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Roundtable: Perspectives on the Development of Himalayan Studies

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Roundtable: Perspectives on the Development of Himalayan Studies

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PARTICIPANTS: Gerald Berreman, Ter Ellingson, William Fisher, Jim Fisher, David Holmberg, John Metz, Bruce Owens.

MODERATOR: Naomi Bishop ORGANIZERS: Barbara Brower, Naomi Bishop.

This is the most recent of what we hope will be recurring roundtable discussions sponsored by the Nepal Studies Association at the Conference on South Asian, to be published in the spring issue of the Himalayan Research Bulletin. The topics will change annually, and suggestions from the members for future roundtables are invited.

This inaugural effort focused on the state of Himalayan studies--its past, present and future. Organized by HRB Editor Barbara Brower and NSA President, Naomi Bishop, the panelists were a group of past editors of the Himalayan Research Bulletin and scholars whose research in the region spans several decades. Each participant was allowed five minutes for a prepared presentation. Some were charged with representing their discipline's place in Himalayan studies, while others were asked to ruminate more freely; a general discussion followed. The roundtable was audio taped and participants were provided with transcripts of their remarks for further editing. Participants received a free hand in amending their remarks; in some cases, extensive revision occurred, in others, none. The resulting discussion retains the flavor and content of the original, while allowing participants to expand beyond the five minute limitation, retract incautious statements, or simply add ideas that emerged from the roundtable discussion itself. The roundtable editor (N. B.) assumed the task of editing the comments from the audience. The final result is an interesting and lively discussion about our field which only initiates the conversation. We look forward to its continuation at future Conferences.

The Roundtable: November 5, 1994

NAOMI BISHOP: Welcome to the roundtable. What we are trying to do today is to gather together two groups: past editors of the Himalayan Research Bulletin, who have an interesting and unique perspective on the field and its development by virtue of their positions as editors, and a group of people who have been working in the Himalayas over a long period of time themselves. We will be discussing where Himalayan studies has come from and how it developed as a field, and then where it's going in the future. It was difficult to select a panel, which is why we would like to extend the discussion to include everyone here in the room. Panelists will each give about five minutes--no more than five minutes--of comments, mostly focusing on their experiences in the past development of Himalayan studies, either their personal experiences or something about their disciplines, and then there will be an open discussion among the panel members and the audience.

BARBARA BROWER: I got to thinking a panel like this might be useful last winter following a visit by Todd Lewis to the University of Texas. He was invited by the Center for Asian Studies to talk about Nepal studies, and I was delighted not only to see
Todd but also at the prospect of hearing Nepal mentioned by other lips than mine. I went to the lecture, looking forward to a public discussion of my territory, and listened for half an hour to Todd--without hearing a single familiar name, or any mention of the issues I think of as being central to Nepal studies. Todd was pitching his presentation to the orientation of my center, which is mostly tuned to classical India and Buddhist studies, (he could just as easily have addressed a group of geographers for a half an hour, for Todd is something of a renaissance man, and seems to know lots about everything), so perhaps it's not surprising that I found myself, a geographer interested in yaks, somewhat in the dark. But in any event, I was brought up against my own parochialism. Here was a half hour talk about Nepal--my region--and I knew almost none of it.

I suspect for a lot of us that is true. We are concerned with our own disciplines and our own corner of the action in our region; very few of us have Todd's breadth of understanding of the range of issues within the region as a whole. Maybe that's not a problem. Obviously it is embarrassing for someone who presumes to edit the Himalayan Research Bulletin to know only a sort of tunnel vision of environmental issues and contemporary resource questions, but does it matter for the rest of us whether we know what other scholars are doing? I'd like to argue that it does, in part because of where Himalayan studies fits--or doesn't--in the greater academic community.

I think we are in some sense a regional area under siege; as a legitimate academic region we are a little bit suspect. I remember as a beginning graduate student people said to me, "Oh, no, not the Himalayas--why don't you work on Latin America?" or "If you work in Nepal, no one will take you seriously." I think a lot of us have heard messages like that. And over the course of the years since, I've heard a good number of anti-Nepal studies stories: libraries that won't let Nepal volumes sit on their shelves, foreign language programs of intolerance or indifference to the field. I think that's something we need to address. Whether by working a little bit more closely with each other, or by having a better sense of what other people are doing, perhaps we can strengthen the position of Himalayan studies, give it some legitimacy that will speak to the Asian study centers around the country that now treat it as peripheral--admissible, but not really a generously welcomed discipline. And strengthen the positions of those of us in disciplines that tend to see the Himalayan region as a little less than first rank.

My own situation has been nice in the last eight years at the University of Texas, because I occupy a joint position in Asian Studies and Geography and was actually hired as a Nepal person. Unlike most of us I've been able to say out loud that I work in Nepal. But I'm moving to another job in Portland, Oregon, where I will rejoin the ranks of the cryptic Himalayanists, where my Nepal identity must be cloaked in what I do as disciplinary bread and butter--environment/resources issues.

That is what most of us have to do. We cloak our interest in the Himalaya in disciplinary issues. Those, too, are of course part of an academic identity. But Nepal isn't the kind of place you can talk about at the general meetings of the discipline and get the same sort of serious attention you might get as (for instance, in my field) a Latin Americanist. One of the pleasures of this meeting has been for a lot of us that we can uncloak. We can admit to being Himalayanists, and talk to one another, and see how much is going on in the discipline as a whole. But one time of year to do this may not be enough. I think we need to do better than that.

Maybe we need a better sense of what is going on among Nepal-oriented scholars in other disciplines. Maybe Himalayanists would benefit from cultivating the broader perspective that I've been missing. Maybe we need to know more about where we've come from, and how the different disciplines have fed our greater understanding of the way our region works. I think an effort to do away with parochialism, to embrace the diversity in Himalayan studies, could work to everyone's advantage, increasing our respectability within our respective disciplines and making us a little more comfortable in admitting to be Himalayanists.

Of course, the other question might be whether it's absurd to consider the Himalaya a region just because it has a geophysical identity and we've got an organization and journal that imply some sort of regional cohesion. Maybe it's just as well to leave our region ill-defined, something of a step-child of area studies.
But I personally would like to see us a little more aware of where we come from as Himalayanists, who else is out there, and where we might go--together, or at least in small mixed groups--in the future.

BRUCE OWENS: It looks like I will propose that we embrace some of the problems that Barbara has suggested exist for us. If I were to entitle what I have to say in my five minutes, I might call it "The Himalaya as Anti-Area: Implications for Research." Having co-edited a journal, and taught two different courses, all of which have the rubric "Himalayan" in their titles, it's become abundantly clear to me, at least, that there are numerous difficulties entailed in defining what is Himalayan about the Himalaya. As a region, however that region may be defined, the Himalaya defy at every turn simplistic ideas about what makes an area an area--what makes a region a region. In a sense, it is, therefore, an anti-area, and that is, I argue, all to the good for us who do work there.

The most obvious difficulty in encountering or attempting to define what a Himalayan Research Bulletin or a Himalayan course should be about is the difficulty in defining it in geographic terms. Where does this area begin? Where does it end? Is the Tarai Himalayan? Is the Tibetan plateau? I'm sure geographers have clearly formulated ways to resolve this dilemma. It's not the dilemma that concerns me here, however. As an anthropologist, I am exercised by different concerns. And as an anthropologist I was recently asked to teach a culture area course on the Himalaya. Being new to the institution where I was to teach this course, I checked the course handbook to find out what a culture area was. And found to my dismay that what was described there did not, as far as I know, exist anywhere on earth, least of all in the Himalaya. Time-worn assumptions were woven through the descriptions of this course category, including ahistorical and geographically bounded conceptions of cultures as types, one or two of which were required to complete the butterfly collection of multicultural exposures deemed necessary for a complete liberal arts education. The Himalayan area course that I designed constituted what I thought was a critique of the area course description with which I was supposed to comply. Somewhat to my dismay, it was enthusiastically accepted. Either they didn't get it, or I didn't get it!

The point of the anecdote is that, armed with recent monographs on the Himalaya, I felt particularly well equipped to engage in such a critique. Teaching recent books by Mumford, Holmberg, Sax, and Ortner made it impossible to ignore the problems that should beset anyone trying to conceptualize the culture area. One feature of any region that I could imagine calling Himalayan was captured in the title of Jim Fisher's important edited collection on the region, with the term "Interface." I don't mean here just the Indo-Tibetan interface, but the multiplex and manifold sociocultural interfaces of all kinds--ethnic, religious, caste, socioeconomic, political, so forth and so on--which are part of every day reality of most Himalayanists. I am not arguing here that such engagements with others, variously construed, are peculiarly Himalayan, but rather that the propinquity and multiplicity of sociocultural differences of many kinds in the Himalaya are impossible to ignore. They are in our face all the time. This makes simplistic notions of culture and place clearly and utterly useless for us, and as I have suggested, this is all to the good.

Sylvain Levi described Nepal at the turn of the century as L'Inde qui se fait--translated as "India in the making." For many, this has served as a kind of charter to use Nepal as a place to pursue questions of Indological origin, particularly for those of us concerned with the Newar. But it occurs to me that Levi's description of Nepal also presaged a very contemporary concern. The sociocultural phenomena we study are very clearly "in the making," and work on the Himalaya is grappling with the implications of this in increasingly sophisticated ways that have a great deal to contribute to broader efforts to understand human beings as historically situated agents who actively engage in the production of culture of which they are also in some sense products. Sociocultural identity, in the Himalaya, has been increasingly portrayed as the product of on-going interaction across multiple interfaces, the parameters of which are continuously shifting from on-going processes of identity negotiation. These processes challenge the culture-area concepts as conventionally imagined in powerful ways, which is one reason why I suggest that it is all to the good that the Himalaya constitute an anti-area.
JIM FISHER: I share Barbara's dismay when I read and survey the literature and don't know most of the people whose names appear. I am also reminded that Bruce's question of "what is the area," has been with us a long time, and it's hard to remember that as recently as the 60's, there was hardly any research being done in the Himalayas. Even in the 60's, a big issue was whether the Himalayas were a region or not, and if it is, what comprises it? One of the key documents here was Professor Berreman's 1963 article on the Himalayas as a cultural area (Berreman 1963). I remember in a conference in the 70's, I believe it was at the AAS, we had a panel on this topic of what constituted the Himalayas. Gerry Berreman and I were both on it, and someone else debated and critiqued Gerry's article about the Himalayan culture area concept, and Gerry parried with the rejoinder that he had written the article when he was 12 years old, and he had since modified his position!

That is an issue that is still with us. In contrast to the 50s and 60s, by the 70s there was a critical mass of people who were beginning to work in the Himalayas one way or another, particularly in Nepal. At that point, about 1972, some of us got together and got some money from the Ford Foundation to start the Nepal Studies Association. This immediately set off a kind of turf battle on the issue, because if the Nepal Studies Association was restricted to Nepal, what did people do who were in the Indian Himalayas, like Berreman, or people interested in Tibet--the very question Bruce was asking. Shouldn't they be included under our tent, or was Nepal some sort of special, unique place with no affinity to Tibet or the Indian Himalayas? A kind of Solomonic decision was made to resolve the issue--namely, that the Nepal Studies Association would remain the Nepal Studies Association, but our publication would be called the Himalayan Research Bulletin, so that took care of everybody (those who wanted to think of Nepal as a special place, as well as the Himalayas in general). And of course, meanwhile, this interest was developing not only in the West but in Nepal, and the Institute for Nepal and Asian Studies was established at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, which became the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies. I remember a rather heated debate at CNAS 10 or 15 years ago about the Himalayas and what constituted the Himalayas. One of the critical, and passionately defended proposals, was that it should be anywhere above 3000 feet. I asked what you do if you had a village located between 2900 and 3100 feet? Or even, to take the reductio ad absurdum, what about someone's house whose first floor was below 3000 feet and the second floor above 3000 feet? But I think we've gotten beyond that kind of question, and I settle for a more Wittgenstinian "family resemblances" notion, rather than any concrete typological construct that we have to die in the ditch for. By the time I got interested in these things in the 60s, apart from the Millers here at Wisconsin who had worked in Darjeeling, the only people who had worked in Nepal were Professors Hitchcock here and Haimendorf in London, plus a Frenchman who wouldn't speak to me. So I went to Haimendorf and spent six months at SOAS and I had a proposal to do a Ph.D. among the Sherpas. His reaction was sort of puzzled; he said, "But I've already done the Sherpas."

In the 70s, the explosion Barbara referred to began, and there are a couple reasons for that. One was a rather overt Indian hostility to American academics at that point. In 1973, Indira Gandhi kicked out all foreign academics for a year or two, and a lot of those people who would have specialized and done field work in India came up to Nepal, because in contrast to India, His Majesty's Government in Nepal welcomed any foreigner in those days who wanted to do research. They put out the welcome mat and were very hospitable, very warm, and very receptive. In addition is the fact that Nepal is just an inherently attractive place to be and people are friendly and warm and so forth. Now we have this demographic explosion that was referred to earlier. The multiplex directions in which the field has gone really reflects the interests of the field in the West, whether it's ecological interests, or symbolic interests, or medical anthropology (which has become very big in Nepal)--these are things that are big in the profession in general, so I think the development there has reflected the field as a whole rather than the interests of Nepalese themselves, which are increasingly being felt now; as you know, we have hundreds of Nepalese MA students in anthropology in Nepal, plus several Nepalese Ph.D. who have gotten degrees in this country and other places.
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DAVID HOLMBERG: This is nice place to begin what I had wanted to talk about. I will have to quell my desire to comment on the interesting things that have come up already. I agree with Bruce that Nepal is kind of an anti-area, but it is a specific anti-area. At the very moment we are sitting here there is a panel about the pattern of development of Indian Studies over the last fifty years—I think it’s South Asian studies. In American anthropology, people who work in Nepal are not considered institutionally as South Asianists generally, which is very different than the European situation where work on groups in Nepal has had a major impact on thinking in South Asian studies in general. But these are colonial residues—these regional area studies programs—and support for the programs all comes from the government. It all comes out of a Cold War mentality in some respects.

All that aside, and particularly with the people sitting around this room, there is very little that I can add to the wealth of experience that is here. I thought I might talk a little bit today about some issues that came up when I was doing research in Nepal last year, particularly around the whole issue of what is going on institutionally in Nepal in terms of anthropology and other Nepal-oriented studies, but as well, what is going on in the context of liberalization in Nepal, particularly the freedom of speech, freedom of political organization, and the official formal legal representation of the multiple languages of Nepal. Nepal is now officially a diverse country.

On the one hand, I want to talk about prospects for things that can be done in Nepal especially about our obligation as scholars. There are a lot of us here in major universities and colleges in the United States that have access to fairly substantial resources. I think we should have a commitment to building, strengthening, boosting and contributing to the academic institutions that exist in Nepal, and also on another level, to some of the culturally oriented groups that are emerging in the multiple populations of Nepal.

I wrote down many more notes here than I could possibly get through in five minutes. I think I’ve got about two minutes left. Let me give you a couple of anecdotes about things that occurred when I was in Nepal this time. I’ve never lived in Kathmandu for extended periods; I’ve always spent my time out in the mountains, but this time I spent a year in Nepal, half of which was in Kathmandu and half of which was out. And this was my first time back in Nepal since the movement which led to the new liberalizations in Nepal. I was doing work in a local area on corvee labor obligations and the nature of those labor obligations, and I was also in Kathmandu where I started to come in contact with the leaders of some of the Tamang ethnic associations. I know Bill Fisher has done work on this in a broad sort of way, and I am sure he knows more about this than I do. But the thing I was struck by was, first of all, these groups were very interested in what I was doing and there were three main groups that had an academic side to what they were doing. They would invite me to come to meetings, where they would do other things such as present me with certificates as a great scholar of Tamang people, which was an awkward situation for me, because everything I knew I learned from Tamangs, but they were trying to place me in a particular kind of position.

Also there were very specific kinds of requests for help. Those of you who have had any long experience in Nepal know that any kind of expression of this sort was pretty contained until quite recently. The Tamang could not organize into a group. Identity politics was not a reality in every day life in Nepal. If it was, it was very hidden at least for groups like Tamang. I was struck and surprised by the fact that there were a number of scholars among the Tamang community that I had never really known about in all the years I had been doing work in Nepal. Partly this was because of regional differences in the Tamang population; the fact is that people who become scholars tend to come from particular areas in Nepal. There was one man who had moved back to Kathmandu from Darjeeling after the andolah and who is a very accomplished musician. He had a tremendous array of tape recordings of Tamang songs from all over the hills of Nepal and an elaborate recording studio. There was a linguist who had already written a Tamang grammar and was very interested in working on problems of literacy and in developing a written form of Tamang that would be useful to the entire
Tamang community. There were numerous people like this. I also had lots of requests from people who had been collecting things, recording things, taping things—asking for very simple kinds of assistance: "How does one classify all these things that I've collected?"

And of course, not being an ethnomusicologist, I said I didn't know but I would certainly try to find out and help out in this regard. And there were requests to help to get money to start small ethnographic museums and archives, because the national government has never had any interest in things that had to do with local history in Nepal or the history of ethnic minorities.

Of course, the history of Nepal is now being contested; it is not simply the history of Prithi Narayan Shah organizing Nepal into a state, it is also the history of articulating peoples like the Tamang into a feudal-like structure, and a variety of other things. This history is completely absent in much contemporary historical discourse. I was pleasantly surprised to discover all this activity but at something of a loss in terms of what direction to go to help and support such groups to do things that are of a scholarly nature. Part of the difficulty is because these groups are tied up with political parties in Nepal and also because there is a lot of contestation within groups in Nepal as well. As I left Nepal, however, I felt quite strongly that there is a place for the Western scholarly community to contact and support these groups, not only just the formal academic institutions in Nepal. I believe this because groups like Tamang are excluded from these formal institutions, while local organizations work on issues like documenting, preserving, collecting historical texts that relate to important histories. In the past, we've all felt obliged to affiliate at Tribhuvan University and send in our research reports—but for many reasons that's often been a fairly flimsy tie for a lot of people doing research in Nepal and a formal obligation that people want to get out of the way. I propose that we should certainly go beyond that in our relationship to the people in the university, but also to make some kind of contribution to the efforts of these local, ethnic cultural associations in their work.

BILL FISHER: Invited as a past editor of the HRB, I feel some obligation to talk about insights gained from that perspective, though it would be impossible to fit the wealth of that experience into five minutes. Furthermore, you can believe me when I say you don't really want to hear about most of what I did as an editor of HRB. Perhaps it is sufficient to say that it was a rich and rewarding challenge that leaves me with great admiration and appreciation for the current editor of the HRB, Barbara Brower. One of the great advantages of being an editor is that you see a lot of ongoing work, works in progress, and work that never makes it into press. The enormous diversity of work on the Himalayas that crosses your desk can not help but shake you out of your parochial orientation. But is also makes it even more difficult to find unifying themes or to recognize Himalayan studies as a unified field. Himalayan studies are no more nor less than what Himalayanists do.

While listening to Bruce's comments on the Himalaya as anti-area and Jim's on previous attempts to define the area, I wondered whether we have trouble establishing Himalayan studies as a field in part because we are often overly focused on what is unique about this "thing" or category, "Himalaya," and as a consequence we have yet to make significant contributions to issues of concern to those scholars who work in other areas of the world. Perhaps what we should do at this stage is turn our emphasis away from the exotica of the Himalayas to consider instead the contribution that Himalayan studies can make to answering broader comparative questions posed in our respective disciplines. The field of Himalayan studies (or the Himalayas as an area) can only be defined through its interconnections with other fields (and areas), through contrasts and comparisons that expose the fluidity of its boundaries.

As examples, (and at the risk of demonstrating the proof of Barbara's observation of our parochialism), I'll comment briefly on two related topics of study where we now have the potential to make contributions of interest to those who study other areas of the work, contributions which could bring Himalayan studies more recognition as a field that has relevance not merely to Himalayanists. The first of these is the question of ethnic, religious, and national identity. A great deal of effort has been made over the past thirty-five years identifying and describing groups, literally mapping the social landscape of the Himalaya. But the answers we pose at one moment of academic history become the
sources for the questions a new group of scholars ask in the next. New scholars are beginning to step back from identifying particular groups or mapping the varieties of peoples and cultures found in the Himalayas to recognize that group identities have been contested and constructed, that historically they have a fluid quality.

The shifting of attention from villages and groups to networks and processes draws attention to the interactions among and within groups, to the effect local, regional, national and international processes have on changing sets of relationships, to the competing dimensions of class, ethnicity, kinship, regional, and religious identities, and to the ties local networks have to large, more comprehensive networks. As David has acknowledged, identity politics in Nepal have been relatively hidden until recently. Though hidden, identity politics have not been nonexistent. My earlier work with the Thakali and my current research on *janajati* organizations has led me to see the post-1990 flourish of identity politics as just the most recent and most visible manifestation of a process that has been going on for a very long time. Issues of identity politics are linked to another important area of study, "development." I'm not thinking here about the many practical studies about how to bring about "development" in Nepal, but studies that focus on what actually happens in the development process.

Development interventions need to be understood as a complex historical phenomenon that has had unintended and unanticipated consequences for many levels of Himalayan societies. These studies need to go beyond questions about whether an intervention is good or bad, successful or unsuccessful (the questions that the development industry asks of its own efforts), to examine the tremendous impact on Himalayan societies of development ideology and practices. The linking of the notion of "bikasi" with patriotism and nationalism, and the definition of some groups and their customs as "abikasi" means that the politics of development in Nepal is closely linked to identity politics. Revitalizing and reasserting "ethnic" identity are means by which disenfranchised groups may strike back at a nationalist ideology that labels their practices as "abikasi" while at the same time providing no opportunity to improve their access to resources or power.

These processes of identity politics and development both offer lessons relevant not only for those who work in the Himalayas but for scholars who work on similar processes elsewhere in the world as well. But while we need to keep in mind the links between our scholarly concerns and those of our colleagues elsewhere, we should also reflect on the curious disjunction between our sets of agendas and the agendas of those we study. For example, while I argue for attention to process and fluid notions of identity and culture, the Thakali and the other *janajati* groups I work with seek increasingly reified notions of their own culture. We need to take their concerns seriously while seeking to understand why it is at this particular historical moment they seek a relatively more fixed and reified view of culture while we privilege more fluid ones.

As I have argued elsewhere, the differences between these views may not be as great as they first appear. In the end, we need to keep sight of the cleansing process of scholarship in which our conclusions are swept away by the penetrating questions of the next generation even as our conclusions make these questions possible.

**JOHN METZ:** In the limited time I have I can only sketch the role of the discipline of Geography in Himalayan Studies; hence I will focus on the area I know best, Nepal, and only allude to work in other areas.

Geography has two interrelated concerns: how are physical, biological, and social phenomena distributed in space at varying scales; and how do people interact with their environments. During the 1950s and 1960s, as the Nepal Himalaya opened to exploration, scholars concentrated on the first of these concerns. S.L. Kayastha described India's Beas River basin (1964). Ulrich Schweinfurth (1957) described the vegetation patterns of the Himalaya. P.P. Karan explored Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan and wrote the first descriptions of these Himalayan kingdoms (1960, 1961, 1967). In the last 10 years, Professor Karan has incorporated the vast amounts of new information into new books on those states (1984, 1987, 1994). A.N. Raina (1981) and T. Singh (1989) have contributed recent books on the geography of Jammu and Kashmir and of Kulu valley respectively.

Another area of geographic research, population and migration, has been explored
intensively by Profs. Nanda Shrestha (1991), Harka B. Gurung, Bal Kumar K.C., Mohan Shrestha, and Krishna Ghimire; in India, Drs. K.N. Singh and N. Lal at Gorakhpur University have studied Nepalese immigrants to India and Prof. K.N. Giri and BHU have examined population in Nepal.

By the late 1960s, the large scale patterns were known, and researchers focused on regional and local studies; much of this effort centered on people/environment relations. These included both how people make a living from their environment and how their use patterns affect the environment. Hence, geographical research has been in the forefront in the debate over Himalayan environmental degradation. In the late 1960s Barry Bishop's study of the society and economy of the Jumla basin traced regional patterns in this most remote part of the Nepal Himalaya. His work articulated the argument later promulgated by Eckholm (1975) and labeled the "Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation (THED)" by Ives and Messerli in their 1989 book; this interpretation maintained that population growth of subsistence farmers was eliminating forests and producing accelerated erosion and flooding. THED gained wide acceptance in the 1970s and 1980s and justified considerable development spending in forestry and resource conservation. Geographers were major contributors to the studies which sought to describe the environmental degradation process, but which ended up suggesting that it is much less severe and much more socially rooted than originally claimed. Jack Ives supported and directed research as well as founded and edited the journal *Mountain Research and Development*, which broadened greatly the understanding of human-environment interactions. This revision of THED (Ives and Messerli, 1989) included 3 major realizations: (1) subsistence farmers have long been inferior classes of elite-dominated states which extracted large amounts of peasant produce and labor and, hence, which impoverish people and degrade the environment; these same elites continue to dominate and divert to themselves development funding; (2) human contributions to flooding and erosion are dwarfed by meteorological and geological processes; (3) subsistence farmers have sophisticated understandings of their environments and, to the degree they can, are improving use systems of their environments. Interestingly, Bishop described elite extractions from peasants, but he failed to include it in his explanation of environmental degradation.

Piers Blaikie, as part of the East Anglia University research team (1978), emphasized the impact of political-economic extractions on subsistence behavior and development prospects. Byers (1987) found only tiny amounts of erosion and flooding. Zurick, Brower, Stevens, and Metz described environmental use systems in detail and their impact on local environments. Schmidt-Vogt described the ecology and impact of human use on subalpine vegetation. Blaikie built upon his work in Nepal and elsewhere to collaborate with Harold Brookfield in exploring the emerging synthesis between cultural-ecology and political-economy called "political ecology" (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987).

In India, Drs. D.R. Joshi, S.C. Tevijir Singh, and Jagdish Kaur have all researched and published on development and environment in India's western Himalaya. Nigel Allan and Ken Hewitt have described traditional subsistence systems of the Karakoram Mountains of Northern Pakistan and how motor road construction is transforming these economies. Professor Allan has argued that the accessibility to roads has replaced altitudinal zonation as the main organizing forces of these communities. Numerous geographers have published works on economic development in the Himalaya; some prominent scholars include Profs. C.B. Shrestha, M.S. Manandhar, H.B. Gurung, S.L. Amatyra, V.M. Malia, and N.R. Shrestha. Contemporary research efforts by David Zurick and P.P. Karan, by Clark University Department of Geography, and by Stan Stevens use traditional field work, remote sensing, and Geographical Information System technologies to specify historical and contemporary patterns of environmental use and impact at regional and whole-Himalaya scales.

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GERALD BERREMAN: As one who works primarily in the Indian Himalayas, presently surrounded by Nepalwallahs, I am something of an outsider here. My compensatory advantage, for this historical session, may be longevity. In 1957-58 I began my work in the Garhwal Himalaya, the western half of the region immediately west of Nepal, now often described for political and nostalgic historical reasons as Uttarakhand. If only our time here were apportioned according to how long we have been frequenting the Himalayas, and therefore how many Himalayan memories we have, John Hitchcock and I would have monopolized this session. I am reminded of a remark by Page Smith, retired Santa Cruz historian who for years wrote a biweekly column for the San Francisco Chronicle, "Coming of Age," to the effect that one of the consequences of growing old is that everything reminds one of something else. Probably that is why professorial lectures--and symposium contributions--gradually evolve into reminiscences. Another thing I'm reminded of is that although I have been working in the Himalayas over a 40 years span, I am still undecided whether to pronounce it Himal-ay-a or Himal-ya. Today I have heard colleagues do what I often do in my classroom (and will doubtless do here) which is to use both pronunciations, even in a single sentence.

Many of us have long puzzled and debated whether and to what extent we are defined as members of the Asianist or South Asianist academic fraternity/sorority, or are in a category of our own, perhaps to be described as students of the Indo-Tibetan Interface (Fisher, 1978:2) or the Himalayan Frontier (Lewis and Riccardi, c. 1995: Ch. I). As I look over the program for this meeting of South Asianists, I note with some ambivalence that there are sessions scheduled simultaneously entitled "Themes and Trends in South Asian Studies: The Last Fifty Years," and another (in fact this one) entitled "Perspectives on the Development of Himalayan Studies." As any componential analyst would immediately recognize, these constitute a "contrastive pair," "emically" distinct. In short, in this meeting we are required to choose: to be Himalayanists or to be South Asianists. Those of us who are here have clearly made that choice, at least for the nonce, with our commitment to this Himalayan session having taken precedence over that to South Asia, or perhaps more accurately stated, our interest in the interface of South Asian, Tibetan, West Asian and Southeast Asian cultures in the Himalayas has overcome the traditional South Asian hegemony of the Mahabharat. In a similar session at the 1976 meeting of the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, in Delhi, I asked the question: "Why are we here, in this symposium?" and I was reminded then, as I am now, "... of George Mallory's oft-quoted reply
fifty [now seventy] years ago to the question of why he wanted to climb Mt. Everest: 'Because it is there.' I think we are all here because the Himalayas are there." (Berreman, 1978:67). I neglected to mention then a somewhat unsettling feature of this analogy: that in quest of the theretofore unclimbed summit, Mallory disappeared into the Himalayan mists never to be seen again. No one knows whether he achieved his goal.

Our Himalayan goals are much less precisely defined than his and in fact, it is not even clear that within the scholarly mists which confront us there lies a summit which we could agree upon as our goal, were one to be found. In short, our aims remain undefined, and perhaps it is just as well, for in scholarship "to each his/her own" may be the most productive motto.

At that historic session, I made five points in response to my question, "why are we here?" I believe they remain germane today and therefore bear repeating, in abbreviated form (cf. Berreman, 1978)

1) Clearly we share a belief that the Himalayan interface or frontier represents an entity suitable for scholarly study -- a functional entity -- an interrelated whole. Its nature, extent and relevance should be subjects of inquiry and debate. Its coherence must be demonstrated rather than simply asserted, lest we risk becoming a Himalayan "fan club" rather than a scholarly community.

2) Until quite recently, Himalayan research has been the preserve primarily of foreign scholars, by which I mean those who come from outside of those nations bordering on the Himalayas. Now we find significant participation by scholars from those nations (though notably not at this 1994 session!). This is to be welcomed and encouraged by all of us. But, while South Asian scholars are very much in evidence, we still see few scholars who are themselves native to the Himalayas, and fewer still in international meetings. Where are the Garhwali, the Gurung, the Lepcha anthropologists? The demise of "academic colonialism" in the Himalayas can come only with their arrival on our scene (cf. Saberwal 1968; Berreman 1969a).

3) Politics have always been a limiting factor in Himalayan research because it is a sensitive border region that is a focus for disputes among several nations. This problem should not be minimized. The high proportion of foreign researchers working in Nepal rather than India reflects only partly the ethnic and ecological diversity of Nepal and the interest these evoke, and only partly the romance of that beautiful country. It reflects also the fact that foreigners are readily allowed to do research in the Nepal Himalayas whereas the opportunities to do so in the Indian Himalayas are extremely limited by national policy. This is, of course, to a significant extent, a consequence of foreign abuse of scholarly privilege in India--the exercise of academic colonialism. If foreign, notably American, scholars are to continue to work in the region they must be alert to these issues, and sensitive to their impact on the people they study, on the indigenous scholars in their disciplines, and on the governments of the nations in which they work. They must be responsive to the priorities these people and institutions place on research in their midst, and must be ready to work in conjunction and coordination with them, and with their approval. No longer does the foreign scholar have carte blanche in the Himalayas on the basis of money or prestige or anything else, and lest the scholarly baby be thrown out with the colonial bath, we foreigners will be well advised to recognize these facts and act accordingly.

4) Politics, however, cut both ways, and indigenous scholars can scarcely afford to be sanguine about its effects either. The very fact that it is governments which decide who shall be permitted to do research and what research shall be allowed poses problems of other sorts -- of government control and censorship. These problems affect not only foreigners seeking research access to the Himalayas, but indigenous scholars as well. Such problems are acute in India where, for example, the Anthropological Survey of India (whose officers do most of the anthropological research in the Himalayas and elsewhere), is a government agency, and where virtually all research funds are government in origin. This means that independent scholarship is likely to be compromised no matter how good the intentions of the scholars involved. As we Americans have found out only too vividly and to our sorrow in our own country, he who pays the piper has a distinct tendency to call the tune, even in social science (cf. Berreman 1969a).
5) Research priorities are determined partly by scholars and partly by sources of funds. To a significant extent the priorities held by scholars are channeled by criteria for the award of funds in the form of research grants, employment opportunities, access to training programs and research facilities, etc., as well as by permissions policies affecting both indigenous and foreign scholars; visas, entry permits, restricted zones, prohibited zones, clearance requirements, and the like. In addition, for better or for worse, the peoples of the Himalayas are routinely included in programs of community development and education, they are reached by motor roads, they are regulated in their customs and behaviors, they are taxed, they are beguiled by merchants, reviled by religious figures -- in short, they are incorporated into the outside world from which their lofty environment, in simpler times, largely protected them.

It is scarcely evident from our writings, I fear, that the fascinating peoples of the beautiful Himalayas are afflicted with appalling poverty, ill-health, high infant mortality, short life expectancy; that those of low caste or minority ethnicity are subject to oppression with little or no recourse to the nations' protective legislation; that few of the amenities offered other rural peoples of the subcontinent are available in the Himalayas, most notably modern medicine, schooling, and, in many places, such mundane but valued perquisites as adequate, safe and accessible water supplies. These are agonizing problems to those who experience them. I hope that as our Himalayan research increases, we will report and analyze these and other problems facing those we study, and that we will propose solutions where possible (cf. Berreman 1969b). I believe it is our responsibility to do so; otherwise we become mere chroniclers of an idyllic view of Himalayan life which bears little relationship to the realities of those who live it, or we become celebrants of a status quo so selectively reported as to be misleading to those in a position to alter it. Either is a disservice to the people whose confidence and goodwill we seek and rely upon for the success of our research and our own careers.

My final comment comprises an abrupt shift of topic. A significant boost will be given to Himalayan scholarship and teaching with the forthcoming publication of Todd Lewis and Theodore Riccardi's long awaited, comprehensive and detailed monograph (Lewis and Riccardi, c. 1995). I have used it for years in its preliminary, photo-copied form, as an invaluable resource for teaching and a ready reference and bibliographic gold mine for research. Its authors are to be congratulated. Now, if only we could see in print the many volumes of readings they have selected, collected, organized and reproduced, covering every region and virtually every imaginable topic of Himalayan history, anthropology, and religion. Unfortunately, that will require funding of a magnitude that in the current economic climate, and with the limited market for such a massive publication, will be extremely difficult to come by. Is there some affluent Himalayan aficionado-benefactor out there? Richard Blum, husband of California Senator Dianne Feinstein, fits the bill but would he foot it?

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TER ELLINGSON: I'd like to end by zooming out in space and I'll start by going back to the court of England in the beginning of the 17th century where the Royal Geographer, Peter Heylyn, tells us that "the earth is divided in respect of it selfe into parts Reali [and] Imaginarey" (Heylyn 1629: 2). The real world is composed of things such as continents, islands, and the people who inhabit...
Travelers are concerned with the real world—they have a linear experience of traveling from one place to another, the representation of which is logically the narrative. For scholars it's quite a different thing. For scholars, the world is organized in grids, templates, paradigms, etc. established by abstract theoretical principles adjusted to balance new information with previous knowledge, and the imaginary world takes precedence over the real world because it's the imaginary world that shapes the real world and tells us where we are.

In Heylyn's time, the world was in a state of flux; only about seventy-five years previously, as you see on the map I handed out, Tibet was still within walking distance of California. You could go up the coast, around the gulf of Tonsa, and head down towards Cathay and you would find Thebet over here, just around the curve of the Amerasian land mass; and over the next few centuries, the continents would drift apart, Tibet would drift slowly down towards the southeast passing through the latitudes of Japan, drifting away from Cathay and into closer proximity with Kashmir and eventually settle in the south central part of the continent. Now, as this happened, of course, something had to make room. So the Himalayas which had earlier run north and south towards the Arctic Circle from the head waters of the Ganges which were in Central Asia from where the Ganges floats up to India—how the world used to be—the Ganges swung around on its axis so it ran roughly east-west and then the Himalayas could swing round and move down parallel to the Ganges and that made room for Tibet. And of course, putting Tibet into that proximity with India and South Asia allowed for Nepal to become a stop on the road from Tibet to India. And so Nepal gets kind of forced by default into membership in South Asia, but Tibet drifts around over a couple of hundred years between incorporation into Independent Tartary, Chinese Tartary, and in at least one instance (the map I show at the lower left) it's a part of Southeast Asia as the head water of all the rivers that flow into Southeast Asia.

But this was hardly a unique situation because the whole world was drifting about. Europe, in Heylyn's time, was still being constructed on the ruins of the vanished Christendom, in an on-going effort to rationalize the misperception of the ancient Greeks who had seen Europe and Asia as separate continents. The solution to that particular dilemma ultimately lay in a non-physical, that is, an imaginary definition of continents in which the imaginary world took precedence over the real world and Heylyn, more than most people of his time, understood the role of the imaginary world in constructing the physical world. Heylyn's discussion of Europe says, "Europe, though the least of the continents, is yet of most renown among us, firstly because of the temperature of the air and fertility of the soil, secondly from the study of all arts, both ingenious and mechanical, thirdly because of the Roman and Greek monarchies, fourthly from the purity and sincerity of the Christian faith, and fifthly, because we dwell in it. And so, first place it." Now, in case the irony is lost, Heylyn goes on to say," I had almost forgot the etymology of "Europe" which according to Beckiness, who maketh it Europe, quasi Verhop, by the transposition of the first two letters, "Ver," for sooth signifying although I know not in what language, excellent, and "hop" a multitude of people because Europe containeth, oh the wit of man, a multitude of excellent people."

The boundaries of Asia and Europe were constantly shifting according to factors that derived less from the real than from the imaginary world. The Irish, the Scots, the Scandinavians, particularly the Saami of Lapland, were only marginal and problematic Europeans. Heylyn said of the Saami, "These give worship and divine honor all the day following to that living creature what ere it be, which they see as they first go out their doors in the morning," a story that had been told word for word the same about the people of India by the great liar Mandeville among many others. Succeeding centuries would not settle the boundaries of Europe. People would debate whether the Russians, the Eastern Europeans, the inhabitants of the Balkans, were really Europeans. That question is still not resolved. We see it in on t.v., we read it in the newspapers everyday. Where is Europe? We don't know. Asia was no less problematic of
course; Orientalism arose and disappeared as a formerly vital but, for the last century or so, virtually extinct construct, until Edward Said gave it a spurious resurrection as a ghost of the past intruding into a fictional present. Where is the Orient of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment? Or of Said's supposedly contemporary critique? Certainly not present in the map of Asia promulgated over and over again by the Association of Asian Studies. Said's Orient is not there, nor is the Asia of the Greeks. Nothing the Greeks ever sought, except very late in the time of Alexander, shows in this map of Asia. The new Asia is cut off and you can't find it--that is, the old oriental Asia--anywhere, certainly not for us academics who can't apply for jobs as Asianists the way our colleagues can as Latin Americanists or Africanists; only in small departments does Asia have a bottom line reality. Rather the imaginary worlds of our time are more tightly bounded in the constructs of East, Southeast, and last and certainly least, South Asia, but more likely in terms of hegemonic identification of the Asians with their dominant political powers. And if Asia means anything today, in the "real world", that is, our particular imaginary world, it is the New Yorker's view of the United States' view of Asia as a bloated China and Japan to which are attached various withered and atrophied limbs of minor and forgettable countries, in which, if the Himalayas appear at all, they are a playground for rich and heroic mountain climbers. This had a point but I can't make it. [out of time]

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[ed. note: a late submission and computer malfunction conspired to eliminate from this issue the maps that would otherwise have accompanied Ter Ellingson's contribution]

NAOMI BISHOP: Well, work it into your comments later. I would like to congratulate and thank everyone on this panel for doing the impossible, which is to speak in five minutes on anything, especially the topic which they were given. I am sure that everyone up here has, if not their point to finish, many other ideas that they have not shared, but we wanted to be absolutely certain that we became democratic at this point and opened it up to everyone in the room, for their points of view and contributions as well. So, the floor is open for comments.

BEA MILLER: Since our name was mentioned as working in Nepal, I thought it was incumbent upon me to tell you that we didn't work in Nepal, we worked with Nepalis. And I think this is one of the characteristics of the Himalayan peoples which we sometimes tend to overlook. In Darjeeling, the Tamang do have an organization, and other people with whom we worked--the Sherpa and some of the others--they were all in (officially) India. The Himalayas covers a multitude of sins; for example, nobody has mentioned Hunza, or NEFA (Northeast Frontier Agency) in the far northeast, which is culturally and linguistically quite different. As a non-Nepalist, I always get confused when somebody says we study Nepal in the Himalayan Research Bulletin and I wonder just where does my Himalaya fit it? My Himalaya is Sikkim, Bhutan, Northern India--east of Nepal. And for Gerry Berreman, of course, its northern India and west India. It's not just a question of geographic distinctions from Nepal--its also a recognition of the fact that one of the things we all have encountered is that these people don't stay in place. So that you are apt to find the wrong people in a particular area, and this is one of the things that should tie together a Himalayan approach. The Nepalis are a large part of the population all over the place, but they do go all over the place and they are dealing with people from
other areas. This 3000 foot altitude [criterion] is great, as long as you don't notice that the mountains don't really run that way.

AMULYA TULADHAR: My name is Amulya Tuladhar, and I am at Clark University. One of the things I noticed in the conference survey of Himalayan studies is the lack of mention of geological studies. Currently in the Internet, I see the new network, HimNet, which is about 90 percent full of geological studies, including Himalayan and Tibetan tectonics. If I look at NSF grants, I see almost a million dollar outlay in grants to geological studies. The second area of studies which is not mentioned is the whole issue of biogenetic resources, which are being studied in the Himalayan territories. I am aware that while I was in Nepal, the Board of Science and Technology granted several research grants trying to prospect biogenetic resources--high altitude rice, high altitude barley, or high altitude rye--and fund studies by local scientists as well as other scientists in order to get some knowledge of those resources.

GERALD BERREMAN: I might say something apropos of what Bea just said. My wife is a sociologist and demographer who has been studying the people of Japanese ancestry from Brazil and Peru who have gone to Japan, but while we were in Nepal, she got interested in whether or not and to what extent Nepalis have gone to Japan as workers. Most people said, "Just a handful." She found there were quite a few people in Kathmandu who were returnees who had worked in Japan for two to four years in factory jobs, blue collar jobs. Some of them had been first in the Middle East and gone directly to Japan. And then when we were in Japan coming home, she contacted some Nepalis, through a couple of phone numbers she'd gotten in Kathmandu, and found a big network of Nepalis in Hamamatsu, which is southwest of Tokyo, and in Tokyo. These are people that have an interest in international employment; they go for economic reasons primarily but a good many of them are coming back into Kathmandu having made some money or a lot of money and bringing ideas there, so I agree entirely that Nepalis are in many places and sometimes, surprisingly so. They are a big urban work force in Japan now--and in Fiji by the way. There are 10,000 Nepalis in Fiji who came there around the turn of the century. People know there are lots of Indians in Fiji, and I am told by an article in Himal magazine, that they retain the language and the ceremonial life. They are mostly men, they have married Fijians or Indians, but they maintain those things. They are on the northern coast of Fiji which is less developed than the southern coast.

JIM FISHER: To underscore that same point--two other places came to mind. I was in Rangoon four or five years ago. There are a number of Nepalese who stayed in Burma after the war, from the Ghurka regiments. And I was told by the Nepalese ambassador to Burma that there is a Nepali village in Burma that is totally Nepali speaking. If you didn't know where you were, you'd think you were in the hills of Nepal. I don't know how many thousands of Nepalese there are in Burma--of course, many of them were repatriated about twenty or thirty years ago, but there still are large numbers there. The other place is the United States. I just saw on the internet a week ago that there are 10,000 Nepalese in the United States. I do know that in any major metropolitan area, like the Bay Area or Boston or at Cornell, at any Dasain there will be several hundred people, and that's a regular ritual occasion in most American urban areas.

JULIA THOMPSON: Someone brought up briefly not only the differences among us but also the differences among researchers in Europe. And I wonder also not only are we divided (for example, the "Newar people" don't know what other people are doing), but what are some of the divisions among our European colleagues? I know that I have very little contact with them. If you don't read German or French, you don't have access to the literature; and I wonder if anyone knows if they are doing the same kinds of things we are working on and why we don't communicate with each other?

DAVID HOLMBERG: The nice thing about Europeans is they are untroubled, at last anthropologically, about the same types of issues that seem to trouble American anthropologists. They charge right ahead doing what is, in many respects, some of the most solid and good ethnographic work that's being done, I think, in at least, Nepal (which I know
best). There is a European Himalayan Research Bulletin—we were talking about this the other day, because in the old days when I was editing the HRB, Andras Hofer from Heidelberg was one of our corresponding editors who was quite good—occasionally he would produce a whole mound of things to go into the HRB. And there was David Sedden, who is still on the masthead. There's a lot of research that goes on in Nepal that's not very good and a lot of that not very good research is done by Americans. One of the things that's striking is that even to this day, people show up in Nepal to conduct research who have never bothered to read anything about Nepal before they get there and are able, somehow, to continue. So there is in some respects, a little contempt toward what they see as the mass of Americans doing research, but there is a lot of very interesting synthetic work going on. If you want to find out what is going on in Europe, the thing to do is to subscribe to the European Bulletin of Himalayan Research which I will try to find out more about so it can be announced how to subscribe. I tried to subscribe but it was very difficult.

[ed: the contents of the latest issue and subscription information for this bulletin can be found in the RECENT PUBLICATIONS section of this bulletin, p]

GERALD BERREMAN: Their headquarters is in Heidelberg; they have an office in Kathmandu as well. The Fulbright people in Kathmandu have never heard of them, and yet it was the best journal that was being distributed there, leaving aside ones that the people here are associated with. The authors are primarily German, but most of the articles are published in English. There are a few articles in German. They have scholars there in association, and of course, the whole French group at the Musee de l'Homme—Corneille Jest, and Sandy McDonald and others who do very classical ethnography, ethnomusicology, and the like. So, there are certainly lots of resources coming out of there. Also I remember there was lots of interest in Nepal when it first opened up among the Japanese, and they sent Jiro Kawakita on a long trip—Shigeru Iijima was there with him. They made observations such as they could anticipate the ethnicity of a group of people before they came into the village by looking at their altimeter because of the altitude stratification of crops and therefore, of the peoples. And they published a map of Nepal which I came across in my files, that has what looks like a spider web of red upon a map that is on white paper with black boundaries, which are all the places that Japanese scholars had visited in Nepal up to about 1968. There were expeditions that would go lots of places and stay very short times.

One other thing I wanted to say, apropos of the bad research being done there by Americans, the Fulbright has a new program which was in its first or second year this past spring. I talked to the people in it. This is a program for people to do research who are neither undergraduates nor graduate students—unenrolled students—and they had had no training in research methods in any discipline for the most part and they knew nothing about Nepal particularly. They were dumped there, enthusiastic but knew nothing, and almost all of them complained "We don't know what to do or how to do it." ... Washington said it's not going to quit because they are democratizing research—why should we limit research funds to people who know how to do research? That's elitism, so forget it!

BARBARA BROWER: That's two anthropologists heard from, and I think there would be a different answer from geographers about what the European connections are because it is interesting how, I think, there is a disciplinary difference here.

GERALD BERREMAN: By the way, the thing I was thinking about on Fulbright has no disciplinary specialty. It is everything you can think about. But, go ahead.

BARBARA BROWER: It's just I was struck by the contrast because there are lots of ways of getting at other geographers, other earth science work that is being done in the Himalaya. Mountain Research and Development is such a conduit—we see often work done by Japanese.

JULIA THOMPSON: Do you see yourself as a group, then? That's the thing that I find—is that on this side, we see ourselves here as a community, and the Europeans that
I've met thing of themselves as a community but we're not a joint community--the geography may be the same but the continents divide us. And I'm wondering, in geography, do you think of yourselves as a unified, or at least a talking group?

BARBARA BROWER: There are other geographers who can back me up, but I think there is certainly collaboration across national boundaries. We are working on a sort of collective arrangement with the European journal, and in fact if you look at your last issue of the Bulletin, there is information about how to subscribe.

BRUCE OWENS: I am a little bit disturbed at the direction that some of this discussion is taking. Certainly Americans do not have a monopoly on lousy research in the Himalaya, and certainly there are a lot more of us there which permits that opportunity. The funding resources available to Europeans are far fewer, as far as I know, which makes for certain rigor in the selection process. But that's a relatively trivial point. I think the more important one is, if we are in part concerned about how it is that Himalayan studies can play a more significant role outside that specific area, then certainly the way to go is not by engaging in atheoretical, descriptive work, which characterizes a great deal of European research. I've heard papers that recite the dimensions of a room in which an interview was taking place. And I think what I have tried to express, and I think some others of us have, Bill in particular, is that if we are to have a presence (and I am suggesting we have certain kinds of opportunities by virtue of the difficulty that the Himalayas impose for making more general theoretical contributions), obviously one should be grounded in the literature before going off to work (I won't dispute any of that), but to suggest that the European approach that is primarily concerned with documentation and description be emulated as a means of achieving the kinds of things it sounds like we want to achieve, I think is wrong-headed.

DAVID HOLMBERG: I think it depends. Certainly the Germans are much more philologically oriented and descriptive, but you can't say the French aren't theoretical. I mean, take Brigitte Steinman's monograph on Eastern Tamang. It's a marvelously innovative piece of work. (BRUCE OWENS: I don't want to overgeneralize.)

DAVID HOLMBERG: L'Homme had the whole issue of South Asia, in which most of the papers were on Nepal and all of which made major synthetic statements. And I don't think we see that in quite the same way in what we do. There is poor European research--you're right--and I think that there is a happy ground in between those two extremes that we're all working toward because we need good empirical work. There's a kind of license to doing empirical work in Europe that we're not allowed in America. Here there's a demand that everything be theoretical which leads to extraordinarily superficial work, as well, that says nothing.

BRUCE OWENS: I must agree, of course, yes. And one of the problems that can occur by virtue of the theoretical pressures is that you have a theoretical template that you replicate, or fit into, in order to engage in "hip discourse" which is obviously a sterile exercise.

KATHRYN MARCH: Another tension that runs particularly through the American work, that I think has previously been understood as something between a ball and chain around our ankles to obligation, and that has to do not so much between the tension between theory and descriptive questions, but between academic and applied kinds of work. I think in the Himalaya these concerns come partly from the early work on environmental degradation and partly from the history of how quickly after, particularly, the country of Nepal opened up to foreign scholars, it opened up in a massive way to foreign aid work. And so, many scholars in Nepal and outside have had to grapple with this question of where to situate their work in terms of scholarly academic interests and applied interests--particularly for the crew of scholars coming up in academia since the 70s, for whom academic employment was not always readily available. And I'd like to suggest turning the anti-area to our advantage. That is something where we are going to see a strength of future work--not in this proliferation of applied kind of things.
I'd like to go back and pick up on David's suggestion for more collaborative work. Most young scholars interpreted that pull toward applied (and I'm talking about whether they were Nepali or foreign) to mean a pull toward large national or binational aid organizations and I think that set off a number of very troubling relationships. But it is true now in Nepal that there is this proliferation of much more grassroots, much more spontaneous, struggling groups—from the *janajati* organizations, ethnic pride or oral history organizations, and from my own perspective, a number of feminist organizations—who are doing very, very interesting work, both in the sense of work for positive social and economic change and scholarly work—not directly associated, by and large, with government institutions or with large non-government institutions or binational institutions, but attempting to try to engage in informed activism formally. And I think that's another place where this debate that we had going could be turned to our advantage, if we began seriously to think about collaborating with some of our peers who are trying to do things in Nepal.

I know less about Sikkim, or Bhutan, but certainly in India it is possible, and I think that's an area of opportunity we have tended to ignore. In Nepal, we do have very great obligations to the university, because the university as we all know is a very troubled and neglected place. These other groups are struggling but very much alive.

GERALD BERREMAN: That's true in India too, and there its interesting that the Chipko movement, the grassroots environmental movement that originated in Gharwal has attracted a lot of the attention of the NGOs, particularly the feminists (because its widely been touted as a women's movement, which incidentally it isn't--its a men and women's movement). But still it has attracted environmentalists, and feminists, and others, so that there is a lot of work being done by people who are not, in some sense, scholars but are very energetic researchers and have an applied interest. One of the things I was going to talk about if I had had the hour and a half that I richly deserved was doing work that is relevant to the issues that confront the people we work among, rather than simply than recording their esoteric knowledge about whatever.

KATHRYN MARCH: One of the really exciting things is that the learning curve is so extraordinarily great in working with groups like that, whereas the learning curve with USAID and World Bank is all the bureaucratic problems. The frustration index is very high. Maybe its because we don't spend quite so much time in the regional centers where these groups are set up, but there are sign boards all over the place and people trying to do things, in addition to the six hundred other jobs they are trying to do to keep their families.

JANA FORTIER: I want to add to what you are saying. Along with collaboration, especially with grassroots intellectuals in Nepal, comes an incredible amount of innovation. When I would give away socioeconomic surveys to be redesigned by research assistants, they would come back incredibly full of things that I didn't see, or that I wouldn't have asked, or ways I wouldn't have asked them. When a small local meeting group gets together, so many ideas come up for projects that people in NGOs and in multinational groups like USAID would not think of. I think its time for us to, I don't want to say share the power, but just look out for opportunities for collaboration that are really opportunities for innovation in whatever field we are in.

BARBARA BROWER: I wonder if there is any risk in that sort of collaboration, or in that sort of focus on bolstering grassroots groups. I'm remembering an account by K.K. Pandey, a while ago. He was reporting on a whole list of wonderfully ingenious local mechanisms for managing forests and fodder which he'd encountered in Nepal. He just set out one day to see what he could document and found case after case of very ingenious strategies for managing resources. He didn't provide a map in this presentation, and he explained that people were adamant that he not identify where they were because they didn't want anybody coming in and co-opting, even admirers. People in Nepal have seen even admiration for local strategies be translated into a kind of kleig-light attention that in the end is very destructive, and I wondered as David was
speaking, whether there is any risk in telling Tamang groups about how to catalogue their collection. Maybe that's the last thing that we should be doing is intervening, or looking for inspiration for our own work, or trying to help.

DAVID HOLMBERG: That's the easy one, it seems, because that's the one that you can respond to. The questions asked are like: "What do I do with five hundred hours of tapes?" What is much more complicated is when you look at groups that are connected with political parties. That puts scholars in a very awkward position. Katherine March was involved with this as well this time--how do you try to create or help create an institution for all these groups, an institution that is depoliticized and is focused on more purely scholarly, documentary pursuits. This is not all that one does, this is just one dimension. I think its really important, partly because you learn a lot by doing it, but also because we have an obligation to do it. There are no other institutions for this in Nepal. For instance, we found historical documents of tremendous interest on the local level that had been kept by eight mukhiya in one village, that kept all their papers in one place going back two hundred years. There is no kind of documentation like this any place in the center; there is absolutely no interest in the national archives for keeping track of any of this stuff. As far as I know, there is not a historian at the university who cares at all about local histories. It's a different kind of thing than looking at resource management groups, or the notion of tampering with or transforming the nature of institutions by involving yourself in them, which may be of a somewhat different nature.

TER ELLINGSON: Once more, I'd like to zoom out for the sake of monopolizing this opportunity to talk about larger issues, because as I see this rather typical movement towards particulars of particular places toward particular institutions, particular governments, particular ethnic groups, all dominated by one particular country and then various other appendages that have been mentioned, I see a mirroring of the construction of all the other imaginary worlds that I talked about earlier. We all live in different imaginary worlds--those of our disciplines are linked microcosm with macrocosm and that necessarily has dominated much of today's discussion as it necessarily dominates much of our professional lives. But what we've heard of Himalayas, and particularly in the last few minutes, it seems to me jumps back and forth between the particular and the global, between the individual person and the individual organization research situation, country on the one hand and then to the world at large on the other hand. And this is of course the nature of academic research in many fields.

Yet I sit here and I think, when John mentioned GIS systems, one doesn't need a GIS system to recall that the simplest model of a mountain range has at least two sides, and all we've heard about is one--we are missing the second side in this entire discussion. The accidental drifting of imaginary continents has created an impenetrable wall of the Himalayas that makes it almost impossible for us to imagine a more inclusive world. I try to imagine myself sitting in a similar discussion in Mediterranean Studies, where only Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco were talked about as comprising the Mediterranean, or a Pacific Rim conference that talked about only the United States and Canada. I'm sure there are such discussions; perhaps more to the point, I think of the division between political Africanism and academic Africanism where political Africanism generally seeks out to embrace all that could conceivably be considered Africa for maximum impact, whereas academic Africanism by and large confines itself to a truncated vision of Africa that ultimately is racially based in "black" Africa, and I wonder which of these various parallels applies to us as Himalayans who deal with one side of the Himalayas. And what it does for the viability and, my main concern, the peripheralization and marginalization of all of us, whether when we descend into the marginalization of particularism of one country or of one scholar as a pioneering heroic researcher, or in the larger sense of dealing with truncated imaginary realities rather than using our imaginations to construct worlds that could have wider impact and influence. I mentioned in one of my HRB editorials that hypothetical deranged Africanist who for some weird reason declares himself a Burkina-Fasologist and anthropologist or a geographer and loses the impact and the advantage of a community that is meaningful and visible in the imaginary worlds at large, that we remain truncated, cut off, isolated,
marginalized, and particularized by our own lack of imagination. The people we study of course, have not. Tibetans constructed a patron-priest relationship that gave them an ideological influence and a political influence out of all proportion to their absolute numbers or their economic productivity in the great Chinese empire. The Newars constructed a socio-economic network based on symbolic incorporation of many other peoples into charged performances in which those peoples had a stake in the outcomes. And I mention these because, like Heylyn with Europe, I know them best; we have heard of others in the Himalayan mosaic. The people we study know about imaginary worlds and how to reach out to others; we do not know how to reach out to each other, to the Tibet side of the Himalayas or Tibetanists to the Nepal and India, etc. side of the Himalayas. We do not know how to reach out to the sciences and the humanities, or to the rest of humanity. We should learn from our object of study.

We invite readers to continue the dialogue. Please send responses to this discussion to the editor for publication in a future issue of HRB.