



The Himalayan Kingdoms:

**Bhutan, Sikkim,
and Nepal**

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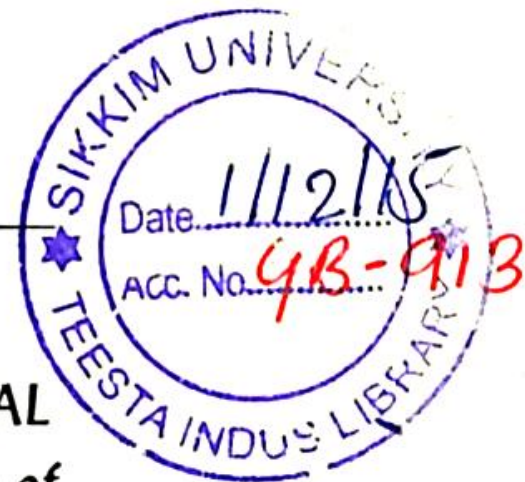
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Preface

During the past decade a series of events has thrust the Himalayan kingdoms into world prominence. The brilliant conquests of Mount Everest, Annapurna, and Kanchenjunga captured the imagination of millions who have been hard put to locate Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan on a map. In 1959 the Tibetan revolt and the dramatic flight of the Dalai Lama from Lhasa focused the attention of the world upon this potentially critical area. More recently, the border clashes between China and India have dramatized the strategic location of the Himalayan kingdoms.

This book represents an attempt to evaluate the complex politico-geographic pattern of the Himalayan kingdoms. On a global dimension, consideration is given to the forces of democracy and Communism as they influence the three kingdoms. On a national scale, the special aspects of geographic location, physical environment, population, economic resources, and cultural heritage are studied in relation to their influence on political patterns.

During 1957 my field work in Nepal was supported by grants from the Population Council, Inc., New York, and the American Philosophical Society. During 1961-1962 I continued field studies in Sikkim and Bhutan on grants from the Association of American Geographers, the American Philosophical Society, and the Kentucky Research Foundation. I am immeasurably indebted to the University of Kentucky for granting me sabbatical leave during 1961-1962.

For permission to travel through the remote Himalayan regions, thanks are due to the respective governments. I acknowledge the assistance given by the Dewan of Sikkim; O. P. Mathur, Chief Engineer, Bhutan Roads; and the Indian Political Agent at Gangtok. I am indebted to G. V. Jani for help, enthusiasm, and good fellowship in the field. Without Khidu Tshering, my interpreter, the whole Himalayan journey would scarcely have been possible.

A special acknowledgement is due to Professor J. R. Schwendeman for his suggestions. C. D. Rai, a member of the Sikkim National Council, offered several suggestions on Chapter 3; Professors D. P. Varma (formerly of Tribhuvana University, Katmandu), S. C. Chatterji (Vikram University, India), and C. Jha (Patna University, India) made many thoughtful criticisms of an earlier draft.

PRADYUMNA P. KARAN

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"Among mountains, I am the Himalaya."

—LORD KRISHNA in *Bhagvad Gita*

ALONG the slopes of the Himalaya, between Communist-occupied Tibet and democratic India, lie the three little-known kingdoms of Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal. Completely landlocked and cut off from the rest of the world by mighty mountains and malarial forests, these small kingdoms remained a sealed book for a long time, territories whose rulers actively discouraged foreign visitors and alien ways. Until 1951 no more than a few hundred Westerners had seen the interior of these kingdoms, and only a few could locate any of the three on a world map.

Now this traditional isolation has changed. Tibetan revolt against Communism, the flight of the Dalai Lama to freedom in India, and the Chinese claim on Himalayan territories of India, Nepal, and Bhutan have attracted the attention of millions to this potentially critical world region. A major transformation is stirring in the remote highlands of these three kingdoms as their rulers attempt to change the middle-age feudalism of the Himalayan lands into the world of the twentieth century. The challenge of Communist aggression in the Himalaya has caused deep concern to the United States as well as to India and has brought these small countries into the forefront of ideologically induced tension between freedom and Communism. To meet that challenge demands change—basic reforms which must overcome internal resistance both from the landed aristocracy and from a people long accustomed to their lot, a people who have yet to develop a spokesman to articulate their needs and dimly-felt desires.

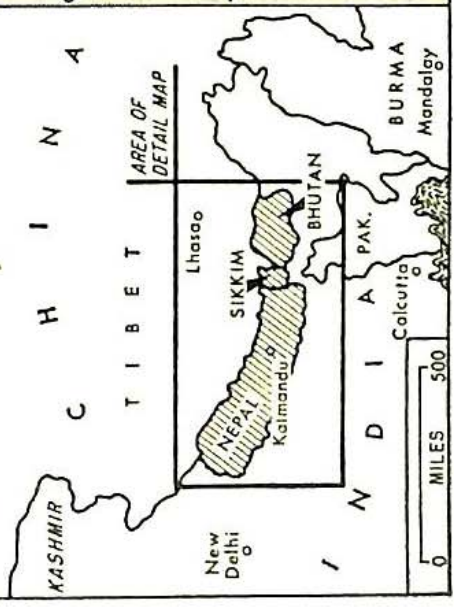
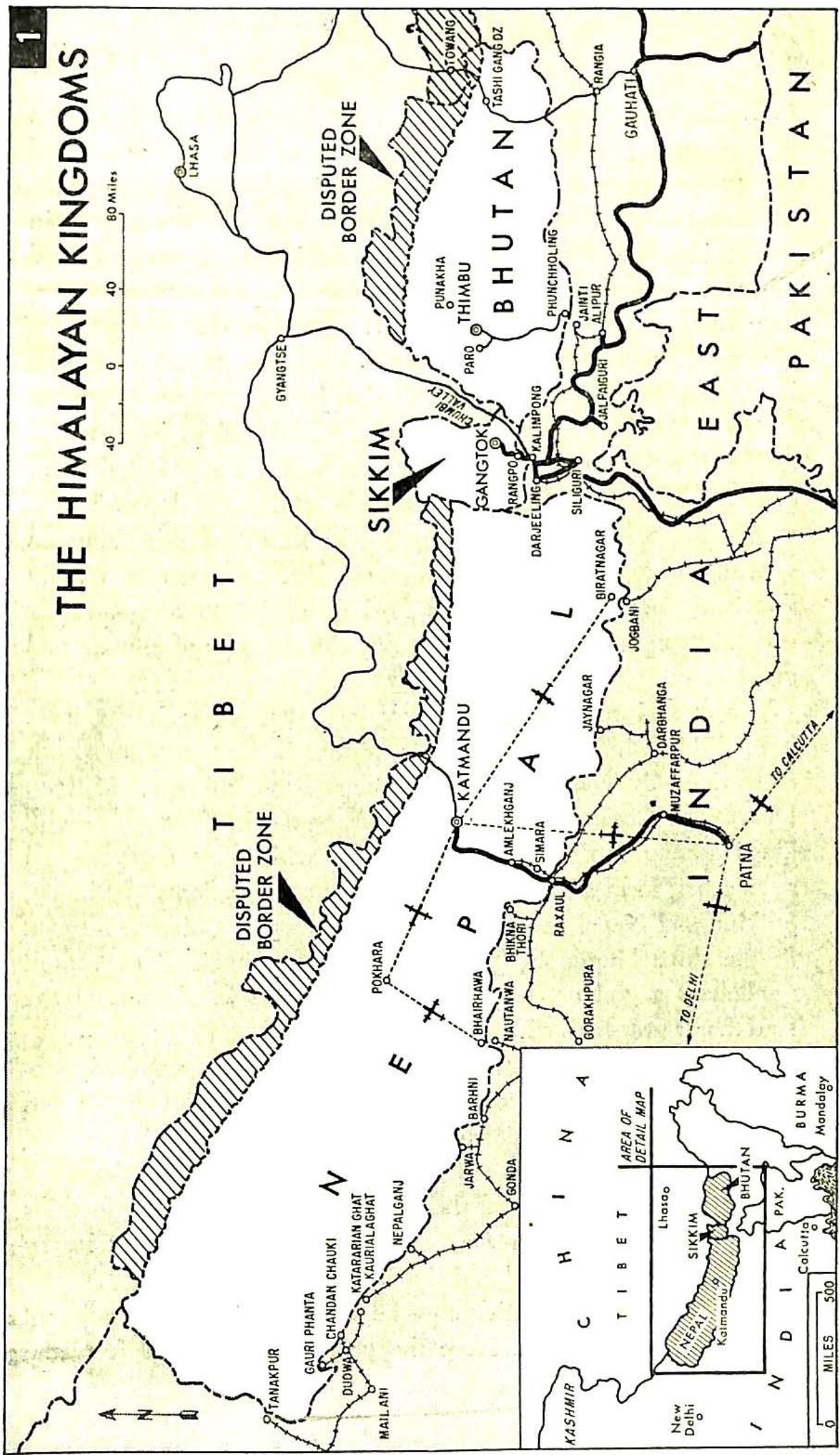
But Himalasia, to coin a regional term for the three kingdoms, faces tremendous problems in its surge into the modern world. Although Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan differ in area, population, natural resources, economic development, and structure of society, their politico-geographic problems are similar in many ways. Each kingdom must build a political organization. Administrative services necessary for a modern government must also be provided. Their economy, formerly adjusted to a feudalistic pattern of society, must be reorganized and developed. The social system, which in most cases had been outside the purview of feudal rulers, must be modernized and revitalized.

These Himalayan kingdoms, for the first time, face complex problems—without an adequate political and administrative organization, without essential skills and technical equipment, and also without a social preparation that could release the energies of the community to deal with the problem of transformation. The satisfactory solution to these problems is made more difficult by the rugged topography of the Himalayas. The nearly 75,000 square miles of these three Himalayan kingdoms contain some of the most forbidding terrain on the earth's surface. Environmental factors impose almost insuperable barriers to the unification of countries along nationalistic lines. In Himalasia is found one of nature's strongholds against man's modern political-administrative progress.

THE PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE

Millions of years ago the area now occupied by the Himalayan kingdoms was the site of the shallow Tethys Sea. During the tertiary period in the earth's geological history, powerful compressive forces folded and thrust marine deposits, which rose out of the waters in gigantic earth waves, and under the erosion of water and ice became a land of broken and irregular mountain masses. These crustal movements led to the development of a series of longitudinal valleys. Finally, in the post-tertiary age, also known as the Pleistocene, approximately one million years ago, further upheavals raised the central portion of the Himalayan range, together with the foothills, into a vast mountain system. In the follow-

THE HIMALAYAN KINGDOMS



ing milleniums, this was reduced by the forces of nature to form the present complex mountains and valleys of Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal.

From the standpoint of man's use of the complex mountain region, there are three salient features of this Himalayan geological structure. First, there is the great elevation of this mountain system, in particular its crystalline axis, whence the altitude and its train of consequences. Second, there are a variety of rocks, sometimes hard, sometimes soft. Their distribution in large masses has made possible the direct excavation of longitudinal valleys in soft rock and, indirectly, the deepening of others which are linked thereto; hence, the great contrast of high peaks and steep slopes. Lastly, there is the preponderance of length over breadth of this mountain system, which enabled man at an early date to penetrate a chain that could not be skirted. This final factor led to comparatively early settlement and cultivation despite the obstacles of altitude and topography.

The central portion of the great mountain mass is the most rugged. Here in majestic splendor, Mount Everest, conquered but defiant, holds court with spectacular Kanchenjunga, Makalu, Dhaulagiri, Gosaingthan, and Annapurna—all, in their own right, kings among mountains. These peaks, with their snow-covered approaches, form a fantastic backdrop for the kingdoms of Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal on the frontier area between China and India. In the three kingdoms, "where gods are mountains," each peak symbolizes a god or deity who rules over the inhabitants of the land that it overshadows.

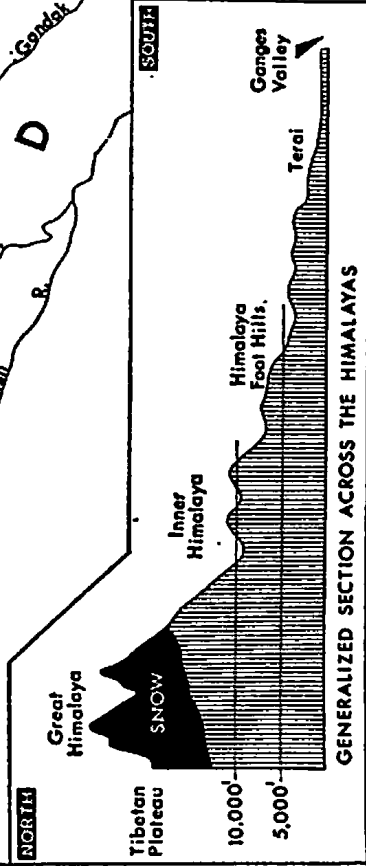
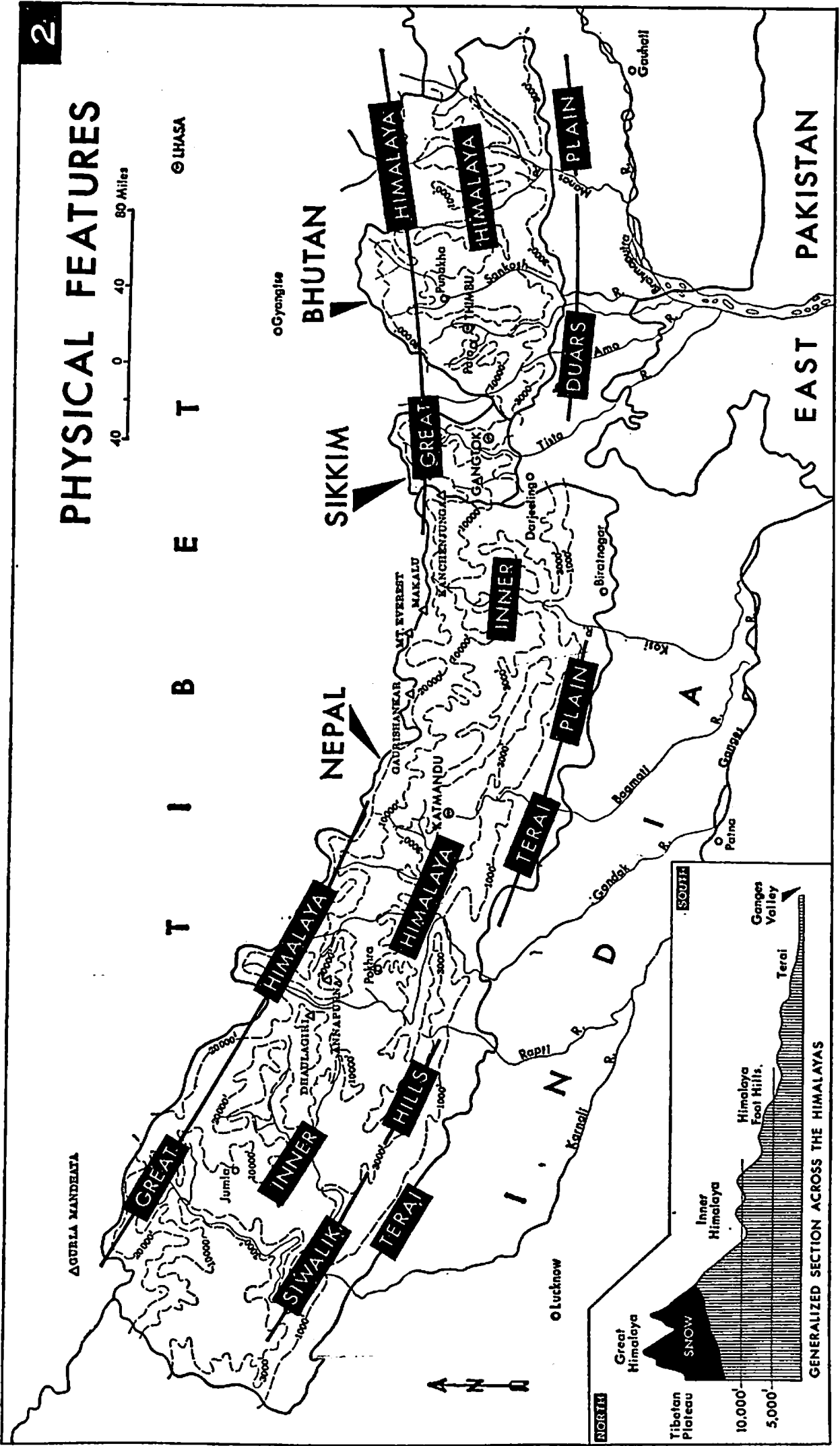
Physically this mountain mass is one of the few remaining isolated and relatively inaccessible areas in the world today. From a geographical standpoint there are three major lateral divisions, which to a great degree exhibit homogeneous regional characteristics: the Great Himalaya, the Inner Himalaya, and the foothills and bordering sub-Himalaya "Piedmont Plain," the latter locally called the *Terai* in Nepal and the *Duars* in Bhutan.

The first geographic division—the Great Himalaya—is adjacent to the plateau of Tibet. Here the peaks rise to 29,000 feet, and

PHYSICAL FEATURES



T I B E T



for much of the 700-mile northern border of the Himalayan kingdoms the mountains average more than 20,000 feet above sea level. Although the formidable mountains rising out of the clouds have challenged the development of large-scale trade and commerce since ancient times, only limited trade flowed through the high passes until recently. In fact, before the Communist occupation of Tibet, the high Himalayan passes were among the few areas in the world where free trade and travel persisted across international frontiers. Caravans carried cloth, spices, and small manufactured goods from India, Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan into Tibet, and brought back salt, wool, and yak herds.

Physically, the Great Himalayan region is dissected into a series of north-south mountain blocks by the Manas, Sankosh, Amo, Tista, Kosi, Gandak, and Karnali river systems. The valleys of these rivers and their tributaries are occupied by small clustered settlements. Extremely cold winters and short growing seasons are distinctive features. As a result, the farmers in the High Himalaya are limited to one crop per year—potatoes, barley, and wheat being most common.

The second region—the Inner Himalaya—is a complex area of forest-covered ranges and intervening fertile valleys. While it is not as forbidding as the Great Himalaya to the north, it has nonetheless served to further isolate the fertile valleys of the kingdoms from the Gangetic plains of India and the plateau of Tibet. Except for the major valley centers of Paro, Gangtok, Katmandu, and Pokhra, the region in general is moderately populated.

Within the Inner Himalaya the intervening mountain ranges tend to compartmentalize the populated valleys. Although the natural drainage lines are largely north-south, the numerous gorges and rugged mountains make travel in any direction difficult. Lateral roadways and transport routes are almost nonexistent, and monumental engineering feats are required to establish any east-west surface transportation system linking the principal population centers. Ropeways and a few “jeepable” roads have been built in recent years, but the basic means of transporting goods and supplies into the interior is by mule and often by “coolie back.” Lacking

adequate means of easy communication, it is not uncommon for dwellers in neighboring Himalayan valleys to remain complete strangers.

The third region—the foothills and the sub-Himalayan Piedmont—comprise the Churia Hills, and the Terai and Duars plain. In general, the southern part of the Terai forms a densely cultivated belt along much of the Indo-Nepal border; the Duars lie south of Sikkim, but a small part extends within the borders of Bhutan. The northern Terai and Duars are negative areas which add to the isolation of the Inner Himalayan valleys. Here the rain forests and malarial swamps, inhabited by such wild animals as the tiger, elephant, rhinoceros, and wild boar, serve as barriers to easy access. The savanna, or elephant grass, which covers much of this region, grows to a height of 15 feet and is so dense that it even impedes the progress of the animals for which it is named. It makes human passage commensurately difficult.

HUMAN RESPONSES IN HIMALAYAN ENVIRONMENT

The environment imposes harsh living conditions on Himalayan peoples. The moderate relief and mild climate of the Inner Himalayan valleys (such as Katmandu Valley and Paro Valley) change to rigorous conditions that become increasingly restrictive at high altitudes. The harshness is most evident in the Great Himalayan region. Nowhere else in the world are the mountains so high. Nowhere else is there such a difference in level between the valley bottoms and the mountain summits. Nowhere else is there such a large mass of steep rocks rising to giddy heights, destitute of plant growth of any kind, unsuitable for any use whatsoever. The natural conditions, being extreme, restrict man's economic activity, especially agricultural, limiting farming possibilities and providing few opportunities for livelihood.

Altitude is obviously the most important environmental factor, causing rapid and profound physical changes in the Himalaya. The effects of altitude, however, are complicated by the site, exposure to the sun's rays, and relief, which enhance the regional or local differences in the Himalayan landscape.

The steep topography aggravates the effects of altitude. If the mountains were rounded with gentle, smooth slopes, the Himalayan peoples would have it much easier. But, in the Himalaya, the exact opposite occurs. The steep contours of the land influence the whole life of the inhabitants. Apart from the alluvial valley bottoms, there are few flat surfaces or even gentle slopes in the Himalaya. Most cultivation is done on sloping ground, where work is more strenuous and takes longer. The slope increases the effects of gravity on cultivated land, causing the soil to slide downward slowly; tillage speeds up this process by making the earth friable and depriving it of a plant cover for a fairly long time. Lastly, slopes cause an outstanding number of avalanches of great destructive power. Most avalanches occur outside the inhabited regions, but occasionally unexpected ones sweep away high-altitude settlements.

From the viewpoint of land utilization there are three zones—crops, forests, and alpine pastures. (See Figure 3.) The crop-growing zone or sector is very extensive, stretching up to about 10,000 to 11,000 feet; crop yields naturally diminish as the altitude rises. Except in a few areas, rice and corn are seldom cultivated beyond 6,000 feet. At higher levels they are replaced by wheat, barley, and potatoes. The hardy grains are often grown at altitudes as high as the permanently inhabited centers. It should be added that between 7,000 and 11,000 feet, soil and climatic conditions are seldom suitable for farming, and consequently the cultivated plots are small and crop yields are low.

Forests dominate land use in the Himalayan kingdoms. The forest zone can be subdivided into two sectors: (1) in the lower part are deciduous forests which have been greatly reduced by clearings, especially in Nepal and Sikkim; (2) above this sector are the conifers species with either persistent or deciduous leaves, better adapted to lower temperatures. The upper limit of the forest growth is related to relief, soil, and climate (particularly the winds); and the tree line is not clear-cut, often varying 500 to 1,000 feet, depending on exposure and the extent of shelter, from Nepal to Bhutan. Above the tree line, there is often shrubby vegetation composed mainly of prostrate mountain pines and rhododendrons mark-

LAND USE



LHASA

Gyangtse

NEPAL

SIKKIM

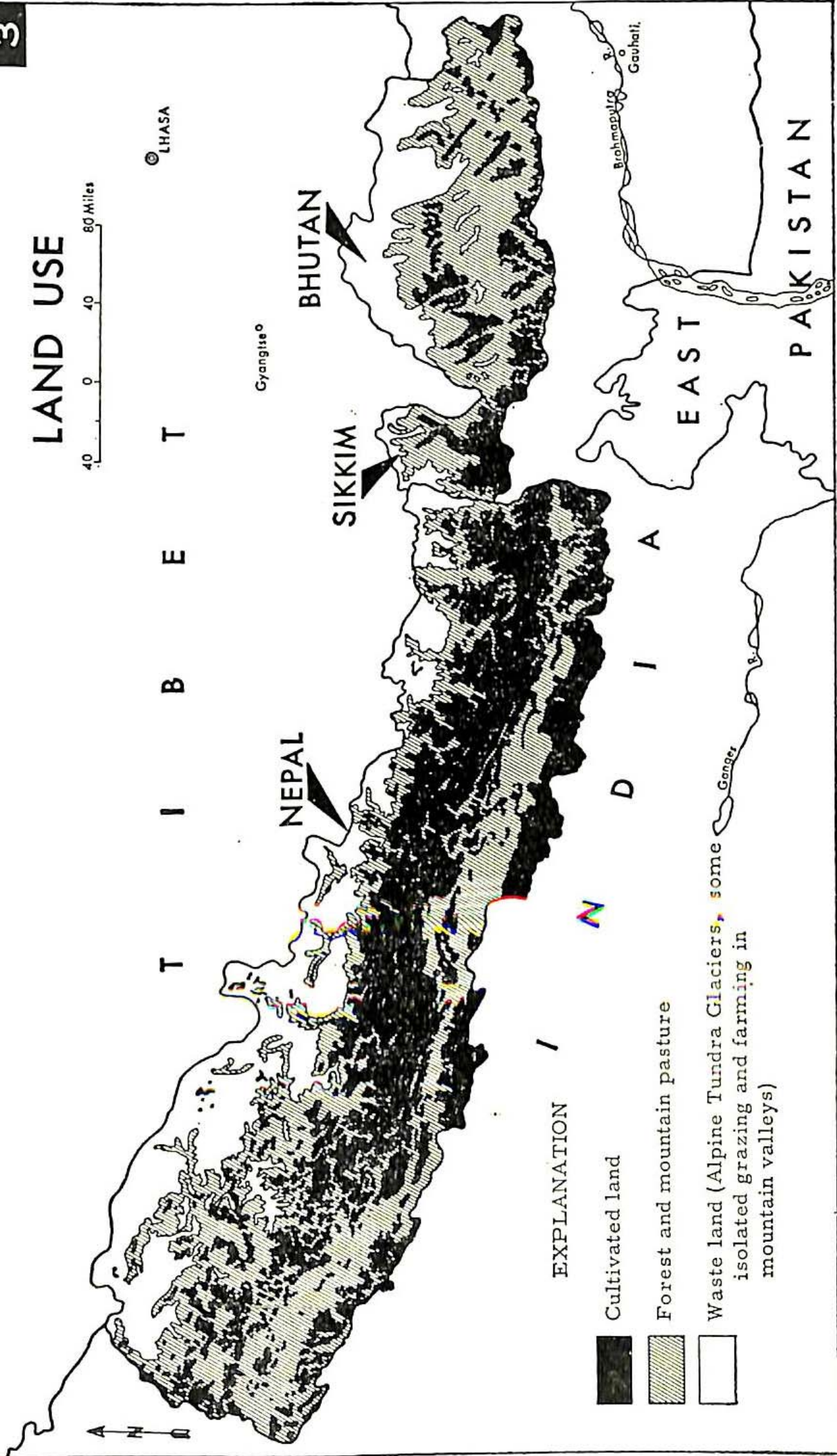
BHUTAN

Cultivated land

Forest and mountain pasture

Waste land (Alpine Tundra Glaciers, some isolated grazing and farming in mountain valleys)

EXPLANATION



T I B I E T

D I A

E A S T

P A K I S T A N

Brahmaputra
Gauhati

Ganges

ing the gradual transition from forest to the alpine pasture areas.

The high mountain pasture forms an essential part of the plant resources of the Himalayan kingdoms and has made possible livestock raising, without the need for preliminary forest clearance. It stretches from the forest zone to the perpetual snow-clad area, but the vegetation rapidly deteriorates as the altitude increases. The snow-clad areas, which cannot be utilized, constitute a considerable part of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan.

Land use and resource development in the Himalayan kingdoms are dominated largely by physical forces beyond man's control.

HIMALAYAN PEOPLES AND CULTURAL PATTERNS

Over the centuries the narrow fertile valleys and the arable hillsides of the Himalaya have been peopled by hardy races who have adapted themselves to the rugged landforms and harsh climate. (See Figure 4.) Mongoloid tribes from Tibet, Indo-Aryan peoples from Northern India, and the Lepchas from Assam and Upper Burma have settled in the Himalayan valleys and developed separate cultural patterns. The compartmentalization of land has favored retention of tribal and cultural individualities. Even the transmigration of tribal groups within the area, particularly from Nepal into Sikkim and Bhutan, has led to little mingling among the peoples.

Regional characteristics of physical appearance may be distinguished in the population. People with dark skin and hair and brown eyes tend to predominate in the south, and fair (yellowish) coloring is characteristic of the more northerly area bordering Tibet. The people in the south are, in general, of larger stature than those in the north. The Mongoloid element is dominant in the Great Himalayan valleys, and Indo-Aryan is indigenous in the Terai and Duars. The Lepchas of Sikkim are both smaller in stature and different in coloring from the other population groups. In the Inner Himalayan valleys there has been some intermixing of the Mongolian and Indo-Aryan strains.

The major religions in the Himalayan kingdoms are Hinduism and Buddhism. The Hinduism practiced in the Himalayan coun-

POPULATION

40 0 40 80 Miles

LHASA

Gyangtse

BHUTAN

SIKKIM

NEPAL

EAST PAKISTAN

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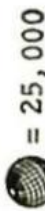
I

N
SKatmandu
Valley

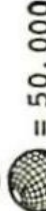
KATMANDU

BAGMATI

PANA



= 25, 000



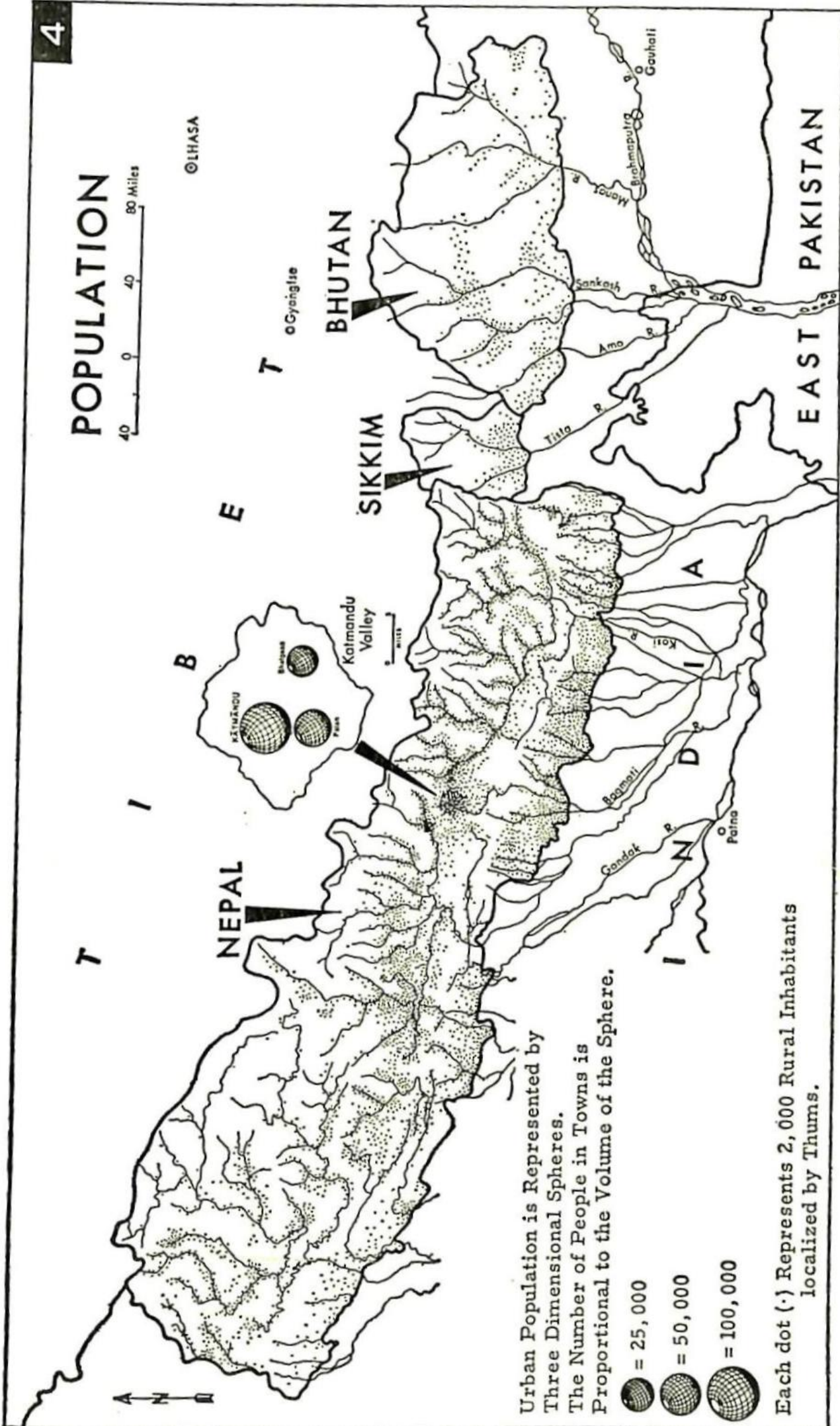
= 50, 000



= 100, 000

Urban Population is Represented by
Three Dimensional Spheres.
The Number of People in Towns is
Proportional to the Volume of the Sphere.

Each dot (·) Represents 2,000 Rural Inhabitants
localized by Thums.



tries, unlike that of Northern India, is of the Tantric cults.¹ Buddhism is dominant in the Himalayan valleys near the Tibetan border. Within the zone of Buddhism two regions can be distinguished on the basis of ritual and belief. The northernmost part is, in general, the area of Lamaistic Buddhism, very similar to that practiced in Tibet.² To the south, Buddhism is strongly influenced by Hinduism. In some areas, such as in the Katmandu Valley, there is a complex blending of the two, and many deities are worshipped by Hindu and Buddhists alike.

Lamaistic institutions and rituals play an important role in those areas that are marginal to Tibetan Buddhism, but customs and concepts alien to Buddhism, representing the remnants of animistic beliefs or older folk-religions, persist in the higher Himalayan regions. Prominent among these practices is the cult of mountain gods. High peaks are regarded as lords of certain geographical areas. Examples of this belief are the mystical role of Khumbila—god of the 19,297-foot Khumba peak—for the Sherpas, and Kanchenjunga for the people of Northern Sikkim.

Illiteracy is uniformly high in these countries, and there is a great diversity of dialects and languages. The existing multiplicity of dialects and languages has tended to enhance the cultural isolation of one region from another.

Generally speaking, the present pattern of settlement, involving three political units—Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan—reflects a highly diversified cultural landscape. Sizeable communities, such as the Katmandu Valley, the Tista Valley, and the Paro Valley, have sprung up around centers of population in the fertile valleys of the Inner Himalaya. These centers have served as core areas, or nuclei, for the development of the three kingdoms. Modern Nepal grew out of Gurkha conquests of the Central Himalaya; Bhutan and Sikkim grew out of the extension of authority and influence of the principal chiefs or governors over adjoining areas. The physical

¹ *Tantric* characterizes the system of doctrines and rites based on a class of religious texts known as *Tantras*, revelations of Siva.

² For the nature and origin of Tibetan Buddhism, refer to Snellgrove, D., *Buddhist Himalaya*, Bruno Cassirer, Ltd., Oxford, 1957.

difficulties involved in the development of lateral transportation patterns over the whole of the Himalaya encouraged the secluded growth of the Himalayan states. Historically, each political unit has built a limited circulatory pattern centered around its political core.

ISOLATION AND GEOSTRATEGIC LOCATION

For centuries the rulers of the Himalayan kingdoms kept out foreign influence by closely controlling traffic and virtually sealing the borders against foreigners, particularly Europeans. At the close of the Anglo-Nepali War (1814-1815), Nepal was forced to accept a British resident officer, but the country steadfastly refused to allow unrestricted travel, even by the resident officer. Only 13 years ago, after the Revolution of 1950, did Nepal open its door to foreigners. And only three years ago, in 1960, was the first American reporter, Paul Grimes of the *New York Times*, allowed to enter Bhutan.³

A recent article in the *National Geographic Magazine* describes Bhutan as "the world's last Shangri-La."⁴ To the average American it gives an idea of a mysterious land of peace and contentment, and tends to hide the many geopolitical complexities of this strategic borderland between Communist Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Lacking accurate knowledge of the geography, peoples, and history of this region, many Americans visualize the Himalayan kingdoms as the home of a placid Buddhist population whose tempo of life has changed little over the centuries. To some extent this concept is true. However, the growth of power of the People's Republic of China and the Communist occupation of Tibet makes Himalasia a cold-war battleground between democracy and Communism. Chinese infiltration in the Himalaya has made millions painfully aware of the strategic location of the border states. Concern for their future independence, in the face of Communist aggression, has caused the Himalayan kingdoms to open their doors, cautiously, and look toward India and the Free World.

³ See three illustrated articles and a picture report on Bhutan by Paul Grimes, correspondent of the *New York Times* in India, who visited Bhutan in June, 1960; *New York Times*, June 13, 14, 15, 1960.

⁴ Doig, Desmond, "Bhutan: Mountain Kingdom Between Tibet and India." *National Geographic Magazine*, Vol. 120, September, 1961, pp. 384-415.

The events that have led the governments of the Himalayan kingdoms to lower age-old barriers serve to emphasize the significance of the area. Mountains are no longer sufficient guarantees against aggression. The mountain passes of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan which have served as routes to the holy places of Tibet could be used by Chinese Communists to gain access to the fertile Himalayan valleys, the Gangetic plains, and indeed the whole of India.

POLITICO-GEOGRAPHIC ASPECTS

It is important to assess the major geopolitical aspects of the Himalayan kingdoms. Basically, these features are the result of interaction among three factors: Himalayan environment and cultural patterns; location between the two major Asian powers, China and India; and the changing character of the power pattern in Asian politics.

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE HIMALAYAN KINGDOMS

One of the common politico-geographic problems of the Himalayan kingdoms is the lack of strong territorial organization resulting from the rugged nature of the terrain. The northern boundaries with Tibet are ill-defined, and for much of their length there are no accurate surveys. Only the Sikkimese border is demarcated satisfactorily, and this line comprises only a small portion of the total boundary. In the absence of clearly defined borders, China disputes the existing traditional boundary. In the past neither the Himalayan states nor China (nor Tibet) exercised effective political control over the frontier area in High Himalaya.

The inhabitants of the High Himalayan valleys are largely of Tibetan origin; they speak similar languages and share allegiance to Buddhist religious ideas and cultural traditions. The Chinese have continually tried to woo people of the frontier region who are many days away from central governments in Katmandu, Thimbu, and Gangtok.

The southern boundaries of the three kingdoms are clearly defined, but here strong centrifugal forces are at work. Were India

as aggressively inclined as Communist China, loyalties of the Hindu people in the Terai and the Duars would be strongly attracted toward India. Currently there is considerable transmigration across the southern borders, and the line here shows characteristics found along the United States-Canada international border. People, currencies, goods, and ideas flow more freely across these boundaries than between the political core of the kingdoms and outlying districts.

The attraction of the northern and southern border regions of the Himalayan kingdoms toward Tibet, and to a lesser degree toward India, poses a potential threat to their territorial integrity.

DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY AND SECTIONALISM

The existence of a state depends upon the will of its inhabitants. No such determination of adequate intensity is present among the peoples of the Himalayan kingdoms. One of the major problems of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan lies in the lack of national consciousness or sense of national identity among the people. Tribal loyalties come first; national allegiance comes second, if at all. In the Himalayan kingdoms geography favors the retention of local identity. Elevation and climatic differences, along with varying soil capacities, are so pronounced as to induce variant cultural patterns within relatively small areas. Regional identity is aided by difficulties of communication which effectively block the exchange of ideas and normal acculturation expected in smaller countries.

A further problem related to population lies in the distribution pattern. The populations of the three Himalayan kingdoms are generally distributed along river valleys. Settlements are small and widely dispersed over much of the Himalayan area. Residents of one settlement feel that they have little in common with their neighboring settlement. Even in the major population centers the economic pattern tends to fragment the population rather than to make it cohesive. There is no labor movement of consequence, and difficulties of communication have so far prevented the tenant farmers from presenting a united front, although they share common problems and dissatisfactions. Lacking a common history and

a common purpose, there is little to bind one Himalayan inhabitant to another in any movement of unity.

Superimposed upon, and in many ways basic to, these divisive forces is the problem of language. Problems rising from the likeness of languages along either side of the frontier are important, but more serious is the problem of the multiplicity of languages within the interior. Here the many dialects create a modern Babel, and the communication of ideas is all but prohibited by the lack of a common language. This multiplicity of languages imposes a serious obstacle to any attempt on the part of national governments to foster a feeling of national unity. As if this diversity of languages were not a sufficient handicap, illiteracy is almost universal, and the usual outpourings of governmental pamphlets, literature, and nationalistic material is of no avail. In the absence of widespread ownership of radios, the spread of information is a slow and tedious process of person-to-person contact.

There are two other cultural considerations: the state of health of the population and the state of technological ability. To develop a strong state requires a healthy, skilled population. The people of the Himalayan kingdoms are not skilled from the standpoint of modern technology. They are not healthy; infectious and dietary diseases are endemic to much of the area. In the south, particularly in Terai and Bhutan Duars, the incidence of malaria runs high. The disease is a tremendous factor in reducing efficiency of workers; it is a debilitating disease which cuts the effective output of the laborer and imposes a frightful burden upon individuals and the economic life of the nation. Steps have been taken to eradicate the insects which cause malaria, but they are far from complete. Dietary diseases such as beri-beri continue to plague the Himalayan nations. Like malaria, these diseases not only take a heavy toll of life, but cause serious economic consequences by reducing the capacity for physical work.

POLITICAL INTEGRITY AND STABILITY

The Himalayan states have been dependencies of one nation or another for much of their history. The tradition of government, on

the basis of present boundaries, is very recent indeed. Nepal is a sovereign state at present; it exercises a full degree of control over its external affairs, but its economy is dependent upon India. Since 1955 Nepal has been a member of the United Nations, and it has been able to obtain economic aid from both the Free World and Communist nations. On the other hand, Sikkim and Bhutan are semi-independent kingdoms retaining a large measure of control over their internal administration, but they are guided by India in their foreign relations. Both Bhutan and Sikkim receive all necessary economic aid from India. The governments of these two kingdoms are acutely aware that a too sudden impact with the outside world might be disastrous. Looking to neighboring Nepal, now suffering from the ills of political immaturity and a bewildering surfeit of foreign aid, Bhutan and Sikkim have good reason to be cautious.

Reference has already been made to some of the more obvious problems of political control—the compartmentalism of the countries; the primacy of tribal loyalties; the difficulties of communication and the high rate of illiteracy, which make political cohesiveness nearly impossible; and above all, the almost universal absence of a sense of national unity and purpose. Throughout most of the region the national governments exercise *de jure*, but not *de facto*, control over their territories.

The basic task facing the Himalayan kingdoms is the necessity for creating centripetal forces of sufficient strength to overcome the physical and cultural pressures toward fragmentation. The “state-idea”⁵ is extremely weak, in fact almost nonexistent. Unless an

⁵ American political geographers define the concept of state-idea as the peculiar purpose or purposes for which a state stands that distinguish it from other states. Richard Hartshorne wrote, “. . . each state must seek to present to its people a specific purpose, or purposes, distinct from the purposes formulated in other states, in terms of which all classes of people in all the diverse areas of the region will identify themselves with the state that includes them within its organized area. This concept of a complex of specific purposes of each state has been called the “state-idea” by various writers following Ratzel, or by others the *raison d’être*, or justification of the state.” James, P. E., and C. F. Jones (editors), *American Geography: Inventory and Prospect*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, 1954, p. 195.

effective sense of nationalism can be fostered in the region, the future of the small kingdoms as independent political entities is dim indeed.

A political nucleus is present in each of the kingdoms—Katmandu in Nepal, Gangtok in Sikkim, and Thimbu in Bhutan—but the influence of these core cities diminishes directly with the distance from their immediate environs. In none of the kingdoms does the core area perform services of sufficient national scope to command respect, obedience, and financial support from peripheral segments. There is no feeling of dependence upon the national government and little sense of national allegiance on the part of the average individual. As a matter of fact, with King Mahendra's suspension of the democratic experiment in Nepal, there is today but little participation in national affairs. And in this absence of a sense of indebtedness or obligation lies the chief political weakness.

PROSPECTS FOR VIABLE ECONOMIES

The economies of the three Himalayan kingdoms are fundamentally agricultural and depend upon subsistence farming based on a feudalistic pattern of land distribution. Mineral and other natural resources for industrialization are gravely limited. The only source of power is in the mighty streams that flow down the steep Himalayan mountain sides.

The agricultural use of the land has reached its maximum intensity with the present state of technology. In some areas, particularly in the Terai of Nepal, improved water control and the introduction of disease-resistant strains of grain could improve crop yields to some extent, but most of the land suitable for farming is already under cultivation.

The inhabitants possess some handicraft skills which might be employed in the establishment of manufacturers for foreign markets. Silver craftsmen and skilled weavers could be used to make luxury goods for other parts of the world. On a more realistic note, however, one must pessimistically observe that the possibilities of any sizeable economic development which would give the Himalayan kingdoms higher living standards seem remote indeed. The eco-

conomic problems are not simple, and when added to the lack of technological skills and raw materials, illiteracy, disease, absence of national consciousness and paucity of effective governmental controls in both political and economic spheres, their solution becomes enormously difficult.

THE FLOW OF IDEAS AND GOODS

An essential politico-geographic feature of a state is the existence of a pattern of circulation that permits the free exchange of goods and ideas among the people within the territory. Through this circulation a national consciousness is cemented and a feeling of mutual inter-dependence between various areas of a country is furthered. In the Himalayan kingdoms this flow is a trickle. It is the lack of such a flow that contributes so much to the difficulties of establishing effective political control. Its absence furthers narrow regionalism and inhibits the development of a common national purpose. The limited road nets, weather-controlled air services, and the secluded nature of the mountain valleys lead to the conclusion that the problem of circulation is basic. Other obstacles to national integration will be much easier to solve with an increase in the ease and swiftness of communication.

THE POSSIBILITY OF UNION AND AN "ASIAN SWITZERLAND"

The Himalayan kingdoms could conceivably join in some kind of federation. Such a political and economic union would, of course, enhance the possibility of the establishment of a buffer "Asian Switzerland" between Communism and democracy in Asia. Certainly at first glance the similarity between the situation of Switzerland in Europe and the Himalayan countries in Asia is striking. From a physical standpoint, the two areas are somewhat alike. Each is a mountainous area, and in general terms it is possible to compare the Alps to the Himalayas. Switzerland's irregular borders have served to separate hostile European nations in the past, and her isolated position was but slightly less difficult to overcome than that of her Asian counterpart.

Like the Himalayan area, Switzerland possesses few natural re-

sources, and only hydroelectric power is readily available as a source of energy. Its agricultural lands are limited, and its population of slightly less than five million people (approximately half that of the Himalayan kingdoms) occupies some 16,000 square miles, an area slightly more than one-fourth that of the Asian region.

In common with the Himalayan nations, Switzerland is composed of diverse linguistic groups, each having language and cultural ties with other nations along the country's borders. Other centrifugal forces are to be found in the diversity of religious groups and cultural patterns. The problem of establishing a responsible government has been complicated by the retention of some vestiges of medieval political units. The greater ease of communications and transportation is an important factor in maintaining Swiss unity.

The success of the Swiss experiment, however, is due to a variety of factors. First, the problem of maintaining territorial integrity was resolved, in part at least, by a policy of neutrality during the period when her territory was unattractive to her neighbors. During this period the country served as the site of many international conferences, and during periods of conflict Switzerland served as a diplomatic clearing house for belligerent nations. Gradually, the idea of Swiss neutrality received general acceptance. She remained neutral because it served the interest of other nations to have her do so.

A second reason, and perhaps one of the most important, is to be found in the attitude of the Swiss people. Sharing a common pride in the achievements of their forebears in attaining independence without outside help, the people developed a sense of unity over a period of six centuries. Further, the Swiss developed a viable economy and a high standard of living through the development of manufacturing skills, using the great hydroelectric resources of the country as an energy source. The people's unique craftsmanship, specialization in agriculture, and the establishment of international banking institutions maximized their potentiality. Finally, the encouragement of tourism resulted in a large inflow of foreign exchange.

Is the Swiss pattern possible for the Himalayan kingdoms? Ad-

mitting that development will differ in specific details, is there a possibility that the Himalayan kingdoms could assume the Swiss role? It must be noted from the foregoing analysis of the politico-geographic aspects that possibilities of such a role are remote. Even though Nepalese leaders have spoken in favor of such a role, the idea has received little encouragement from the other two kingdoms.

It is obvious that the three kingdoms are not a completely homogeneous whole. They share the strategic location, the rugged terrain, inaccessibility, and lack of natural resources, but beyond these common attributes there is little real similarity upon which to base a federation of the Swiss type. The contrast between Nepal and Bhutan, which lie within 100 miles of each other, is especially striking. Nepal, a completely sovereign state, has a comparatively distinct political history, a highly developed culture in the Katmandu Valley, and a stable government despite its thoroughly autocratic institutions. Semi-independent Bhutan, on the other hand, has enjoyed little stable government. Until the turn of this century, it suffered from internal strife. Each of the four penlops (governors) competed for an extension of power and influence. The ascendancy to the post of Deb Raja, the temporal ruler, was decided by arms. The Dharma Raja, the spiritual ruler, the reincarnation of Buddha, was found as the need arose, among the highest families. Only since 1907, when the penlop of Tongsa District became the hereditary king, has there been a measure of political stability.

Bhutan still feels the crippling effect of internal wars fought during the nineteenth century. Much more than Nepal, it is a land of poverty and illiteracy. As a result of almost continuous civil wars, commercial activity has been limited, and agricultural practices are far more backward than those of the other Himalayan kingdoms.

Between Nepal and Bhutan is the tiny Indian protectorate of Sikkim with its fertile Tista basin. The base of the Sikkimese economy is much broader than that of its neighbors, including rich copper mining and cultivation of a variety of crops as well as livestock and dairy products for export. Despite Sikkim's small size, its developed productive capacity far exceeds that of larger Bhutan.

Its able government under the King, formerly under the protection of Great Britain, now of India, has permitted a gradual and orderly development of the resources of the country.

Certainly, the rulers of the three kingdoms will be loathe to surrender any of their personal power. If, however, the Himalayan nations are faced with the prospect of completely losing their present status under the dominion of foreign powers, particularly Communist China, they may achieve a certain degree of union. Such a union, coupled with improvements in communication (for example, the establishment of a radio system and a passable road network), may possibly lead to development of a Himalasia approaching an Asian Switzerland.