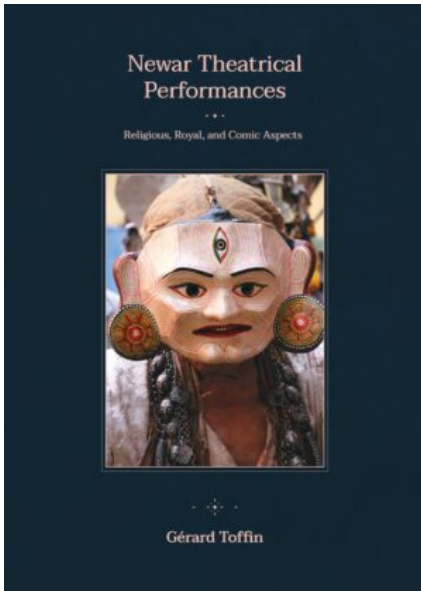


# Newar Theatrical Performances: Religious, Royal, and Comic Aspects



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## About the Book

Newar traditional dance theatre is one of the major theatrical traditions of the Himalayas. In this ethnographically grounded book, Gérard Toffin explores this crucial element of Newar culture and society. The study focuses on monographically oriented case studies, based both on Newar villages and towns, as well as on the main general characteristics of these performances and their role in Newar civilization. Strikingly enough, this traditional theatre is mainly derived from India but has become fully and genuinely Newarized over the centuries. It gives preference to mythological themes, divine or royal intrigues, far from the daily realities of the people. The performances favor dance, music, stylized gestures, and very rarely includes dialogues. They are fundamentally non-realistic, save, notably, for satirical and comical plays which play a crucial role. Newar dance theatre belongs to the traditional type of performance. There is limited room for individualism. Reference to the past and to religion dominates. Plays are organized around kinship groups, gender, local territories, and on the ancient caste system. They are governed by premodern rules, they exclude women and rest on a strict hierarchy between the characters, whether divine or royal. In all these topics, they stand in stark contrast to Nepali modern theatre, which is much more concerned with contemporary stakes.

## About the Author

Gérard Toffin is a social anthropologist and emeritus senior researcher at the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), France. He is currently member of CESA, Centre for South Asian and Himalayan Studies, Aubervilliers. He has carried out extensive fieldwork among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley and has published widely on this Nepalese ethnic group, including the monograph *Newar Society: City, Village and Periphery* (2007), as well as on other subjects concerning Nepal and the Himalayas: *The Politics of Belonging in the Himalayas. Local Attachments and Boundary Dynamics* (Delhi, 2011) and *Facing Globalization in the Himalayas. Belonging and the Politics of the Self* (Delhi, 2014), in collaboration with Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, as well as: *Imagination and Realities. Nepal between Past and Present* (Delhi, 2016). He

has published (in French or English) altogether about 180 articles and ten major books. His research presently focuses on Newar theatrical performances and the anthropology of theatre; see for instance his edited book, *Théâtres d'Asie à l'œuvre* (2012).

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