradition of religious tolerance see in [Landon] Vol. 2, pages 211–220.

4. Season annual counts are from the *Himalayan Database*. The various economic recoveries of recent times seem not to have had a strong effect on the number of foreign mountaineers. This is surprising but indicates that the group had sufficient economic resources to support its interests. It appears that foreign trekkers to mountain areas behaved similarly. For the spring 2014 events, see Alpina for Winter/Spring 2015 (LXVI no. 1, pages 128–131) and for Summer/Fall 2015 (LXVI no. 2, pages 121–122).

5. *Hudhud* is an Anglicization of the Arabic name for the exotic looking but relatively common bird, the hoopoe. The cyclone had nothing to do with the bird or the Arabian state of Oman, which under the byzantine system for identifying Indian Ocean storms applied the

name. The government of Andhra Pradesh reported 61 deaths and the most costly destruction in years in a web post on December 19.

6. The web post giving the estimated consequences can no longer be retrieved. The Tourism Ministry promised a rationalized report on the deaths, injuries, and other rescue results, but the document has never been released. Although it is true that weather reports in Nepal before the storm were misleadingly bland, it is obvious that no one could have predicted with any confidence the location of the small area of very heavy snow or the amount of snow that fell.

7. See Everest 2015 web posts at alanarnette.com/blog and mountainguides.com. Obviously normal reports on the pre-season will not be available for some time if ever. The most reliable sources appear to be eyewitness reports by knowledgeable climbers at and above Base Camp for the period.

8. The Nepal Mountaineering Association provided a list of nineteen dead on April 28, 2015. They cited fifteen by name: six Sherpas, four non-Sherpa Nepalese, and five foreigners—two from the United States and one each from Australia, China and Japan. Four were unidentified. A later posting on the Nepal Disaster Risk Reduction Portal, drportal.gov.np, added two more from the U.S. Later postings added Hiroshi Yamagata and Jangbu Sherpa, who both died later of injuries.

9. The records for major Indian earthquakes provided by the site imd.gov.in covering 1819 through 2005 show only the 1934 and 1988 quakes. It is unlikely that a major Nepal quake would not be noted for Bihar in India. For the exception, see the article by Roger Bilham in *Current Science*, July 1995, 69, no. 2, pages 101–128.

10. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf in *Mount Everest: Formation, Population and Exploration of the Everest Region*, edited by Toni Hagen, Günter Oskar Dyhrenfurth, Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Erwin Schneider, and E. Noel Bowman (Oxford University Press, 1963, 172–175). Either the Sherpas or Fürer-Haimendorf were confused on the date of the 1934 earthquake. Fürer-Haimendorf must have seen the rebuilt monastery in the 1950s. I saw it in 1972 when it was by far the most handsome monastery in the Solu-Khumbu region. By that time, the artist Kappa Kalden of Khumjung had probably redone the murals. The monastery has been unfortunate. It was destroyed in 1989 in a fire probably caused by a short in a recently installed electric system. It was handsomely rebuilt with major contributions from abroad, then again damaged in the 2015 earthquake, but I am unable learn to what degree.

11. The best reference for this earthquake is the very thorough *Reconnaissance Report on the 21 August 1988 Earthquake on the Nepal-India Border*, edited by Teizo Fujiwara et al. (Tokyo, Japan: Japanese Group for the Study of Natural Disasters, March 1989). Available on the web as a PDF. As a comment on the importance of tourist interest to publicity, I note that the report mentions in passing a 1980 earthquake in far western Nepal, estimated at VIII on the modified Mercalli scale, which caused 48 dead and 236 injured—not publicized elsewhere.

12. There are discrepancies among recent estimates for the population of Nepal. The Central Bureau of Statistics does not include citizens working outside the country in the Nepal counts. This group is sizable, about 1.9 million, but does not explain all of the discrepancies.

13. Much statistical data for the 1934 earthquake is tabulated in the *Reconnaissance Report* referenced in note 11 above. The data are excerpted from M.R. Pandey and P. Molnar, “The Distribution of Intensity of the Bihar-Nepal Earthquake of 15 January 1934 and Bounds of the Extent of the Rupture Zone,” *Journal of Nepal Geological Society*, 5: 22–44 (1988). The medical information for pre-quake Nepal is taken from [Figures].

14. Ed Douglas, former editor of the *Alpine Journal* and an expert on Nepal, has an informative article on the July situation in the July 4, 2015, *Manchester Guardian*.

15. Wealthy and devout Hindu residents of the Kathmandu Valley often have their dead cremated at the burning ghats—steps—leading down to the Bagmati River in Pashupatinath. The ashes are then pushed into the river. The Bagmati is said to eventually flow into the holy Ganges, and thus its water is considered holy. Devout Hindus bathe in the river, drink it, bottle it to carry off as a religious souvenir. The Hindu religious structures at Pashupatinath were not seriously damaged in 1934 or (apparently) in 2015.

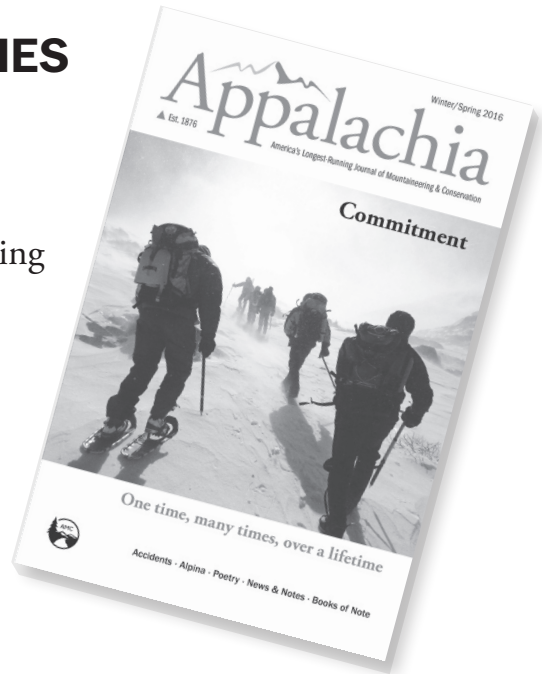
16. A prescient and gloomy article by long-time Kathmandu resident Robert Piper in the January 12, 2013, *Manchester Guardian* discusses the construction boom, the lack of enforced standards, political and bureaucratic difficulties, and other issues affecting response to a severe earthquake.

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