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## Editorial

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MACALESTER

# Editorial

We're delighted to welcome readers to this spring issue of *HIMALAYA*, full of an array of enthusing content!

Volume 39.1 foregrounds a special thematic section on "Approaching Potent Substances in Medicine and Ritual across Asia", guest co-edited by Barbara Gerke and Jan M. A. van der Valk. A truly interdisciplinary compilation of original research articles, perspective essays, and curated images, the pieces within draw us into the (al)chemical, medico-religious, socio-ecological, and political-economic processes that render substances 'potent' across time and place. Indeed, the specifics of place often have a great deal to do with potency, as contributors collectively reveal through their historically deep, ethnographically rich, and theoretically robust explorations of materials (e.g., plants, stones, compounds) and the syncretic methods and meanings applied to them in different contexts, by different people, for different reasons. Together, these authors tackle questions of matter, materiality, and efficacy amidst the complex histories and politics of varying sensorial worlds in which conceptions of food, flavors, and medicine are differently shaped.

These papers engage with, broaden, and productively unsettle the concept of potency in a range of cosmo-religious, artisanal, and healing traditions found across Asia, from Sowa Rigpa and Bonpo rituals to Ayurvedic tonics, Burmese metallurgy, and equine medicine in Japan. As a result, this issue continues to push further the geographical boundaries and scholarly conceptualizations of

the Himalayan region; in the case of these articles, through tracing the meanderings of various materials and their formulations and adaptations, as they move with people and practices. What emerges, then, is an expanded understanding of how potency is more of a living assemblage than an achieved or static state.

Visually, this issue delivers the goods, as well, with two pictorial highlights that accompany as addendum fuller length special issue pieces. The Art Gallery highlights a thirteenth century Japanese scroll painting, which is explored in depth in Katja Triplett's article on Buddhist herbal remedies used to treat horses in Japan during the Kamakura period. Our sincere appreciation to the Tokyo National Museum for permitting the scroll's reproduction. A photo essay (found on the journal's website) also supplements Anna Sehnalova's article that analyzes the most recent celebration of the Tibetan Bonpo *mendrup* (Tib. 'medicinal accomplishment') ritual, the *Light-Swirled Mendrup*, performed in Nepal in 2012.

This issue also features exciting omnibus research and perspectives pieces wide-ranging in scope, which include two set in Nepal—a research article that discusses a locally-informed approach to measuring well-being following the building of a road in the far northwest district of Humla, and a perspectives piece that ethnographically explores the dynamics of converting to Christianity in Bhaktapur; another perspectives piece explores Tibetan oracular

practice in exile in India; and a provocative original research piece unpacks 'the politics of dog ethics' in Ladakh.

We also remember so well the life and work of Pradyumna Prasad Karan (1930–2018), an applied environmental geographer whose work in the Himalayas was fundamentally pan-Asian, as well, spanning work in Bhutan, Tibet, India, Nepal, and Japan. Rajiv Kumar's moving tribute celebrates the legacy of Professor Karan's "intellectual radiance", and his enduring contributions to Himalayan scholarship, itself.

We would be remiss to not thank all the individuals who help us produce *HIMALAYA*. This includes our two Pre-Production Editors who meticulously copy-edit each manuscript, Emily Leischner at the University of British Columbia, and Megan Ramaiya, at the University of Washington. Managing Editor, Scott Halliday, is an exemplar of order and process amidst the often-entropic world of journal publishing. And, similarly, our somewhat ineffable appreciation goes to Jacki Betsworth and her team of student interns at Macalaster College's Dewitt Wallace Library. We are in awe of their remarkable work and commitment to the quality of the journal. Special congratulations and acknowledgements to Rebecca Krasky and Stella Wang who are graduating this year!

A few more notes on transitions. To begin, we take a moment to celebrate and thank Angie Hurlbut at AH Design, who has been the visionary behind the captivating covers that have

come to be a core aesthetic hallmark of *HIMALAYA* in recent years. We regularly receive comments from readers on the journal's curated design and rich graphic content, and Angie's work has been critical in drawing our readers into the visual, artistic, and iconographic worlds of the Himalayas. For 39.1, Angie worked with the team at Macalester to transition this design process over to them and bring it further 'in-house'. In particular, Stella Wang took the lead role in designing the transfixing cover for this issue.

We also bid a fond farewell to our Reviews and Reports Editor, Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz, who transitions out of her role with this issue. Jessica served on the Executive Council of the Association for Nepal and

Himalayan Studies from 2012-2018, and has served as Reviews and Reports Editor since 2011, throughout the tenure and transitions of three editorial teams. We are deeply grateful for her service to the journal, and we wish her the very best in future endeavors. We have an active search underway for a new Reviews Editor, please do reach out to us if you are interested in this position!

In addition, we have begun the search for the next editors of *HIMALAYA* to take over in summer 2020. Candidates should have a broad and deep knowledge of South Asian and broader Himalayan scholarship, an interest in bridging disciplines and pushing (past) geographical boundaries, and a commitment to inclusion and mentorship. Interested candidates

are requested to submit a cover letter outlining their vision for the future of the journal, a curriculum vitae, and the names of two references to <himalaya@anhs-himalaya.org>. The Executive Council of ANHS welcomes applications from potential editors from all regions of the world, and from all disciplinary backgrounds.

Happy reading! We hope you enjoy the issue.

**Mona Bhan and David Citrin**  
Editors, *HIMALAYA*



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(Mason, 2015)