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## From the Editor

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## FROM THE EDITOR

The three research articles that appear in this issue of the journal all focus on Nepal and take up disparate themes from different disciplinary perspectives. Maya Daurio revisits a village in the valley of the Bheri River first described by James Fisher in his *Trans-Himalayan Traders*, to describe Kaike, the little known language spoken there by a few thousand people, and to examine the reasons for its survival in the face of the pressure of Nepalization. Her paper illuminates the relationship of language to the environment and local understandings of landscape, and contributes to our knowledge of one of the world's least known languages.

Lai Ming Lam is an anthropologist whose work focuses on the Rana Tharu of Western Nepal. The Rana Tharu have not fitted easily into the pan-Tharu movements of recent years, including that led by the Tharu Kalyankarini Sabha (Tharu Welfare Society) or the Tharu Indigenous NGO Federation. Indeed, as she notes in her paper in this volume, many Rana Tharu do not regard themselves as indigenous at all (contrary to a central tenet of contemporary Tharu political organizing) but as high-caste immigrants from India, who are superior to other Tharu groups. Her analysis illuminates the fluidity of Rana identity formation, which is informed by ideologies of both sanskritization and indigenism, as well as by the tribal rights movement in India.

Yogendra Gurung analyzes the phenomenon of migration from rural Nepal through a social exclusion perspective to answer the following questions: who migrates, why do they migrate, and how do social, cultural and economic factors shape where they choose to go? Depending on the resources available to them, the extent of their social-cultural marginalization, the degree of their literacy and where in Nepal they are from, people opt to migrate within Nepal, to India, or to more distant places. His paper provides a useful framework to think through this process.

We publish two contributions to "Perspectives" in this issue of the journal. The first is the keynote address given by Dr. Drona Rasali at the Himalayan Studies Conference in St. Paul last Fall. Dr. Rasali is the founder of the email list serve *Nepaldalitinfo*, which is an invaluable resource not only for Nepali Dalits in Nepal and the diaspora to share information and discuss matters of concern and interest, but also to those who would wish to gain insight into events in Nepal from a Dalit perspective. In this essay, he outlines an argument for bringing about positive outcomes in the quest for dignity and social justice for marginalized people in Nepal by making "small changes." He focuses on two initiatives that have been close to his heart: the work of Nepal Dalit Info, and the proposal to create an open university for Nepal. The second contribution, by Amanda Snellinger, describes the current state of affairs among the student activists who were foot soldiers in *jana andolan II*, and who must learn to wait and cultivate patience as Nepal's democratic process stumbles erratically forward.

This issue of *Himalaya* also breaks grounds in publishing poetry; as far as I am aware, this is the first time we have done so in the journal's history. The poems are by Mikael Vause, a poet and mountaineer; I am delighted to be able to include some of his poems in this issue and to add a new dimension to the journal's interdisciplinary approach, which has been heavily oriented of late to the social sciences. The journal has welcomed submissions from a wide range of fields, both under my editorship and that of my predecessor Barbara Brower, but submissions from the Humanities have been few and far between, something that I certainly regret.

This past Fall, we also organized our first (and very successful) Himalayan Studies Conference at Macalester. It was held in conjunction with the 60th annual meeting of the venerable Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs, and well over 200 people were present for the joint event. 89 people registered to attend for the Himalaya conference, and all the panels were very well attended. There were two plenary addresses by Drona Rasali and Pratyoush Onta, and a plenary panel on the conference theme, "Rethinking the Himalaya." We had a full house at the conference banquet on Friday evening, where the keynote speaker was David Gellner, who spoke on "Upland Region or 'a World of Peripheries'? Some Thoughts on Himalayan Identities." We published a list of the panels that were presented in the last issue of the journal, and panel and paper abstracts are online at the association's website (<http://anhshimalaya.org/HSC/2011/programs.html>). The conference would not have been possible without the hard work of Margo Dickinson, the coordinator of the Anthropology Department at Macalester, who kept on top of the logistics, made sure everything came together seamlessly and worked flawlessly; I am most grateful to her. To build on the success of this first conference, we will follow up with a second at Western Michigan University, again in conjunction with the Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs, and plans are afoot for a third at Yale in 2014, in partnership with the Yale Himalayan initiative.

Arjun Guneratne  
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