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MACALESTER

her 2014 monograph *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development*. Yeh is on the editorial board of HIMALAYA. AAS conferences are also an excellent opportunity for graduate student research and dissertation development. With support from the Henry Luce Foundation and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), Dannah Dennis of the University of Virginia participated in the AAS-SSRC Dissertation Workshop Series under the 2015 theme: Religion and the State in Asia.

The annual AAS conference is a rich and rewarding event for both established and emerging scholars and remains a professional gathering of intellectual rigor and social engagement. Numerous meetings of professional associations and academic initiatives were held in Chicago. These meetings and receptions included but were not limited to: the AAS South Asia Council and AAS China and Inner Asia Council; the American Institute of Indian Studies; the American Center for Mongolian Studies; the Burma Studies Group/Burma Studies Foundation as well as the Committee on Teaching about Asia and the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy. Many universities with unique histories in Asian Studies also held receptions and networking events, including: University of Chicago Affiliates Reception; University of Washington Reception; Yale Asian Studies Councils' Joint Reception; Stanford University Reception; UC Berkeley Reception; and University of Michigan Reception. Meetings and planning sessions in Chicago for other organizations committed to the growth of Asian Studies across the academy include: the AAS Editorial Board Meeting; the Asian Librarians Liaison Committee meeting; the Midwest Conference on Asian Studies (MCAA); the National Endowment for the Humanities meeting; and the

South Asia Across the Disciplines Series Board Meeting. In addition to the above-mentioned panels, lectures, and themed events, the conference also featured an impressive array of film screenings and a large book fair.

Finally, while there was strong representation from scholars on Nepal and the Himalaya across panels and presentations at AAS 2015, this author hopes for even greater ANHS engagement at AAS conferences in the years ahead. Situated at the crossroads of South, East, and Central Asia, ANHS has much to offer AAS. This is particularly true with respect to expanding conversations across Asian landscapes and further disrupting traditional area studies frameworks in the academy and policy realms. Towards a greater production of critical knowledge and cross-disciplinary dialogue, these kinds of interventions are among the most important contributions to be made by scholars of Nepal and the Himalaya.

Galen Murton  
University of Colorado-Boulder

### ***Articulating Ethnicity: Language and the Boundaries of the Himalayas***

**University at Buffalo**

**18 April 2015**

Situated at the peripheries of the world's two most populous nation-states—India and China—the Himalayan region represents an exceptional site for the study of the intersection of language and ethnic and national politics. As the Himalayas are home to both contested ethno-nationalisms and disputed and shifting borders, language often finds

itself not only at the forefront of the region's cultural politics, but also its geopolitics. Fredrik Barth's *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* signified a major shift in the approach to the study of ethnic groups (Fredrick Barth. [1969] 1998. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press). Barth argued that if we focus on boundaries, we can see that the forms ethnicity takes are relational—it is the boundary, in fact, which makes salient the cultural content of ethnic groups. This conference engaged with and utilized Barth's early insights to investigate the role of language in boundary maintenance among Himalayan peoples.

Articulating Ethnicity: Language and the Boundaries of the Himalayas, organized by Walter Hakala (University at Buffalo) and Joseph Stadler (Gannon University), was a workshop-style conference hosted at the University at Buffalo in April 2015 that brought together a remarkable group of researchers for a thought-provoking discussion. The workshop was divided into three panels that focused on (1) language, (2) Himalayan populations living abroad, and (3) land and territory. These three panels, which were chaired by Elizabeth Mazzolini (University at Buffalo), Elen Turner (*Himal Southasia* magazine) and Vasiliki Neofotistos (University at Buffalo), respectively, structured the conference's conversations.

To begin the workshop, Mark Turin (University of British Columbia) succinctly arranged and discussed a number of issues related to language and ethnicity throughout the Himalayan region. Addressing the politics of language and the language of politics as both expressions of political identity and public displays of cultural belonging, he argued that the rapid

transformation from *boli* (speech, or spoken language) to *bhasa* (written language), or from malleable, oral cultures to fixed, written cultures, deserves careful analysis. Turin's elucidation of these problems, bolstered by his two decades of fieldwork in the region, helped to contextualize our discussion throughout the day.

Next, Heather Hindman (The State University of Texas at Austin) looked at the "micropolitics of transformation" to explore the shifts in Nepalis' motivations in teaching and learning foreign languages. Hindman noted how exchanges in labor migration, tourism, and aid work over the past several decades have accordingly reoriented many Nepalis toward languages other than English, which offer their own strategic and economic opportunities. Rather than making general claims about an abstract globalization and its effects on Nepal, Hindman made an excellent argument for understanding the particular contexts in which Nepalis are made into specific kinds of cosmopolitan subjects who, in some cases, turn east rather than west for a language of power.

Ingrid Hakala (University of Virginia) considered the mother tongue educational efforts of a Limbu-language primary school program, Anipaan, to examine how ethnic difference is shaped and practiced in schooling. Hakala argued that while the program allowed for Limbu children to practice their ethnic identities in a clearly bound space-time in their school day, it also served to effectively undermine the status of their mother tongue by relegating it to a marginalized milieu in the wider government-run education system.

In the second panel, which focused on Himalayan peoples abroad, Susan Hangen (Ramapo College) described how the work of a nonprofit organi-

zation in New York, originally formed to assist Nepali-speaking immigrants, blurs the boundaries of "Nepaliness." Hangen's paper illuminated how in this immigrant community the boundaries demarcating belonging—and the ethnic markers that define them—have shifted with the welcoming of Tibetan speakers. Yet, while the organization she described has blurred the Nepali-Tibetan boundary, Hangen showed that it has also remained Nepali-centered in its representations.

Joseph Stadler's paper described a similar set of issues regarding the reworking of boundaries in the Nepali-Bhutanese refugee community of Erie, Pennsylvania. Stadler showed how the Bhutanese Community Association of Erie attempts to balance social integration with cultural preservation. However, the circumstances of resettlement have necessitated new definitions of just what "culture" they are trying to preserve. Some older ethnic boundaries have receded, while new ones have become salient. Stadler suggested that one meaningful new boundary is the one between Nepali-Bhutanese Christians and those who belong to what this particular Nepali-Bhutanese community term the "Omkar Family"—Hindus, Buddhists, and Kiratis.

Beginning the final panel on land and territory, Sara Shneiderman's paper asked the question: How do Himalayan peoples conceptualize "territory"? In seeking to unpack this concept, Shneiderman (University of British Columbia) shared with us some insights from her recent fieldwork that expands upon her research on ritual practice and political performance (Sara Shneiderman. 2015. *Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities Between Nepal and India*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press). Shneiderman looked to the inter-

relationships between the localized expression of territorial practices and the national and transnational configurations within which these practices occur. Though this project is very new, Shneiderman's work will not only lead to a greater understanding of territoriality in the Himalayan region, but also to new theoretical and methodological insights for anthropologists, who can sometimes find themselves encumbered by the scale at which they conduct their research.

Andrew Nelson (University of North Texas) explored the issues of land and territory through a case study of land conflict between a family of Newar Jyāpu farmers and a Chetri broker in the Kathmandu Valley. Nelson found that the farmers framed their ethnicity in terms of being moral guardians of inalienable lands, as they felt the threat of losing land to "outsiders" such as the state, upper-caste traders, and Bahun and Chetri migrants. Nelson demonstrated how land practices and land beliefs can regulate group membership and considered how different scalar factors affect the relationship between land and Jyāpu identity. Nelson's paper was most effective at taking the discussion of ethnicity out of the realm of the political and into the realm of the everyday.

Lastly, Dambar Chemjong (Cornell University) explored the oppositional politics of the Limbuwan movement and its ethnicized claims to territorial rights. Chemjong's paper gave historical depth that contextualized Limbu claims of cultural, territorial, linguistic, historical, economic, and political difference from the Nepalese state. Chemjong drew our attention to the problems incurred by the drawing of boundaries and just what this means for people, not only politically, but in terms of their selves.

In all, though it was a conference about boundaries, *Articulating Ethnicity: Language and the Boundaries of the Himalayas* was characterized by a distinct feeling of community, in which junior and senior scholars with diverse research areas and theoretical backgrounds exchanged ideas to help further each another's work. While the papers were excellent, the conversations were even better. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the presenters, chairs, attendees, the Humanities Institute at the University at Buffalo, and everyone else who helped to make this conference a reality. Also, I give special thanks to Walt Hakala for his tireless work as the organizer of the Foundations of South Asian Studies Research Workshop at the University at Buffalo and for his guidance in the planning of this conference.

Joseph R. Stadler  
Gannon University

### **17th International Association for Ladakh Studies (IALS) Conference Report**

#### **Kargil, Ladakh**

#### **26-29 July 2015**

The 17th Conference of the International Association for Ladakh Studies (IALS) was held July 26-29, 2015 at the Tourist Facilitation Centre in Kargil, Ladakh. The conference was organised by IALS in collaboration with LAHDC, Kargil and J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Kargil. A total of around 90 scholars, scientists, and students from different parts of the world registered for the conference and attended various sessions, demonstrating a great interest to learn and share knowledge. Forty-six

papers, including five in Urdu, were presented, and three documentary films were screened during the conference. The participants and presenters were of diverse backgrounds from within and outside of Ladakh. Unfortunately, some participants, including research students from Jammu University, could not make it to Kargil due to heavy rain fall and road blockage at Sonamarg.

The inaugural session took place at the Syed Mehdi Memorial Auditorium Hall in Kargil on July 26, 2015. The Chairman of the J&K Legislative Council, Hajji Anayat Ali, was the Chief Guest and Chief Executive Councilor LAHDC, Kargil, Hajji Hanifa Jan, was the Guest of Honor for the inaugural session. This session started with a welcome speech by Gulzar Husain Munshi, the conference convener. This was followed by introductory speeches by IALS President John Bray and an insightful address from the keynote speaker, Prof. P. Stobdan, former Indian Ambassador. Executive Councilors Syed Abass Razvi and Tsering Angdus were also present on the occasion.

The sessions on Climate Change and Water Management, Folk Art, Ethnography and Material Culture, and Governance and Political Change were successfully covered in three sessions on the first day. On the second day, there were sessions on Development, Religion and History, Agriculture, and Heritage Conservation. Two documentary films were screened on the second day: "In the Lap of the Mountains: The Irrigation Systems of Ladakh's Farming Communities" by Joe Hill and "Buddhist Art: a Fragile Inheritance" by Prof. David Park. The Biennial General Meeting of the Association took place after the final session. The conference dinner was held at Tourist Facilitation Centre on the same day.

Day Three included sessions on Folk Art, Ethnography and Material Culture, Art and Architecture, Urdu Papers, Biodiversity Conservation, Heritage Conservation, Contemporary Society and Contemporary History. The election results for the posts of President, Ladakh Liaison Officer, and eight members in the advisory committee were also announced. Sonam Wangchok was elected President, Konchok Paldan was elected as secretary, and Tashi Morup was elected the Ladakh Liaison Officer. The elected members in the advisory committee include Tashi Ldawa Tsangspa, Kacho Mumtaz Khan, Iqbal Ahmed, John Bray, Amjad Ali, Monisha Ahmed, Gulzar Husain Munshi, and Tsewang Rigzin. The day ended with the screening of the documentary film "Hajira: The Story of a Woman Journalist in Ladakh" by Tashi Morup and Mabel Disket from LAMO, Leh.

An excursion tour to Kartse Khar and Hunderman village were organized on July 29, 2015. This was followed by a dinner hosted by the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Kargil at the Tourist Facilitation Centre. Shri Hassan Khan, former member of Parliament, Hajji Hanifa Jan, CEC Kargil, Brigadier V.P.S. Kaulshik, Commander 121 Brig., Lt. Col. K. Swaminathan, AAG, 121 Brigade, and executive councillors were also present at the dinner.

The conference would not have been possible without the support of LAHDC, Kargil, J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Kargil Development Authority, Tourism Department, Kargil, and many individuals from Kargil, especially conference convenor Mr Gulzar Hussain Munshi and Deputy Secretary/Special Officer for Culture (Grade 1), Nazir Hussain, and their team of volunteers. The Association is grateful to all the organisations and individuals who