Bibliography of
SELECTED WORKS ON NEPAL BY TONI HAGEN

Compiled by

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About the Compiler

Khem Shreesh worked at Social Science Baha in various capacities from 2009 to 2025, serving as in-house editor from 2017. A Nepal-based researcher, editor, and translator with an MPhil in English, his interests include social history, knowledge production, and migration in Nepal. He has published a review essay, "Writing a Region from Within," in *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 31(1), June 2026 issue. Email: krshreesh@gmail.com

Bibliography of Selected Works on Nepal by Toni Hagen

INTRODUCTION

If one remembers Toni Hagen (17 August 1917–18 April 2003) only for his 1960 photobook *Nepal: The Kingdom in the Himalaya*, one would be overlooking many aspects of his multi-faceted personality.[1] He was a trained geologist, great humanitarian, and international development worker. His work with and for people in distress during many a catastrophe, man-made and natural, as a development aid worker led him to being one of the earliest critiques of international development practices.

Toni Hagen was awarded Dr. Sc. Nat. (Doctor of Natural Sciences) by ETH (Federal Institute of Technology) Zurich in 1943. He worked in geological and aerial survey projects before coming to Nepal in 1950 on a Swiss government-funded six-month development aid mission under the patronage of ETH Zurich, becoming one of the few foreigners invited by the-then Rana Regime. He was part of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team and pioneered Swiss development cooperation to Nepal, which continues to this day. In 1952, he was appointed as the government geologist by the Nepal government, and he traversed Nepal, surveying the land and interacting with its people. From his initial visit in 1950 to 1959, he covered at least 14,000 kms that he details in *Nepal: The Kingdom in the Himalaya* (1960), which is credited with introducing Nepal to the outside world. This book not only contained exotic photos of mysterious Nepal but

[1] This bibliography was prepared on the occasion of the second installment of the Nanda R. and Pamela L. Shrestha Lecture Series: Honouring Nepal Scholars. The lecture, titled "Toni Hagen: The Journey from Development Expertise to Social Relevance," was delivered by Dipak Gyawali on 12 February 2020. The series operates under the aegis of the Nanda R. and Pamela L. Shrestha Fund for Honouring Nepal Scholars, administered by Social Science Baha.

also described its history, culture, and people and possible futures in terms of development planning.

From 1959 to 1960, he was assigned by the United Nations to conduct aerial surveys in Nepal and was involved in developing planning principles for road construction, powerplant construction, and general development plans. During 1961–1962, as the chief delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the relief and settlement of Tibetan refugees, he was instrumental in raising funds and providing them relief and resettlement options with income-generating activities, chief of which was the establishment of carpet-weaving and Tibetan handicrafts training and factories in the refugee camps in Nepal. He resigned from ICRC under pressure and left Nepal and did not return for the next six years though he continued to come to Nepal frequently thereafter until his passing away in 2003. He has chronicled his travels, observations, changes in Nepal in his 1994 *Building Bridges to the Third World: Memories of Nepal (1950–1992),* which also contains a few chapters on the failures of development, based on case studies of Swiss aid to Nepal, such as development aid becoming "development colonialism" and development beneficiaries becoming "undevelopable," "vicious cycle" of development projects, and "missed opportunities" for meaningful work.

His perceptive and critical reflections on international development resulted from his work in developing countries. He worked for the UN in civil-war-torn Northern Yemen (1969–71), earthquake-hit Peru (1970), and in reconstruction of the-then East Pakistan (Bangladesh) after the civil war (1972). He worked as a consultant and evaluator for many government and private organizations for international development projects and programs from 1973 to 1995. He also taught a course on international development in ETH Zurich from 1974 to 1982. He published his reflections on the failure of international development in his 1988 book, *Paths and Dead Ends in Development Aid: Experimenting on the Third World (Case studies of 230 development projects in all the continents)* (not listed here).

In recognition of his contribution, he was honored by the Government of Nepal with Birendra Pragyalankar (1984), granted only to foreign scholars. Many exhibitions were held in his honor in Nepal and Germany.

Toni Hagen wrote and produced extensively across multiple formats and media, ranging from newspapers to journal articles to books to documentaries and on various topics and countries. This bibliography focuses only on his writings and documentaries on Nepal. It has been prepared after consulting his brief CV on the Toni Hagen Foundation webpage and list of his writings

provided by his daughter. Additional works were located through keyword and Google Scholar searches. It also contains a film by/about him, a YouTube video of his early travels, and a book of photos by him.

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