Review of 'Climate Change Modeling for Local Adaptation in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region (Community, Environment and Disaster Risk Management, Volume 11)' edited by Armando Lamadrid and Ilan Kelman

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Luke Lindemann on *Trans-Himalayan Linguistics: Historical and Descriptive Linguistics of the Himalayan Area*

Trans-Himalayan Linguistics provides a helpful introduction to major issues in the field. It will be most useful for linguists working on Sino-Tibetan languages as a solid contribution to Tibeto-Burman historical reconstruction and description. Overall, contributions are light on theoretical concerns beyond the issues of historical comparison and construction and instead focus on the data at hand. The volume will also be of interest to scholars working on the documentation of endangered and understudied languages because many of the contributors explicitly raise issues that emerge over the course of field studies. Post and Blench stress the untapped resource of local administrative materials and difficulties inherent to working in a political unstable region. David A. Peterson (Ch. 10) and Opgenort separately describe the particular circumstances that led to meeting and working with speakers of the severely endangered languages of Rengmitca and Tilung respectively. Michaud's contribution is particularly interesting because of the detail with which he describes particular problems encountered during fieldwork on Yongning Na, peppering the description of his project with musings about the way in which elicitation mistakes may shed light on deeper linguistic questions, or the necessity of "bootstrapping" from basic assumptions arrived at by trial and error in building a description of basic tone categories.

Owen-Smith and Hill do an admirable job of marrying van Driem's proposal for the term Trans-Himalayan with the diverse analyses and interpretations of a large group of linguists working on these languages. Their volume contains a wealth of historical work and primary language data for the Trans-Himalayan language family as well as general insights on the nature and necessity of working on understudied languages.

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Climate Change Modeling for Local Adaptation in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region (Community, Environment and Disaster Risk Management, Volume 11).

Armando Lamadrid and Ilan Kelman, eds. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2012. 237 pages. ISBN 9781780524863.

Reviewed by Pasang Yangjee Sherpa

This edited volume examines the application of environmental modeling methods toward local adaptation to climate change in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region. It contains chapters on each of the HKH countries—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan. These chapters highlight the complex social and environmental contexts of the region while presenting the challenges of using different knowledge sources for local climate change adaptation. The editors frame the book as one where consideration for local peoples' terms are emphasized while developing, testing, and implementing solutions, and also where physical systems modeling is recognized as one knowledge system among many that is needed for adaptation and other development works in the region. The book begins by introducing the HKH mountain systems and concludes by comparing the case studies from each country and drawing lessons from them. Through multiple perspectives from different countries
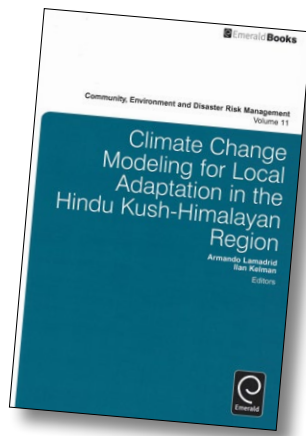
and a critical discussion, the editors hope to contribute to assisting mountain peoples in coping with both the environmental and social changes they are experiencing.

In the HKH region, recognized by the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as data deficient, scientists, and researchers are still developing climate change knowledge and mechanisms to effectively apply the multiple knowledges for adaptation and resilience building as the chapters in this book show. This book also shows that although climate change related activities have been initiated and sensitization of individuals and institutions has occurred at the national levels, the questions about how we address the socioeconomic complexities of the region and deal with the multiple knowledge systems of various peoples and institutions at the local levels remain insufficiently explored and unanswered. Therefore, this book makes a significant contribution toward climate change adaptation research through critical assessment of current climate change adaptation initiatives in HKH countries and the advantages and the limitations of climate change related modeling for local climate change adaptation. The limitation, however, is that the climate change adaptation initiatives discussed here are those that are covered only by the one chapter on each of the eight countries, leaving the readers to

seek additional literature to get a wider picture of how climate change adaptation research is evolving for these countries.

In the book, editors Armando Lamadrid and Ilan Kelman attempt to provide both sides of their assessment through the contributors' chapters. For example, Eklabya Sharma (Chapter 3) introduces the readers to the Hindu Kush-Himalaya region as one that is abundantly rich in natural resources and cultures but where poverty is rampant. He discusses climate change and its impacts in the region, identified as a hotspot for climate change impacts by the Fourth Assessment Report (2007). Sharma remarks that modeling and top-down endeavors of those working on climate change in the HKH fill in the data gap and support the tools needed to understand changes, and are most useful for the people who need the results most in order to deal with climate change.

In the concluding chapter, Sarah Opitz-Stapleton and Karen MacClune discuss the utility of hydrological and climatological modeling in informing climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction initiatives. They argue that climate change programs benefit from modeling but require much more than climate information to be successful. They argue "the success of CCA [climate change adaptation] initiatives will depend more on the quality of

human institutions—social, political, and economic structures—and their ability to address underlying vulnerabilities, than the ability of climate and hydrological models to project plausible scenarios" (p. 228).

Marius Warg Naess (Chapter 6), when presenting a preliminary discussion of potential climate change impacts on nomadic pastoralists on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau (QTP), reveals that "official policies that constantly introduce reforms that reduce pastoral flexibility represent a far more significant threat for nomadic pastoralists on the QTP than climate change because they may result in the wholesale extinction of the pastoral culture" (p. 111). Naess thus shows that in some cases climate change may not be the urgent or the most serious threat people face. Therefore it is necessary to understand local level socioeconomic changes, the very conditions that need to be considered for adaptation and resilience initiatives before inserting them into the climate change narratives.

In societies with modernizing developments and changing social contexts with shifting gender roles and expectations, as in the upper Indus Basin, Farida Azhar-Hewitt and Kenneth Hewitt (Chapter 4) point out that development practices undermine traditional risk-averse practices while also failing to provide alternatives. They show how exposure and vulnerability to

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Pasang Yangjee Sherpa on *Climate Change Modeling for Local Adaptation in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region*

environmental dangers are a social construct that are invisible to climate models. Therefore, they argue that having a "professional ear " (p. 69) that listens to the concerns of the local communities that are rarely heard, and the translations that respect their concerns, is necessary as we continue to address climate change vulnerability and adaptation issues. Such works differ in character and approach from climate models and arguably should come ahead of attempts to use model results to propose adaptive responses. The professional ear, they argue, needs the greatest training and application, "learning to listen to and translate what people report into actions that best serve their needs and to which they can contribute intelligently" (p. 69).

The editors of this book point out that their critical assessments and remarks are expected to assist in evaluation and refinement of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction initiatives and thereby increase effectiveness. They argue that this book summarizes and presents the challenges of applying results from climate change modeling but that it does not present a one-size-fits-all solution that will close the modeling-to-adaptation gap.

The book then concludes that "to achieve the best of both modeling and climate change adaptation requires thoughtful and patient application of modeling, tailored to local needs, conditions, and politics,

with communities engaged around all stages of generating, interpreting, and applying the result" (p. 233).

Pasang Yangjee Sherpa is an anthropologist at Penn State University. She studies climate change impact on the Sherpas of the Mt. Everest region in Nepal.

The Sacred Town of Sankhu: The Anthropology of Newar Ritual, Religion, and Society in Nepal.

Bal Gopal Shrestha. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012. Xxv, 615 pages. ISBN 9781443837705.

Reviewed by Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz

In *The Sacred Town of Sankhu: The Anthropology of Newar Ritual, Religion, and Society in Nepal*, Bal Gopal Shrestha has undertaken the impressive task of detailing the ritual life of Sankhu, a 'traditional' Newar town located eighteen kilometers northeast of Kathmandu. Sankhu boasts a notable history in the Kathmandu Valley as a commercial center on the overland trading route to Tibet. After the construction in the late 1950s of roads that bypassed the town, Sankhu's political and economic import in the Valley waned. Nevertheless, Sankhu continues to be a culturally and religiously prominent town today on account of its rich Newar heritage, traditions, and festivals, thirty-four of which Shrestha describes at length. Many of these traditions revolve around the goddess Vajrayogini, the patron deity of Sankhu whose main temple resides on the hilltop overlooking the town and who is worshipped widely by Nepal's Hindus and Buddhists alike.