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Editor's Introduction

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editor's introduction

In May of 2001, this issue of HRB was ready to print. The proceedings of the panel *A Decade of "Democracy": Assessing Activism after the 1990 People's Movement in Nepal*, organized by Laura Kunreuther and Laura Ahearn, was formatted; we lacked only a few illustrations.

Then came June 1st, which will always be remembered as the day on which unimaginable catastrophe was visited on the royal family of Nepal. We joined the rest of the world in offering our condolences to survivors and the Nepalese people, but we thought a journal started as the Newsletter of the Nepal Studies Association ought to do more. So we reprint here a commentary by Bipin Adhikari and S.B. Mathe, and add comments on it from Arjun Guneratne, David Gellner, Pratyoush Onta, John Whelpton, Binod Sijapati, and Ramesh Parajuli, and the authors' response; we hope that HRB's readers will add further to the discussion, and help us all come to terms with and understand this horrific act.

It has been a year of horrific acts: September 11th found us again all but ready to go to press; again publication was delayed. Our response to the events now associated with this date is different, but also emerges from the core of what our organization is pledged to do: increase understanding about our region.

A glance at any relief map of the planet marks the region as unique: nowhere else is there so extensive an expanse of high-elevation terrain. More difficult to discern is a coherent topographic boundary that delineates territories within that expanse. Where do the Himalaya give way to the Karakoram, the Karakorum to Hindukush and Pamir? The Tibetan Plateau clearly laps against the Himalaya; are the Kunlun Shan not also part of the distinctive concentration of upthrust ranges that mark Highest Asia? How meaningful are politically demarcated boundaries in a landscape where nature itself creates such an intricate interplay of mountains, rivers, high hidden valleys, and interstitial lowlands? These borders are hugely significant both in local conflicts and in geopolitics, clearly—but how useful are they at defining zones of cultural or environmental difference? The Nepal Studies Association's members found ourselves struggling with the borders around our area of interest, and explicitly expanded them last year when the organization's membership voted overwhelmingly to rename itself the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies. But events of this fall suggest a still wider area of concern for us: can we stop at Khyber Pass, when people and events crossing that divide involve not only Nepal and the Himalaya, but most of the rest of the world as well? Regional definitions laid out by geographers and area studies programs are challenged by the exploding globalization of the 21st century. We are suddenly aware that here, too, Barry Commoner's First Law of Ecology applies: *Everything is connected to everything else.*

At HRB we are working to articulate those connections, and welcome contributions to that effort. We are grateful for the enormous effort of this volume's contributors, especially panel and proceedings organizers Drs. Ahearn and Kunreuther and commentary orchestrator Arjun Guneratne—and, of course, for the patience of subscriber-members of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies, who have waited too long for this issue.

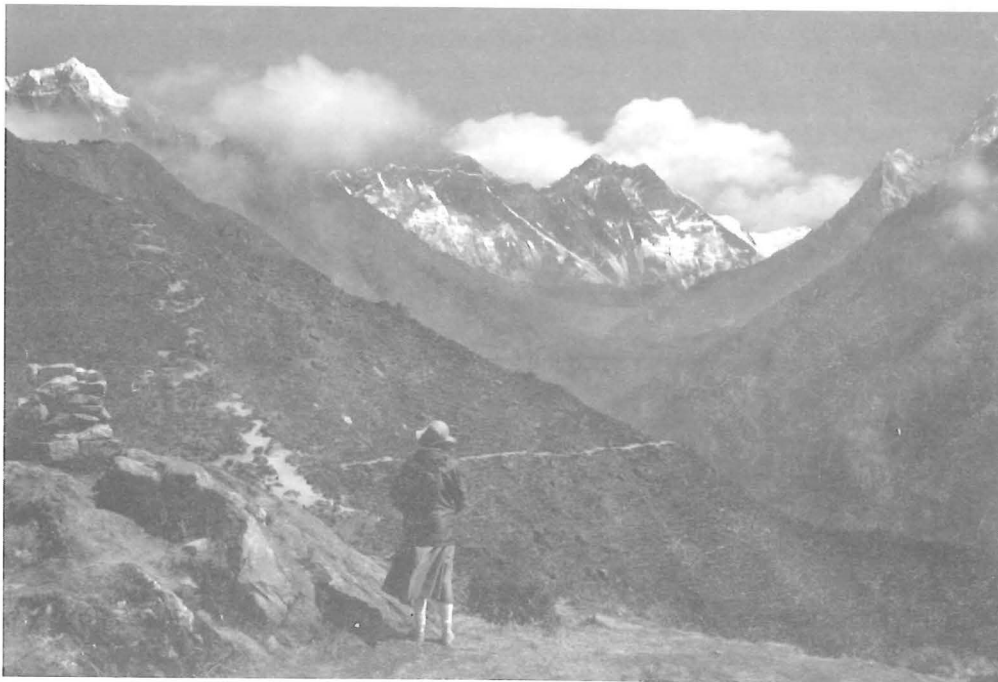
We have lost one of the most loyal and supportive of these subscribers, a founding member of the Nepal Studies Association and mentor for some of the best known of American scholars working in Nepal. John Hitchcock's extraordinary contribution to the anthropology of Nepal inspired an issue dedicated to him in 1984. We repeat that gesture of recognition in the first issue of volume XXII, this time a memorial compilation of papers and commentary organized by Al Pach and Tom Fricke. In common with most American Nepal-bound students of my generation, I learned the name and work of John Hitchcock before I ever got there, and I will miss the kind notes he added to his member renewal forms, his words of encouragement when we met at Madison meetings.

Our community of High Asia scholars laments another loss, as reported in Todd Lewis' memorial to Richard Kohn. And along with the world's tragedies, my own world suffered another: the death of my mother. She would be disgusted with the number of times I've invoked her as an excuse in the month since she died (sorry, Mom). She was pleased, though, to have used my presence there to widen her horizons to include Nepal, which she visited twice. Impressed, of course, with the mountains, she was most moved by its people. Her curiosity and appreciation for human diversity infected all of us around her; her warmth and interest in almost everybody made her almost everybody's friend. Although in the last issue, noting the death of my father, I regretted the end of his telephoned editorial advice, it was really my mother who over the years was most often pressed into that service; now I'm *really* on my own--except, of course, for all the others engaged in making this publication happen.

In house at Portland State University, the list of people putting out HRB and managing the membership of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies includes two new HRB staff members, replacing the all-but-irreplaceable outgoing HRB editorial Associate Marc Weber; they are Jenifer Cesca and Jennifer Prokos, graduate students in Geography at Portland State whose own research interests lie in High Asia. Kathleen Jongeward continues as our undergraduate and exceptionally adept office manager. My thanks to all.

Barbara Brower, Editor

December 2001



Anne Brower, 71, meets Mt Everest, 1984