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Editorial

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editorial

The Himalaya-Hindukush form a geophysical seam that binds extraordinarily different regions. As the arid interior of Central Asia is stitched to South Asia's subtropical lowlands, so the Himalaya joins peoples and traditions of great diversity.

It is common to emphasize difference, the distinctiveness of the array of Himalayan peoples and landscapes. Yet at least as striking are the processes and history that make the region one, and connect it to all of Asia and to the world: The Gangetic plain, built from the spoil of the wasting mountains; monsoon rains and winter storm tracks enhanced and directed by peaks and intervening river gorges. The lives and livelihoods of Buddhist highland herders have long been linked to the fortunes of Newar or Kashmiri merchants. Pahari farmers descended from Rajasthan chieftains trade grain for salt along routes in use for hundreds of years. Plains pilgrims travel those routes to find the mountains' holy places. Today's globalization ties Gurung villages to the Hong Kong stock market through ex-Gurkha body guards; Sherpa hotelier's fortunes to Senate elections, through patronage relations; Rotary Clubs to outhouses at 16,000 feet, because of tourists' expectations and industrious entrepreneurs; yaks with Montana to Argentina to portray on film a piece of history played out in Tibet; even, perhaps, the fate of the planet to the outcome of a contest over a few miles of peaks and passes where the Himalaya and Hindukush come together.

The Nepal Studies Association exists to explore and understand the diversities and connections of this region with a curiosity that takes in physical landscapes and processes, cultural landscapes and the people who shape them: the underpinnings, history, and prospects of the worlds that intersect at this geophysical seam.

Himalayan Research Bulletin's purpose is to encourage and report that exploration. And though an artifact of the organization's history names us "Nepal" Studies Association and "*Himalayan*" *Research Bulletin*, in fact and intent, as these pages show, our interests encompass far more.

Volume 18 number 2 continues a theme begun in the last issue of *Himalayan Research*, on Sherpa people and the Solukhumbu region, then moves us west and north to Ladakh. To wrap up the first theme, we present a paper by Swiss-based contributor Eberhard Berg, whose piece on pilgrimage in Solu should help to appease our last issue's gentle critic Michael Muehlich, and let Paul Lachapelle report about sanitation in the Everest region. (Let anyone who doubts the true eclecticism of *HRB* consider those two pieces.) Both contributors are owed apologies, and awards for patience: both pieces were submitted long ago (two years, in the case of Eberhard Berg), but were crowded out of the first issue on Solukhumbu. The Ladakh emphasis comes through the efforts of our sister organization, Ladakh Studies. Nepal Studies Association council member Martijn van Beek does double duty as the Ladakh Studies journal's editor, and contributes to us his paper *True Patriots: Justifying Autonomy for Ladakh*. John Bray contributes a summary essay about research on Ladakh; his piece is a model of useful synthesis. Ladakh is the subject of the book by Crook and Low reviewed here by Kimber Haddix, and provides gossip for Mick Khoo to pass on. It is gossip about the Ladakhi view of another topic reported here, in Philippe Forêt's review, *Seven Years in Tibet*.

Clearly at *HRB* we do not feel slavishly bound to themes, and diversify in this issue in the usual ways. We print a book review of *Moran of Kathmandu* borrowed from the Kathmandu Post and kindly passed on by its author through the helpful intervention of Father Donnelly. ICIMOD sends us its publications, and we print their most recent lists. Our CONFERENCE DIGEST assembled by Sam Sonntag includes an unusually varied selection of conferences and demonstrates the disciplinary diversity that parallels our open-minded conception of the Himalayan region. We defer to the next issue Frank Shulman's extraordinarily comprehensive DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS. As compensation we offer the semi-annual printing of our MEMBERS' DIRECTORY, and invite your corrections of information contained in it. Our most substantial departure from the Solukhumbu-Ladakh theme comes in the form of conference proceedings: the transcription of a panel sponsored by NSA at the 1997 Annual Meeting on South Asia held at Madison. We want to thank panelists Paul Karan, Jim Fisher, Gautam Vajracharya, Jack Ives, and Gerald Berreman for participating, Nanda Shrestha and John Metz for putting the panel together, and especially Naomi Bishop who moderated the roundtable and then undertook the truly torturous task of transcribing the tapes of the session. Note that Naomi Bishop no longer serves as NSA chair, and thus contributes this effort, as well as countless other support services for NSA and *HRB*, out of plain goodness.

This issue has tapped an unusual range of plain goodness that calls for acknowledgment. We list the extraordinary library contributed to us by David Lockwood, which inspires not only our gratitude but also efforts to find space and resources to make these books, as well as other Himalaya-related materials which fall into our hands, available to others. The books went from box to EndNote file through the after-hours labors of attorney Brad Lechman, whose enthusiasm for Ladakh and interest in the books may have slowed his progress at the computer, but guaranteed his persistence; he's coming back for more volunteer help. We had another expert to exploit for this issue, and are grateful for the editorial skills of Gary Ridout. He used his training as a University of Chicago Geography Ph.D. less, perhaps, than his undergraduate education in South Asia at Syracuse to very good effect on *HRB's* behalf.

Contributing editors Nirmal Tuladhar and Philippe Forêt have supplied a variety of materials, from Philippe's aforementioned review and a map of Ladakh (which we had to rework for our antiquated computer system--sorry!) to conference proceedings sent us by the ever-reliable Nirmal. Thanks! We also want to thank the purely local talent that helped us, Geography graduate student Matt Hampton, who took on the task of remaking and printing the maps included in this issue; colleague Ric Vrana, who also struggled with the maps (graphic conversions are our bane). Editorial assistant Amy Jo Woodruff, on the job now for eighteen months, has become essential to the production of the *Bulletin*; the editor invites suggestions as to how to bind her permanently to the task, despite her intent to finish her master's degree and go forth into the world. It was Tenzing Gyazu Sherpa's entreaty that brought us the contributions to the Solukhumbu/Sherpa issues. Our paper on the Sherpa Diaspora, promised for this issue and based on his research, will have to wait for space in a later issue. We are still struggling with the delicate question of how to report on a phenomenon--the diffusion of Sherpas around the world--without putting anyone stretching the limits of a visa at risk of discovery.

Next issue, which should follow close on the heels of this one, is being put together by an exalted team of guest editors, David Seddon and Piers Blaikie of the School of Development Studies at the University of East Anglia. The work of these internationally important geographers, already known to many of us, will be under discussion in the forthcoming issue, to focus on development in Nepal as investigated by their institution.