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Conference Digest and Abstracts

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Please address your questions and information about meetings of interest to the Nepal Studies Association’s Conference Coordinator:

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FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

29th Annual Conference on South Asia    Madison, Wisconsin   October 19-22 2000

Please try to attend the Annual Meeting of the Nepal Studies Association (perhaps the first meeting of the rechristened Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies?) on Saturday evening, October 21st

Panels Planned:

Himalayas in comparative perspective
Selma Sonntag, Multi-language policy in Nepal and S.Africa
Steve Cunha, Tourism in the Pamirs and Alaska
Paul Benjamin, City government in Nepal and Wisconsin

A Decade of "Democracy": Assessing Activism after the 1990 People's Movement in Nepal (Parts I and II)
Presenters and their general topics are:
Susan Hangen -- The MNO and its critique of democracy
Laura Kunreuther -- FM and changes in public voices - - or women's property rights
Mukta Tamang -- Janajati movement and decentralization rhetoric
Steve Mikesell - Insurgency, Counter-insurgency and Destruction of Democratic Possibilities in Nepal
(on Maoist movement)
Laura Ahearn --Janajati movement and rural response
Tatsuro Fujikura -- Youth activism
Seira Tamang -- In the Shadows of Modernity: WID and Democratic Space in Nepal
Yasuko Fujikura -- public debates on women trafficking and prostitution in Nepal

Economic Cultures of Nepal
Katherine Rankin, Mark Leichty, Greg Grieve, Anne Rademacher

Buddhist Identity in the Himalaya
Arjun Guneratne, Todd Lewis, Martijn van Beek, Lauren Leve

Changing Patterns of Resource Use in the Nepal Himalaya
John Metz, Ganesh Shivakoti, Andrea Nightengale.
International Mountain Research Workshop/
Séminaire International de Recherche sur la
Montagne
Grenoble, France
4-7 June 2000

Leading up to the World Mountain Forum organised
by the French National Association of Elected Representa­
tives from Mountain Regions and the city of Chambéry,
Grenoble will welcome an International Mountain Research
Workshop in June 2000. The workshop will be the occa­
sion for a limited number (approximately 70) of research­
ers from a variety of scientific fields and experts active in
a number of geographic zones to compare their different
approaches to mountain regions as research topics and their
methods. The workshop will devote most of the available
time to sessions bringing together all participants in view
of exchanging thoughts and ideas, rather than formal pre­
sentations. The results of workshop debates will be pre­
sentated during the World Mountain Forum in Chambéry. A
further result will be a collective publication whose goal is
to contribute to the preparatory work for the International
Year of Mountains.

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The Extremes of the Extremes: An International
Symposium on Extraordinary Floods
Reykjavik, ICELAND
July 17-19, 2000

Sponsors: Iceland Hydrological Service; International
Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS); others.

This symposium will discuss extreme and extraordinary
floods with particular emphasis on mountainous regions
and extreme climate zones. Focus will be on the role of
snow, ice, and other interacting forces in generating ex­
treme floods, such as those caused by extraordinary com­
binations of hydrological and climatic conditions; volcan­
ism, including eruptions and geothermal processes; and
landslide related events. Other themes include the physi­
ical processes involved; predictability of extreme floods the
short-term forecasting of extreme floods; the estimation of
flood frequency; case studies of prehistoric, historic, and
contemporary extreme floods; and the environmental con­
sequences such as geomorphic agents or natural polluters.

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HIMALAYAN RESEARCH BULLETIN XIX(2) 1999
A New Breeze: Questions on Region, Representation and Postcoloniality

Ravina Aggarwal
Smith College

I will read a short story by Ladakhis writer, Abdul Ghani Sheikh, called “The Breeze” which I have translated from Urdu in collaboration with the author. The story unfolds with the escape of a Muslim family from their village after communal riots break out in the district. Translating this narrative raised crucial questions concerning “regional” literatures, pedagogy, anthropological representation and linguistic identity. These debates are central to scholars in Ladakh as they strive to define what constitutes Ladakhi literature and what social role it must serve in a postcolonial land where religious, linguistic and territorial borders are forever being circumscribed and challenged.

Mountain Madness: The 1930’s Nazi Expeditions to the Himalaya

Nigel J.R. Allan
University of California, Davis

During the early Nazi era, Hitler, like so many Germans, was enamoured with mountain climbing, mountain people, and the mountain environment. Much of the discussion about Hitler’s legacy, however, has been shrouded by vergangenheitsbewältigung, a failure of Germans to “come to terms with the past.” Now, Germans are writing about these eventful years. Included in the Nazi mountain activities were numerous scientific expeditions seeking to measure and document Himalayan people and their environment. Through photographs of the Deutsche Alpin Verein, and captured Nazi files of scientists on these expeditions, we begin to discern the Nazi cultural construction of the Himalaya.

Non-texts?: Words and Works of the Weak.

Brown Bledsoe
University of Chicago

The inequitous stratification of traditional South Asian societies has fueled academic discourses of many persuasions. In recent years approaches to the Indic past have aimed at readings sympathetic to people marginalized and largely silenced by the social formations of their time and place. Such readings emphasize resistances, evasions, and subversions of overbearing order. But does the presumption that participation in a non-egalitarian social formation was primarily coerced really do service to either the objects of our sympathy or our own understandings? Is there not a danger that in devaluing explicit statements of subscriptions to prevailing social order, scholars may actually strip the lowly of the very dignity they wish to restore?

This paper focuses on the words and works of a humble sector of the Newar society of the KTM Valley, the sweepers-of-temple-compounds known as Jogi (Jogi, <yogi). Between the 17th and the 19th centuries these low-caste Saivas generated a set of stone inscriptions inserting themselves into the permanent and public record of world-ordered, an arena dominated by the elite—theist kings and wealthy Buddhist merchants. Although many leading schools of interpretation would have us reduce inscriptive texts to non-texts—as reflexes of or data for an encompassing contextual milieu—I use the Jogi inscriptions to argue for differential but active participation in both the social world and the encompassing cosmos.

Self-Cognizing Cognition (Rang rig) in Tibetan Madhyamaka: A Comparative Analysis

Jim Blumenthal
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Many scholars have argued that the division of Indian Madhyamaka into three distinct sub-schools was a uniquely Tibetan phenomena. Central to the divisions which were clearly delineated in Tibet by the time of Atisa (11th c.e.) were the systems of logic to which Indian Madhyamakans adhered and by which they were partially designated nominally in Tibet. In addition to this common distinction between sub-schools of Madhyamaka, the 8th century Indian pandit, Santaraksita introduced the concept of self-cognizing cognition into Madhyamaka discourse and thereby introduced a topic of often heated debate among Tibetan Madhyamakans. Self-cognizing cognition (rang rig) is integral to his interpretation of Madhyamaka thought.
and plays a vital role not only in Yogacara-svatantrika-madhyamaka’s presentation of the two truths but also in its own particular Madhyamaka epistemology and integration of later Yogacara developments into Madhyamaka thought. The syncretic nature of Santaraksita’s presentation of Madhyamaka which incorporated important post-Nagarjuna developments in Indian Buddhist thought including not only Yogacara ideas but also the formally systematized Buddhist logic of Dignaga and Dharmakirti, found both friend and foe among its Tibetan interpreters. Santaraksita was instrumental in the early transmission of Buddhism to Tibet as well as being the author of Ornament of the Middle Way (Madhyamakalamkara) which is commonly considered as the root text of the Yogacara-svatantrika sub-school of Madhyamaka. Thus, for several centuries upon the arrival of Buddhism on the Tibetan plateau, Santaraksita’s system was considered as Buddhism’s highest philosophical system. During the later transmission this favor began to turn among the newly evolving schools of Tibetan Buddhism and found its apex in the arguments of Je Tson-khapa, founder of the Gelug school and fervent defender of Prasangika-madhyamaka and his disciples. Nonetheless, the majority of adherents to the Nyingma traditions, the oldest Buddhist tradition in Tibet, still adhere to and defend Santaraksita’s positions including the notion of self cognizing which is so central to his particular presentation of Madhyamaka. Prominent among Nying-ma commentators was Mipam Gyatso, the 19th Century scholar whose work, Explanation of (Santaraksita’s) “Ornament of the Middle Way”: The Sacred Worlds of the Smiling Lama Manjusri (dbU ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad ‘jam dbyangs bla ma dgyes pa’i zha lung) lays out the primary Nyingma explanation and defence of the Yogacara-svatantrika-madhyamaka view. The purpose of this paper is to examine the two conflicting arguments of the Gelug and Nyingma commentators of Santaraksita concerning the issue of self-cognizing cognition, offering critical analysis of the two major Tibetan approaches to the issues and thereby penetrating into some of the more subtle points of the madhyamaka controversy in Tibet.

Representing the Other in a Nepali Village: Tourism, Tharus and Village Walks

Arjun Guneratne
Macalester College

Anthropology’s habit of emphasizing the particular over the general has generated finely drawn ethnographies of global processes as they are worked out in particular contexts. One of these has been the village.

For many, the village represents the idea of the local in studies of globalization. While we no longer subscribe to earlier assumptions that the village can be treated in isolation from the wider society, it continues to be a fruitful locus for the examination of those broader questions that interest social scientists.

This paper discusses these themes by considering how international tourism contributes to the formation of ethnic consciousness among both Brahmins and Tharus in a village lying close to the Royal Chitwan National Park in Nepal, and undermines the Nepali state’s ideological goal of “national integration” by calling into play the differences between these two ethnic groups: by aligning the former with the world of modernity represented by tourists and by representing the latter as “primitive” or “jungly” people. The specific practice through which this is accomplished is the “village walk,” a part of the itinerary for most visitors to the park. High caste Nepali tour guides represent their native Other – the Tharus – to foreign visitors in certain ways in the course of these tours, while simultaneously distancing themselves from the world the Tharus are held to represent.

The Politics of Hill Council in a Marginal Place

Kim Gutschow
Harvard University

How does a movement like Hill Council, which claims relative autonomy within India and from Kashmir, emerge from a contested history of social development? The 1995 movement for Hill Council Status in Zangskar indicated the difficulties of development in the Zangskar region since Indian Partition as well as the different notions of belonging to India, Kashmir, Ladakh, and Kargil. Moreover, these identifications both hindered and furthered the local development process, in which local leaders mobilize their own political or socio-economic agendas. The gradual climax and subsequent disabandonment of the Hill Council Movement in 1995 reveals the contested nature of regional identities in Himalayan Kashmir.

From the Silk Route to the Karakoran Highway: Remembering the Future

Charles S. Haines
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Since border trade between Pakistan and China first commenced in 1968, the imagery of the days of the Silk Route have been invoked to capture the essence of the barter exchange system initially employed, the remoteness of the region in northern Pakistan through which the trade occurs, and the difficult route along which trade goods flow.
The Silk Route imagery has become more pronounced since 1978, when the Karakoram Highway was opened. The allusions to a rich and mystical past, however, take on conflicting meanings for different actors. From the local, to the regional, to the level of the nation-state, the Silk Route imagery implies a form of resistance, accommodation, or integration/domination, respectively. One notion all conflicting meanings hold in common, though, is a rich, independent, and bright future. The Silk Route links Pakistan, the Northern Areas, and various localities in the region not merely to an alluring past, but a realm of possibilities for the future, particularly as an economic, political, cultural, and ideological link to Central Asia.

This paper examines the various meanings implied in the Silk Route imagery; how they are shaping the political and economic landscape of the Northern Areas; how cultural performances are being remolded to fit the imagined past; and the implications of a Central Asian future for the various actors propagating the Silk Route allusions.

Susan I. Hangen
University of Wisconsin-Madison

In political movements based on assertions of difference, people construct identities that are shaped by national and transnational discourses. In this paper, I demonstrate how the Mongol National Organization (MNO), a grassroots based political party in Nepal, forges together a diverse range of peoples in order to create a Mongol identity as a basis for political mobilization. The construction of Mongol identity is shaped by discourses about identity both within the Nepali state and at the international level. First, Mongol identity is asserted largely through negating the state supported national Hindu identity, even while MNO ideology remains staunchly nationalist. Second, choosing the label "Mongol" for this identity is a way for MNO activists to seek legitimacy for their political claims as well as a voice in the global political arena. Finally, I suggest that debates among MNO supporters over how Mongol identity is to be defined, and over who is to be included/excluded from the Mongol group point to flaws in the logic of the political of difference.

Linguistic and Cultural Issues in Translating Nepal Bhasa (Newari) Literature
David Hangreaves
Western Oregon University

Although little known outside of Nepal, Nepal Bhasa (Newari) has a long tradition of oral and written literature, only a small fraction of which is available in English translation. The process of translation from Nepal Bhasa into English raises many theoretical, artistic, and practical questions. In this paper, I will provide a brief overview of literary history and examine a sampling of translations of Nepal Bhasa texts in terms of the linguistic and cultural issues raised in translation. In addition to highlighting the untranslatable- contrasts between Newar and Anglo-American culture, translation brings into focus the demands of accurately rendering in English the socio-linguistic and rhetorical contrasts between classical and modern written styles as well as oral folktale and written literary styles. Finally, the demands of translation also brings into focus the problems of accurately rendering in English the reflexes of Himalayan/South Asian cultural contact found in the contrastive literary functions of Indic and Tibeto-Burman vocabulary.

NGOs, the State, and Democratization in Bangladesh and Nepal
Jeff Kay
Seetbriar College

This paper will explore the relationship between national political capacity as formulated by Robert Jackman (Power Without Force) and the role played by NGOs in the democratization of Bangladesh and Nepal.

The participatory development, NGO, and civil literature suggests that the link between such organizations and their political environment is critical. However, this literature fails to make the relationship sufficiently explicit to meaningfully assess such groups' contribution to democratization. Rather, it is assumed a priority that NGOs represent an alternative to other organizational forms (the state, private sector enterprises, and traditional social organizations) in meeting human needs and that their multiplication promotes democracy. Donors support NGO formation regardless of the political milieu in which they are to operate and local activists organize to exploit these new resources.

Jackman's concept of national political capacity as determined by "institutional capacity" and "legitimacy" suggests an unambiguous means of defining the political environment for NGOs. Bangladesh and Nepal are two South Asian countries with very different political histories. According to Jackman, they have different levels of political capacity. Bangladesh is a very young state ruled in an authoritarian manner for most of its twenty-seven years while Nepal is a very old state with one of the world's few functioning monarchies. Their transition to multi-party democracy in the 1990s has been fitful. Both have suffered from...
weak governments where parliamentary obstructionism is the norm and violent street demonstrations and hartals (strikes) have been the preferred mechanism for issue advocacy. However, NGOs have played very different roles in the democratization of Bangladesh and Nepal due to the difference in their political capacity.

The essential dilemma for NGOs in these two countries, indeed all democratizing countries, is the same: How far do they go, individually and collectively, in promoting their interests in the political arena? For example, Bangladeshi NGOs are largely pro-Awami League yet the NGO community has split over whether or not to say so publicly. Democratic theory says that such groups should be free to state their preferences but the strong development state in new states like Bangladesh works against this.

Comparing the influence of national political capacity on NGOs’ role in the democratization of Bangladesh and Nepal should offer insight into their potential contributions to democracy elsewhere.

Searching for Ladakh on the World Wide Web: The GIGO Principle and Gossip from the Electronic Bazaar
Michael J. Khoo
University of Colorado at Boulder

"Searching for Ladakh” offers an analysis of the dominant themes in representations of Ladakh on the Internet, showing their implication in ‘traditional’ Western imaginings of the Himalayan region and its people. The Internet is commonly said to enhance our knowledge about the world, to promote communication and cross-cultural understanding. While information presented on a computer screen suggests unmediated, ‘real-time’ authenticity and accuracy – a virtual and multi-indexed continuation of the Enlightenment Encyclopaedist project, the world at one’s finger tips – the old computing adage of “Garbage In, Garbage Out” (the GIGO Principle), reminds us that computers are tools, not oracles. A search of “Ladakh” on the World Wide Web reveals thousands of sites, mostly travel agents, on-line travel guides, home pages of tourists, but also sites of ecological, Buddhist, and other NGOs. The dominant metaphors of these sites – Ladakh as a remote, mysterious, and blissful place, its population wise, happy Buddhists (not Muslims) – reinforce, rather than challenge, Western stereotypes about the Himalayas and its populations, and silence the people who they purport to represent.

Shifting Loads: Re-positioning Narratives of Travel
Ken MacDonald
University of Toronto

To a degree, the act of travel is played out on a stage – it is constituted by a performative geography of display – with roles defined by a history of cultural encounter and interaction. These roles assume hierarchical labels based on the intersections of specific criteria (eg., class, wealth, status, race, ethnicity, political allegiance) which act as markers of difference and underpin specific processes of exclusion through which certain bodies in motion are ascribed (and accept) the status of ‘traveller’ while others are consigned to a functional status in relation to that role.

In this paper, I identify and interrogate the disciplinary mechanisms of exclusion whereby trekking porters in the Baltisan region of northern Pakistan are made into subject bodies and situated differentially within a field of power. In it, I contextualize their labour as travel through their own stories and an examination of their agency in shaping the terms under which others travel. This does not negate the degree to which the business of travel creates a regime of dependent, disciplined labour within which mobility is organized and coerced. Rather it contributes to a transformation of the ideology of a dominant group by exposing a narrative of travel which extends beyond the familiar ground of leisure experience to include elements of discipline, exploitation, accommodation, resistance, containment and displacement.

A Heart Like a Man: Feminine Power and Patriarchal Constraints in a Nepali Community
Ernestine McHugh
University of Rochester

This paper will involve examination of the limits of resistance in a patriarchal context. In current discussions of “agency” and “negotiation,” we see the development of a discourse in which individual assertiveness and imagination and their effectiveness as tools for empowerment are celebrated. In this discussion, the case of a woman who for most of her life seems to have exemplified the truth of such discourse will be analyzed. She had high status through both birth and marriage, and given her strong personality had developed a great deal of authority within the village, speaking forcefully at village council meetings, being widely sought for advice, and supervising communal building projects. However, her position, though it seemed firmly established, proved quite fragile. In middle age, when she was at the height of her powers, she was subjected by her brother to a devastating public humiliation that involved
the loss of both wealth and status. Her case reveals the risks for women of forging positions that are in tension with patriarchal ideologies and institutional structures, demonstrating the importance of political and economic entitlements for even the most exceptional women.

Nepali Nation-State in the Era of “Tribalism”

Pramad Mishra

Duke University

How can one both champion the rights of the various nationalities in Nepal to find their due place in the post-1990 Nepal and advocate the sovereignty of the geographically pressured Nepal in its transition from authoritarianism to democracy? By using my personal experience of growing up in a Rajbanshi tribe in eastern Nepali lowlands, I’ll highlight and explore the Nepali national dilemma and situate my discussion in the context of theories of representation, nationalism, and globalization.

I’ll argue that Nepali state as a political unit that represents certain democratically oriented political institutions is unproblematic and deserves safeguarding. But to do that one doesn’t have to endorse either the ruling high caste Hindu ideology or the uncritical mobilization of ethnic passions. We still think of nationalism vis-a-vis nation-state in terms of nineteenth-century epistemology and politics—European enlightenment, national unifications, and colonization. With the advent of the era of globalization, we need to reconceptualize Nepali nationalism, nation-state, and their relation both at the micro and macro levels—a project that both strengthens and diffuses the Nepali nation-state, that both addresses the issues of dispossession of the various nationalities within Nepal, thus positively mobilizing their cultural bases in order to empower them while at the same time critiquing the tendency of all culture, language, ethnicity, race and religion-based nationalisms to go out of bounds.

Text as Talisman in Tibetan Cultural Regions

Katherine Anne Paul

University of Wisconsin - Madison

This paper will discuss the use of text as talismans in Bhutan, Mustang, and Ladakh. Text plays an important role in consecration rituals in Tibetan Buddhist traditions practiced in these areas. A crucial component of the consecration of objects includes writing a syllable or mantra on the object, which invests it with divine powers. The inscriptions may be written in more than one script and more than one language. Tibetan, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Mongolian inscriptions can occur side by side or in isolation. These inscriptions are found on architectural structures, paintings, sculptures, textiles, and medicinal pills. Taking its cue from the religious importance of text, folk traditions have adopted certain inscriptions into secular material culture. Both sacred and secular uses of texts are meant to empower and protect objects, individuals, and communities. The talismanic properties of these inscriptions will be compared to the iconographic symbols that are used in a similar manner, and the relationship between the content of the inscription and how it is used in the material culture, in addition to the significance of the language chosen will be explored.


David Pinault

Santa Clara University

Since the 1980s and the rise of Muslim-Buddhist tensions in Leh Township, Ladakh, the annual Muharram procession sponsored by the town’s Shia community has acquired new significance. In order to show Muslim solidarity, local Sunnis now join Shias in the procession; but many Shia participants, mindful of old sectarian conflicts, insist on performing matam (gestures of lamentation for the Karbala Martyrs, ranging from chest-beating to self-flagellation with daggers and chains), an action frowned on by local Sunnis, as a way of differentiating themselves from their co-religionists. In recent years the Imam Khomeini Memorial Trust, based in the Ladakhi town of Kargil, has attempted to educate local Shias concerning the 1994 decree by Seyed Ali Khameini banning the public performance of “bloody” matam. In this paper I review four seasons of fieldwork in Ladakh (1995-1998) and describe my interviews with Shia religious authorities in Kargil, describing the stages in the dissemination of Iranian religious propaganda in Ladakh, from Iranian seminaries of Qom to Kargil, Leh, and the villages surrounding Leh Township. I describe Ladakhi reactions to these attempts to influence the shape of religious practice, and I note how the persistence of “bloody” matam comprises an assertion of local identity in the ongoing dialectic of Muslim-Buddhist and Sunni-Shia relations.

Palaces, Politics & the Contemporary Urban Fabric in the Kathmandu Valley

Corey Saft

University of Oregon

My paper examines the palace structures within the Kathmandu valley as a tool to understand larger cultural
attitudes during the major political regimes of the Malla, Rana and Shah. Palace buildings demonstrate a special relationship in the built world in the Kathmandu Valley. Because they are at once a special case of construction and part of the larger fabric of the city, that is, because they are both similar and different to the buildings around them, they lend themselves to a comparative analysis. My paper compares the spatial structure of palaces from each regime in order to understand the relationship between each and the urban fabric; ultimately, the project locates the contemporary building culture of Nepal within a historical context.

The paper identifies major periods of the building culture in Kathmandu, correlates these periods with spatial characteristics and associates these characteristics with general social and political developments. In addition to chronicling the building patterns, this paper also attempts to establish general guidelines for comparisons within the built environment and to ground the morphological differences of each regime within a shared historical context.

The transformation of Nepal’s built environment throughout the twentieth century is a physical example of the political reconciliations the country has undergone as it has tried to change its role away from being an isolationist nation and toward a more interactive one. The urban fabric is a visual history that reveals Nepal’s evolving political attitude and self-definition. The royal palaces of Nepal are a special class of evidence that allow for synchronic as well as diachronic comparisons to be made in a specific and pointed manner. The palaces are interesting because they chronicle the development of Nepal’s building culture and express the most active building ideologies throughout the valley’s history; the palaces are uniquely informative because they communicate what Kathmandu is and not just what it says it is.

Nepal Bhasa (the Language of Newars): Possibilities and Limitations
Uma Shrestha
Western Oregon University

The use of Nepal Bhasa, which was once a rival of Sanskrit during its glorious days, goes back as late as 1207 AD. In this paper, I will give a historical overview of the development of Nepal Bhasa, including its social and political prestige during the Malla period and the gradual loss of that status during the Shah regime. Secondly, I will also provide a brief glimpse of the language policy of the Nepal Government, over time, with an emphasis on the overall situation of Nepal Bhasa in that policy context. Third, after the political upheaval in 1990 and the introduction of a democratic system thereafter, the Nepali public has seemingly received a great deal of freedom, including freedom of speech and language. Consequently, there have been efforts to encourage the use of Nepal Bhasa in wider public affairs, such as the media, government, and education. Such efforts have also manifested in the publication of newspapers, journals, and magazines written in Nepal Bhasa, and centers geared toward improving its status and maintaining its use. In this paper I will examine these movements, together with the political and social concerns that they raise, in an attempt to offer an assessment of the changing status of Nepal Bhasa at present.

Liberal Narratives in the Himalayas
Selma K. Sonntag
Humboldt State University

In Multicultural Citizenship (1995), the Canadian political theorist Will Kymlicka claims that in liberal, democratic, multinational states, there is a principled and practical imperative for the protection and promotion of minority rights. He argues that liberalism dictates self-government rights for national minorities and “polyethnic” rights (e.g., language rights, preferential treatment) for ethnic groups.

I will explore the applicability of Kymlicka’s alleged universal liberalism to minorities in two Himalayan areas of India: Darjeeling in West Bengal and Uttarakhand in Uttar Pradesh. These offer challenging case studies for Kymlicka’s theory because in each, the categories Kymlicka uses (national minorities versus ethnic groups; self-government versus polyethnic rights) are confused, yet frequently referenced. For example, it is not clear whether the Gorkhalis in Darjeeling are tribals and indigenous (a national minority in Kymlicka’s terms) or an immigrant population (an “ethnic group” for Kymlicka). Demands made by the Uttarakhandis span Kymlicka’s categories of self-government and polyethnic rights (e.g., demands for statehood and reservations).

I will contend in the paper that while both the minority group’s demands and the state’s responses employ the discourse of liberalism, the Himalayan cases reveal tensions in liberalism (e.g., between inclusion and exclusion) rather than confirming liberalism as a transnational narrative.

Shopping for Legitimacy: Environment, Indigeneousness, and the Hill People of Uttar Pradesh
Dave Stulligros
University of California at Berkeley

Supporters of Uttarkhand movement seek statehood for the politically unacceptable rationale of economic secu-
A Uniquely Marginal Place: Relocating Ladakh
Martijn van Beek
Aarhus University

Ladakh is a marginal, derivative place. Official texts, travel guides and some ethnographic texts represent Ladakh as an essentially Buddhist place located on the fringe of Tibetan civilization, not quite authentic or pure. Muslims are either ignored or treated as an alien influence. Its marginality is also attributed to its location on the borders of the nation-state, beyond the Himalayas. Its backwardness is stressed in developmentalist discourse. These visions of Ladakh can be traced partly to colonial imaginings, but still dominate official and popular perceptions. Ladakh is attributed a lack of ‘substance’, and diagnosed as lacking, insufficient, inauthentic, backward.

The paper briefly traces the marginalization of Ladakh historically – identifying continuities between colonial and postcolonial imaginings of the region. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Ladakh (1985-1998), I examine the ways in which local actors—both individuals and organisations—strategically adopt and foster the discourse of marginality to create a new centrality for Ladakh as a uniquely marginal place. These discussions and initiatives, e.g. in education, arts, and ‘development’, seek to redefine Ladakh’s ‘identity’. Giving space to local discourse about Ladakhi society and culture, the paper seeks to move beyond the mere deconstruction of received imaginings of Ladakhi ‘identity’ and to re-embed analysis in local social practice.

Coping with Changes in Population and in Forest Resources: Institutional Mediation in the Middle Hills of Nepal
George Varughese
University of Indiana

This study examines the relationship between the governance of forest resources and population in 18 locations in the middle hills of Nepal. Specifically, it investigates the significance of local institutions in forest resource management to gain a better understanding of how such institutions shape the actions of individuals at the community level. By focusing on local institutions, the study becomes less concerned with what or who is the agent of environmental degradation than with what has helped forest users to cope with environmental and population change.

This study suggests that development policy aimed at preserving the environment must recognize the significance of institutional arrangements at the local level to resource conditions at that level. Ultimately, the benefits and costs associated with resource conditions at the local level have considerable bearing on larger environmental issues. Furthermore, the study suggests that government policy on participatory resource management will be more successful if it is facilitative of institutional innovation and adaptation at the village level.

Developing Love: The Significance of Development Discourse in Nepali Love Letters
Laura M. Ahearn
University of South Carolina - Columbia

In this paper I explore the multiple meanings and values surrounding the presence of ‘development discourse’ in a corpus of over 200 Nepali love letters. After exploring how love is defined and expressed in the love letters as something that “afflicts” people rather than as something that people themselves do, the paper discusses the influence of “development discourse” on letter writers’ conceptions of their own agency. Paradoxically, even as love is depicted as something over which the letter writers have no control, it is also the very force that enables them to achieve their goals in life. Sometimes contradictory ideas about progress, development, individual responsibility, and social change are woven into the letters and therefore provide insight into how global economic development impinges upon culturally mediates ideas about romantic love and vice versa.
Placing Each Other in Baltistan: A Geography of Knowing

Kathryn Besio
University of Hawaii

Common to both tourists and ethnographers is that both are “out of place” in another’s world. That is, they move themselves to new or distant locations and through that displacement, use experience as a means to know other people and places. What, then, is the epistemological role of understanding others by being “in their place” when one is “out of place?” This paper complicates these metaphors of knowing by addressing the fundamentally geographic dimensions of participant observation (and by extension tourism) that of putting yourself in someone’s place as a means of knowing self and other. If we can never truly switch places with another person and experience the world as they do because of differences in power, social position, and gendered life experiences, how might we come to understand others across the distances of culture, “race” and status? Using empirical data from a village in Baltistan, northern Pakistan, and the provocative insights of Iris Marion Young (1997), this paper begins to outline an alternative geography of knowing self and other.

The Purpose and Politics of Representation: A re-Evaluation of dGe-lugs Commentarial Literature

James Blumenthal
Oregon State University

This paper takes a fresh look at the philosophical commentarial literature of the dGe-lugs school of Tibetan Buddhism and offers a new three-fold model through which it is argued these texts can be more successfully engaged. Acting as a corrective, this paper first examines some interpretive shortcomings of past scholar’s dealings with this genre of texts. After demonstrating how these interpretive errors usually fall into two opposing categories (two extremes if you will) with specific consequences and also after demonstrating why both sides of this error can be traced back to the same hermeneutical mistake, this paper proceeds to offer a solution. I will argue that the fundamental mistake is in the presumption that all dGe-Lugs commentarial literature on philosophy operates under the same hermeneutical perspective, with the same purpose and method of presentation and thus has been misconstrued due to this erroneous basis of engagement. In addition it will be argued that the resulting biases likewise reflect the biases of the investigating scholar. This paper argues that a more accurate portrayal of this body of literature would be to divide it into three distinct sub-genres, each with distinct hermeneutics, purposes and methods of representation. Moreover it is argued that engagement in the literature through this newly offered framework will result in a more accurate accounting of not only this genre of dGe-lugs literature and its contents, but could have implications for how scholars approach such genres in other Buddhist schools as well.

Autobiography, Autoethnography and Intersubjectivity: Analyzing Communication in Northern Pakistan

David Butz
Brock University

I explore how my interpretations of communicative processes in a mountain community in Pakistan have been constituted through important facets of my recent autobiography. Specifically, I show how the efforts of some Shimshali villagers to colonize my subject position by communicating with me in certain ways informs an analysis of communication in their community. My experiences in Shimshal keep returning me to themes of intersubjectivity, despite my sympathy with alternative post-structural readings of the power-embeddedness of all communication. Thus, one of my theoretical challenges has been to conceptualize how communities like Shimshal may nurture a strong commitment to the ideal of intersubjectivity, while retaining a clear sense of the asymmetries of power which contextualize members’ interactions within and outside the community. The paper begins with an overview of my research involvement in Shimshal. I then describe villagers’ attempts to insert themselves into my autobiography by nurturing contingencies that encourage me to (a) create a place for the community in the way I understand myself; (b) create a place for myself in the way I understand the community; and (c) involve myself in the way social and political relations unfold there. Next, I explore villagers’ insistence that I try to understand the community intersubjectively. In particular, I examine Shimshalis’ efforts to involve me directly in their representations of the community to the outside world, and the implications of that for the relationship between my autobiography and their autoethnography. I conclude with a discussion of the analytical implications of my relationship with Shimshalis, emphasizing the disquieting effects such a relationship has had for my theorization of communication and resistance in the community of Shimshal.
Knowing the Other: Renegotiating Powerful Subjectivities
Nancy Cook
York University

One of the contexts within which White Western women 'know' the South Asian Other is through racist, Orientalist and (neo)colonialist discourses about them. In this paper I use intensive interview and participant observation data to examine how discourses of gender race, class, sexuality and empire operating in northern Pakistan are manifested in, constituted through, and articulated by White Western women's practiced subjectivities as they work for international development organizations and other NGOs in the Northern Areas. By examining how these women's subjectivities are constituted through the nature of their involvement in these discursive frameworks and systems of oppression, I will explore how they participate oppositionally, complicitly, or in an ambivalent combination of both, in various material and ideological relations of domination in Pakistan. Resistance to discourses of domination, and the subjectivities they produce, alters discursive regimes of truth, thus changing how Western women 'know’ the Other.

Diversity and Discord in the Tajik Pamir
Stephen F. Cunha
Humboldt State University

Anchoring the western margin of the Asian cordillera, the Pamirs form the great complex orographic node where the Hindu Kush, Karakoram, Tian Shan, Alayskiy and Kunlun Shan ranges converge. This illustrated paper will 1) present the major regional biophysical and human characteristics of the Tajik Pamir, 2) examine post-colonial environmental and human changes, and 3) critique various strategies for regional economic development. Defining characteristics include intense seismicity, giant earthflows, ethnic diversity, return migration to the Western Pamir and increasing nomadic pastoralism in the Eastern Pamir. Major income sources include subsistence farming, commercial ariculture, pastoralism, and raw opium. The prevailing development initiatives involve water resources (irrigation and power generation), farming (cotton, wheat, fruits, nuts), minerals (aluminum), and ecotourism (trekking, mountain-eering, fishing, hunting, horse packing, etc.). However, ongoing civil turmoil, economic uncertainty, and the regional demographic caldron continue to throttle economic development and environmental quality.

Natural Frames in Feminist Tourism: Women's Development Becomes a Tourist Destination
George Varughese
University of Indiana

This paper is an examination of similarities, differences, continuities and fissures between ecotourism and the tourism of women's empowerment. I center the discussion around a women's development project in Nepal at which traditional women's painting has become the stylistic basis for the production of paintings and crafts made for sale as ethnic art in the tourist market in Kathmandu. In the course of this paper, I attempt to answer to sets of questions. First, what role does the depiction of of natural forms (flora and fauna) play in traditional and commercialized painting, and in what ways do these depictions play into the discourse of 'developing women' that underwrites the support given to the project by development ('aid') agencies and by tourist consumers of the project's wares. Second, what is the role of political, in this case feminist, ideology in the production, promotion and consumption of the project itself and the products made there? Is this role similar to that played by environmentalism and conservation(ism?), as ideologies, in ecotourism? Are these ideological influences similarly explicit? Do feminist tourism and ecotourism reflect equally the devolution of 1960s and 1970s activism to lifestyle politics? To what extent are they politically viable alternatives to mass tourism and how do those positioned as the "objects" of that tourism and development engage with these ideologies?

A Yolmo Phenomenology of Dying
Robert Desjarlais
Sarah Lawrence College

In this paper I advance some thought on the life and words of Kesang Omu, an eighty-five-year-old Yolmo woman who has lived much of her life in the foothills of the Helambu or Yolmo valley of northcentral Nepal. In working to elicit and record Kesang Omu's jibhan-katha or "life-story" in 1998, I was struck by the fact that her recollections largely entailed a theater of voices: when narrating significant events in her life, she often invoked, in vivid, morally significant terms, the voicings of key actors in those events. She also commented frequently on the potential skillfulness of her speech when talking to me and how others might evaluate the aesthetic value of her speech. What I convey through this paper is how Kesang Omu's take on her life and words related to the culture-specific forces that underpinned her life, from pressing moral concerns to the perceived effects of aging on her ability to remember well or speak skillfully. All told, the
paper works toward an understand of Yolmo lives and self-narrations as being deeply embedded in complex, politically charged fields of inter-subjective relations and voicings.

Putting the Bliss back in Emptiness: The Tantric Middle Way of Shakya-mchog-Idan
Paul Donnelly
Northern Arizona University

In the early fifteenth century in Tibet any Buddhist scholar of note had to contend with the views of the Gelug sect. One of the most astute critics of these views was Shakya-mchog-Idan, who subjected the writings of Tsong-kha-pa, the Gelug founder, to careful scrutiny and pointed criticism. Shakya-mchog-Idan disagreed with Gelug doctrine on numerous points but one of the most fundamental was the relationship between "middle way" philosophy and the esoteric descriptions of reality found in the Buddhist Tantras. Shakya-mchog-ldan asserts that the highest, definitive Buddhist view is to be found in Tantric texts rather than those of the Indian Buddhist philosophers. He claims that while analysis is a necessary part of the path of transformation it must be complemented, and ultimately superceded, by the realization won through Tantric meditative praxis which are expressed in Tantric texts. The highest view then is not the philosophical "middle way", but the Tantric one. He claims that this better reflects the overall Tantric orientation of Tibetan Buddhism and also better accounts for the actual attainment of Buddhahood. This paper will examine Shakya-mchog-ldan's view and its implications for the relative roles of reason and Tantric practice on the Tibetan Buddhist path to enlightenment.

Struggling for Human Rights in Nepal: The Case of Tanka Prasad
James F. Fisher
Carleton College

Despite widespread discontent with the repressive Rana regime in Nepal, organized resistance to it was virtually non-existent until the mid-1930s. Into this essentially politically vacuous ideological setting stepped a small band of political warriors with Tanka Prasad Acharya at their head — the group that for the first time in the history of Nepal not only envisioned a explicitly political, democratic alternative for the country but mapped out a coherent plan of action to achieve it. They were Nepal's first revolutionaries in the modern, organizational, and ideological sense of that term. Their conception of human rights was couched in political and economic terms, with social or cultural rights left mostly implicit. Some of the Parishad's leaders were executed; because it was too great a sin to kill a Brahmin, Tanka Prasad was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was released in 1950, became Prime Minister in 1955, and devoted much of the rest of his life fighting for human rights.

Development at Work: Discourses of Awareness
Tatsuro Fujikara
University of Chicago

This proposed paper will describe and analyze what I call 'discourses of awareness' in relation to the development context in Nepal. The project of development in Nepal has resulted in the proliferation of discourses about the need for new modes of 'awareness' and 'consciousness' appropriately progressive for the changing times. Development discourses have not only insisted on labeling those identified as the 'underdeveloped' part of the population as somehow lacking in consciousness, but also helped create conditions in which people (from political leaders, development workers, school teachers, to newly-literate women in the villages) speak about the state of their own and others' consciousness, while narrating their experiences and discussing the environment in which they live, and the ones in to which they hope to progress in the future. Accusations of others "lacking in consciousness" or being "only half conscious," are common in daily conversations and debates accompanying the implementation of development programs. This analysis will illuminate some aspects of the on-going process of constructions of agencies and subjectivities in a locality saturated by development discourses imbued with narratives of progress.

The Cultural Politics of Empowerment: Local Feminisms, NGOs and Development in Uttarakhand, India
Shubhra Gururani
York University

Over the last two decades, since the global resonance of the environmental movements like Chipko, large numbers of environmental, women's, and development groups and organizations have dotted the Himalayan countryside in India. Backed by the powerful purchase of the rural ecofeminist women hugging the trees a la Vandana Shiva, the majority of non-governmental organizations in Uttarakhand increasingly focus on women as prime actors in the discourses of environment and development. Espousing feminist goals of empowerment, equality, and participation, rural women now bear the responsibility of sustaining the environment and equitable development. In this paper, by focusing on NGOs that focus on women and development, I want to explore how gendered spaces have
been carved out by the NGOs for local women and how 
local women resist, redefine, and remap these spaces and 
strategically contest their new roles and identities. Com-
plexly configured around the competing discourses of tra-
tition and modernity, development and underdevelopment, 
the politics of empowerment unfolds in the everyday 
struggle for subsistence and marginalization. The paper 
argues that women participants and organizers defy their 
narrow categorizations as presented in the developmental 
model and force us to rethink the contours of local develop-
ment and feminist politics. Central to the paper is the 
examination of the contested and contradictory spaces of 
empowerment which describe how such spaces are spa-
tially mapped, culturally produced, and historically embed-
ed in the cultural patriarchy, class, modernity, and develop-
ment.

Tourist Spots, Truck Stops, and Local Places: Spatial 
Transactions Along the Karakoram Highway 
Chad Haines
University of Wisconsin - Madison

The Northern Areas of Pakistan — home of some of 
the highest mountain peaks in the world; the most glaci-
ated environment outside of the polar regions; a ‘harsh,’ 
‘extremely mountainous,’ and ‘inhospitable’ region — has 
become increasingly an object of tourist fascination and a 
destination on the global tourist market. The advent of tour-
ism in the 1980s into the Northern Areas and its contin-
uous growth through the 1990s has had a major impact on 
socio-cultural transformations.

This paper examines how the tourism industry is literally 
reforming the landscape of the Northern Areas through the 
encoding of distinct spaces in which socio-cultural trans-
actions are structured. I will question how inter-cultural 
transactions are being disciplined through the differentia-
tion between tourist spots, truck stops and local spaces and 
how the transactions occurring in these spaces are reshap-
ing gender, ethno-sectarian, and national identities.

The Sites and Spaces of Ethnographic Inquiry: 
Reflections on Identity and Interviewing in Northern 
Pakistan
Sarah Halvorson
University of Colorado at Boulder

How do the sites and spaces of ethnographic inquiry 
influence the production of knowledge about women in 
Northern Pakistan? In this paper I problematize the inter-
view site as a geographical and social space within which 
the ongoing construction of social identities of self and 
“other”, takes place. Reporting on my experiences conduct-
ing research on household livelihood and well-being in the 
Gilgit District, I consider the linkage between identity and 
geography in women’s lives as evidenced by the sites of 
access and ethnographic situation. The spaces occupied by 
women as active participants of social groups (e.g., 
Hunzakutz, Bagroti, Shia, Ismaili) draws attention to 
women’s negotiation of their own identities and situatedness 
in community and regional-level social relations and gen-
der politics. The interview is described as a site in which 
the politics of narration and representation intersect with 
the social positionings of the interviewer and interviewee 
to influence what knowledge is created, how social cat-
egories are conceptualized, and the practices and discourses 
of academic research.

Independent” Tribal Trade and State Business: Com-
mercial Sectors and Their Integration in Late Nine-
teenth Century Afghanistan
Shah Mahmoud Hanifi
University of Michigan

This paper outlines instances of ambiguity, conflict, 
regulation and resistance as experienced by two compo-
nents of the multifaceted transnational commercial net-
works linking Central and South Asia: the nomadic tribal 
traders known as kuchis who operated between and within 
Afghanistan and British India, and the kafilabashi, or Af-
ghan official responsible for transmitting state goods pur-
chased in India to Kabul. The relationship between the 
kafilabashi and kuchis will be considered in light of an 
attempted monopolization of commodities exports to Brit-
ish India. Published accounts of the relationship between 
the British and the Afghan Amir ‘Abd al-Rahman (r. 1880 
to 190 1) emphasize the ongoing reconfigurations of ad-
ministrative boundaries between colonial India and Af-
ghanistan. Colonial and nationalist historiographies glo-
raly these mutually contrived political “achievements,” but 
the articulation of both states’ authority and control over 
the transnational commerce binding them remained highly 
contested and problematic during this period. This paper 
relies on archived colonial documents concerning ‘Abd al-
Rahman’s project of monopolizing the export trade in com-
modities such as fruit and opium from Afghanistan to co-
lonial India. The economic practices of Afghan nomad trad-
ers and a government agent responsible for the carriage of 
state commerce between Afghanistan and British India will 
be considered in light of those sources.
Malleable Mourning: Shi’a Muslim Women Crafting Muharram. Flagellation Rituals for Personal and Political Caring in Peshawar, Pakistan

Mary Hegland
Santa Clara University

The Shi’a Muslim women with whom I worked in Peshawar during the Muharram mourning season of summer 1991 had learned about Imam Husain’s 680 A.D. martydom, along with that of his male followers and the capture of the band’s womenfolk, since childhood. While males commemorated the deaths by self-flagellation with chains and knives, women beat their chests with their hands and wept. Women were seen as more emotional and soft-hearted and indeed, spent more time crying and mourning, not only for the martyred saints, but for the suffering and death of friends and relatives. Further, women were more responsible for the care and emotional well-being of family. Taking the Muharram mourning rituals as a resource, women combined their roles of chief mourners and family and group care-takers by applying the rituals to grieve and also take proactive steps to address problems. In this paper, I present several case studies of how Peshawar Shi’a women consigned Moharran mourning to family concerns or concerns of the Shi’a community under attack by the sometimes hostile Sunni majority. Although often lacking access to other types of resources and strategies, the women wielded this one powerful resource to address their responsibilities for family and community.

Situating and Historicizing Human Rights in Democratic Nepal

Lauren Leve
Wellesley College

This presentation analyzes everyday appeals to international human rights by ordinary citizens and political activists in urban Nepal, and the structural possibilities that these entail for democratic state-building. In particular, we are interested in the mobilization of the ideal of religious and cultural rights among Nepal’s non-Hindu minorities. First we explore the rhetoric of human rights as it is invoked in daily discourses on political representation and repression. We then track the global political and economic frameworks within which the rubric of human rights emerged, not from the 17th century French intellectuals, but from the 1940s meetings at Bretton Woods, the United Nations, and the eventual formation of the World Bank, the IMF, and the Bandung project of postcolonial national-building these spawned. This history poses questions about the possibilities for extra-national instruments (like those deployed in the United Nations) to account for and address situated, local problems of politics, religion, and representation. Do the language and instruments of international human rights offer disempowered religious and cultural groups critical legitimization in the context of a contested democracy, or do they undermine the possibilities for democratic formations by effacing the local, religious character and needs of practicing members of these groups?

Hindus Beyond the Hindu Kush: Indian Moneylenders in Early Modern Central Asia

Scott Levi
University of Wisconsin - Madison

This paper will discuss the commercial activities of the Indian merchant Diaspora in Central Asia, existent from the mid sixteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. These multi-ethnic communities were dispersed throughout the region and were generally comprised of agents from a number of family firms, largely centered in Multan, the early modern financial capital of northwest India. Whereas they are known to have been important import-export agents responsible for bringing large quantities of Indian cotton and cotton textiles to Central Asian markets, this paper will argue that their most important function was the agents’ money lending activities, a business which they nearly monopolized in Central Asia’s urban markets as well as throughout the countryside. By functioning as a premier source of investment capital and rural credit, thousands of agents of Indian family firms active constituted an element crucial to the Central Asian economy which, despite their unpopularity among the majority of Central Asia’s Muslim population, earned them a position in Central Asian society protected by successive Bukharian Khanate state administrations.

Class as Cultural Practice: Middle-Class Experience in Kathmandu

Mark Liechty
University of Illinois, Chicago

Although people in Kathmandu often speak of class in everyday discourse, there is no real consensus on how different classes, or membership in them, might be defined in objective terms. Rather than seeking to define middle class in terms of income, occupation, lifestyle, and so on, this paper examines how class is constructed in linguistic and material practice. It asks how people in Kathmandu speak and think of themselves and others as class bearers in everyday life.

People construct a sense of “middle-ness” between social others who are characterized by a variety of contrasting values and behaviors. Being middle class also
means participating in the ongoing struggle to reconcile the apparently contradictory (even oxymoronic) terms "Nepali" and "modern." Rather than a thing, the middle class is a project aimed at opening up a middle space between the urban poor and the national elite, a project that rescues a "suitable" Nepali-ness from its negative association with the "traditional" poor, and a "suitable" modernity from its association with the corrupt lifestyles of elites. The outcome is a class cultural experience unmistakably tied into global processes, yet unmistakably Nepali in its content and expression.

Reflecting on Reflex: Relations of Time, Positionality and Power in “The Field”
Kenneth Macdonald
University of Iowa

Poststructuralism has complicated the concept of ‘the field’ by challenging ‘researchers’ to reflect on the role of power relations in constituting and bounding ‘the field’ and delimiting ‘fieldwork.’ In this paper, I attempt to address that challenge and rely on personal reflections over 10 years of ‘fieldwork’ in a Karakoram mountain village — and recent self-defined crises in relationship with inhabitants of that place — to offer some thoughts on the process of constituting and bounding ‘the field,’ understandings of otherness and the politics of research, the role of identity and selfhood in constructing the field, and the role of ‘field experiences’ in constructing identity and selfhood. I focus particularly on how the shifting webs of power relations that constitute ‘the field’ through time and space continually structure a realization of self-identities and reveal them as multiple, shifting and often contradictory. Finally, I reflect on how incidents that have highlighted this realization lead to questions regarding praxis and the limitations and partiality of research yet also expose the power relations that structure those limitations as a necessary point of departure for research investigating the constitution of ‘the field.’

Lives, Stories, Poetics and ‘Authenticity’
Kathryn March
Cornell University

We produce and read life histories for many reasons: to know what other peoples’ lives are like, to understand what matters to them, to explore what personhood and life mean to them . . . In the richesse of the last twenty years’ of cross-cultural life history work, including the many outstanding words from South Asia, we have learned to understand life history as a project of ‘dual biography,’ producing, above all, a record of multiple-person interaction(s)—among original teller(s), reteller(s) and reader(s)—and not a transparent or translated first-person account. At the same time, we remain attracted by the possibility of indigenous self-conscious and poetic constructions of personal identity and experience, perhaps less altered by the ethnographic encounter. This paper explores the prospects (and limitations) for identifying, recording, interpreting translating and sharing these more apparently ‘authentic’ accounts by looking at bomsang—a Tamang genre of sung personal laments.

Re-Creating the Self in Narrative and Ritual
Ernestine McHugh
University of Rochester

The recounting of life history can be seen as a kind of narrative construction of self. In this paper, I will discuss the life of a Gurung woman from a Buddhist community who renounced her position as a householder to become a sannyasin. Her story involved a lengthy narration of loss. In it, she described the reconstruction of her life after the deaths of all the members in her immediate family, drawing heavily on Hindu mythology. Motifs in the myth speak strongly to more general South Asian constructions of personhood, which are also reflected in the Buddhist mortuary ritual typically performed by Gurungs. Here, too, a self destroyed is re-created, in that an effigy that serves as a temporary body for the spirit of the deceased is constructed and celebrated. This involves another kind of re-creation of self (as well as a willful deconstruction of it) and shows how certain metaconceptions about fragmentation and relatedness cut across religious frameworks and may be reflected more widely in South Asian understandings of the self.

Promoting Forest Improvement in Nepal: Community Forestry as Challenge to State Bureaucracies, Local Elites, and Mountain Farmers
John J. Metz
Northern Kentucky University

In response to perceptions that deforestation was causing accelerating erosion and flooding, international donors began in the late 1970s funding projects to plant new forests and to improve watershed management. The most successful project was the Nepal Australian Forestry Project. Their success was due to staff who 1) realized that local communities must benefit from plantations or they will destroy them; 2) established a working relationship with a District Forest Officer who had independently realized the need for local control and, more importantly, was willing to bend the law to give control to forest users. The success of the Australian project led donors to pressure the Nepalese government to change its forestry laws and bureaucratic
practice, giving forest users legal control over forest management. Meanwhile, by the late 1980s, research seeking to specify the deforestation and environmental degradation processes revealed that the earlier formulation was incorrect in most of its parts. Perhaps the most commonly held view today is that subsistence and social processes are so complex and locally specific that generalizations are impossible. Nevertheless, development projects have continued to invest in forestry, based on the following assumptions: 1) because geological and meterological processes overwhelm human land cover impacts, forest plantations are unnecessary; 2) improved forest management is essential to preserving biodiversity and providing subsistence farmers with essential products; 3) the key to improving management is to make local forest users managers. However, the devolution of power inherent in community forestry poses critical, though differing dilemmas for the forest bureaucracy, local elites, and ordinary forest users. This paper seeks to explore those dilemmas.

Separating the Yam from the Boulder: Statemaking and Space on the Anglo-Gorkha Frontier, 1730-1814
Bernardo A. Michael
University of Hawaii at Manoa

In 1814, the two expanding states of Gorkha (present day Nepal) and the English East India Company entered into open conflict. Studies on this Anglo-Gorkha war have often approached this event from nationalist, diplomatic and military perspectives. This study attempts to use this particular moment as a window to understand issues of space and state formation. For this reason it will explore the disputes over territory and revenue administration that occurred on the Gorkha-Champaran frontier between 1730 and 1814. Using archival materials spread over North India and Nepal, this paper seeks to understand issues of space, statemaking and illegibility that marked the historical geography of these two states. The paper concludes with the finding that precolonial fiscal divisions such as tappas and parganas need not always have been organized around neat notions of kinship or administrative convenience. Though possessing a fairly composite body, these divisions when historicized, reveal amiguities, inconsistencies, blurring, disorder and illegibility. This caused problems of spatiality and illegibility for officials of the Company state. In this sense, these events mark a prelude to the subsequent efforts of the early colonial state to reorder territory to create the state as we know it today — spatially distinct, occupying a determinate portion of the earth’s surface, and compartmentalized into non-overlapping sub-divisions.

People’s Participation in the Political Process in Nepal
Tara Niraula
Columbia University

In 1950 the 104 year long autocratic rule of the Rana family ended, and Nepal established a parliamentary type of democratic political system. King Mahendra terminated this system in 1960, and in its place introduced a non-democratic political system, generally known a “Nirdaliya Panchayati Byabastha”, under which all political parties were banned. During this palace oriented and controlled rule, basic human rights such as due legal process and the right to form political parties as well as freedom of expression were abrogated. Attempts to establish a more open democratic political system were unsuccessful until the broad-based People’s Movement of 1990, which brought together various otherwise separate groups - political, occupational, ethnic, religious, etc. The new constitution transformed the absolute monarchy into a constitutional one (with the King as the nominal head of state), fundamental rights of the people were established, and a democratic, multi-party parliamentary polity was reinstated. The political change of 1990 not only provided people with basic rights such as freedom of expression, but also provided them with the opportunity to engage in the national decision-making process.

Bruce McCoy Owens
Wheaton College

Recent transformations of the sacred urban landscape and buildings of the Kathmandu Valley have come about through international and local preservation initiatives on the one hand, and local devotional practices on the other. This paper examines World Heritage Sites and other centers of religious practice as sites of struggle where those who seek to manifest their devotion in traditional ways find themselves at odds with national and international preservation initiatives.

The Lay of the Land: Demonesses, Dakinis, and Tibetan Women in Exile
Melinda Fay Pilling
University of Chicago

In this paper, I speculate why Tibetan women have been largely ignored in U.S. Tibetan studies scholarship, and I advance a framework for theorizing Tibetan women’s roles in Tibetan nationalism. The first part of my paper consists
of a cursory discussion of published U.S. Tibetan studies scholarship on women. While a number of books have been published on the lives of various female Tibetan adepts and goddesses, very little scholarly work about Tibetan women from non-religious studies perspectives has, to date, appeared. My critique of existing U.S. Tibetan studies scholarship on women is grounded in my belief that Tibetan studies harbors immense potential as a forum for analysis of the global and local forces through which Tibetan national identity is articulated. I argue that Tibetan national-ist discourses, as situated expressions of the struggle against Chinese imperial domination, are articulated in gendered terms and so cannot be understood without considering questions of gender and power. The approach to studying Tibetan women that I advocate in the first half of my paper is tested in the second half, in which I outline a framework for the study of women and Tibetan nationalism. This framework consists of a threefold process for examining the roles of women in the nationalist project and the gendering of this project in its various articulations: 1) investigating the gendered formations and discourses of Tibetan national identity groups in religious, historical, and political sources; 2) exploring women’s roles in the construction of Tibetan identity and in resistance to imperial domination in historical sources and through interviews with Tibetan women living in exile; and 3) considering critically the relationships among women, Tibetan nationalist and religious institutions, the institutions of the countries in which Tibetans have taken refuge, and global structures of power and domination.

Transformations in Lamentation Ritual and the Internationalization of Shi’a Identity in the ‘Horse of Karbala’ Procession in Leh District, Ladakh

David Pinault
Santa Clara University

Annual processions organized by the Shi’a Muslims of Leh district honor Imam Husain’s seventh-century martyrdom at the battle site of Karbala. These processions feature Zuljenah, a horse representing that ridden at Karbala by Husain. During Muharram, Zuljenah is led riderless through the streets of Leh, while participants crowd forward to pay homage, strike themselves in the act of matam (ritual self-mortification), and recite poetry thematizing Zuljenah. In Leh district these observances are the object of criticisms linked to charges of idolatry and the public shedding of blood during the self-flagellation. Until the 1980s participation in Leh’s Horse of Karbala procession was largely Shi’a and scorned by Sunnis, the predominate sector of the Muslim minority. With the 1989 Buddhist-led ‘Social Boycott,’ however, Sunnis joined the procession in large numbers. Leh’s Sunnis perform the ritual in such a way to demonstrate pan-Islamic solidarity while modifying the ritual in a way as to distance themselves from the “heterodox” aspects of Shi’a lamentation. I also document recent attempts by Iranian proselytizers to introduce the “internationalized” version of the mourning promulgated in fatwas by Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Feminization and Marketization of Development in Nepal: The Perils and Prospects of Microcredit

Katherine Rankin
University of Toronto

This paper brings a Foucauldian “governmentality” framework to bear on the study of development, construed here as highly contested planning activity through which global economic processes articulate with local cultural-political practices and structures. It considers the multiple spatial scales of governance in development through examination of financial restructuring in the country of Nepal. The paper demonstrates how Nepalese planners’ enduring concerns about rural lending intersects in surprising (and gendered) ways with the present focus of foreign development agencies on deepening financial markets. In the resulting ‘microcredit model’ of rural finance, the onus for rural lending is devolved from commercial banks to state-and donor-subsidized ‘rural development banks’ and women borrowers become the target of an aggressive ‘self-help’ approach to development. As a mechanism of governance, the microcredit model can thus be seen to constitute social citizenship and women’s needs in a manner consistent with a neoliberal economic agenda and at the expense of a concern with social protection.

The Landscape of Identity: Transacting Indian, Assamese and Tai-Ahom in Assam

Yasmin Saikia
University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill

The connection between space and identity are inter-related processes in Assam. In the 18th c. the penetration of Brahmanic Hinduism attached the people and place of Assam to Hinduism, and following it under British rule the label Assamese was created and entrenched. The recent attempts of the Indian government to construct a homogenous body of “Indian” citizens have led many groups in Assam to question the labels — Assamese and Indian. Alternatively, the label Tai-Ahom has emerged as the identity of people living besides the Luit river (also known as Brahmaputra). Tai-Ahom is deemed as an emotional understanding linked to notions of inferiority in the Luit valley. Notwithstanding, the exchange sphere of the label Tai-Ahom has expanded to include transnational consumers,
Migration Across the Southern Border of Nepal
Mohan N. Shrestha
Bowling Green State University

Migration of people across the southern border of Nepal has been a continuous process throughout the history. In historic times, people from India moved into the present day Nepal in waves to find haven from social, religious and political prosecutions. As the population grew and agricultural land became scarce in Nepal within the last two hundred years, people started moving to the South. An open border and close social and economic ties between India and Nepal have facilitated the continuous movement of people from both sides of the border. The 1961 Indian census recorded 493,400 Nepalese working in India. Within the last thirty years, this number has increased three-fold. In the meantime, people from India also have steadily migrated into Nepal. The Nepalese census of 1961 recorded 337,600 persons as foreign-born, and 96 percent of them were from India. In 1981 there was a significant drop in the number of immigrants to Nepal, which could have been basically due to the misclassification by enumerators and/or willful distortion on the part of respondent to avoid identifying themselves asforeigners. In 1991, the total count was a little less than half a million. Among the foreign-born, more than 40 percent indicated marital relations as the reason for migrating to Nepal. Trade and commerce, agriculture and service were cited as other reasons for migration. This paper will further analyze the source and destination of these international migrants both in Nepal and in India; and will discuss some of its social and economic implications in the nations’ economy.

Minority Language Politics in North India
Selma K. Sonntag
Humboldt State University

This paper examines the relationship between the symbolic politics of language and the practical pedagogical import of minority language use in education in the context of North India. Two cases of minority language demands will be compared and contrasted: those of (1) Nepali-speakers in the Darjeeling area of West Bengal; and (2) Urdu-speakers in Uttar Pradesh. In both cases, the symbolic politics of seeking official recognition has taken precedence over minority language use in education. But the trajectory of demands and accommodation has differed between the two, with Nepali receiving state level recognition decades before receiving federal (Union level) recognition, and Urdu following the sequence in reverse, with federal recognition preceding state recognition. It will be argued that these two North Indian cases reveal much about the political context of language policy in federal liberal democracies. The administrative unit responsible for language policy (federalism), the ideological context in which the policy is justified (liberalism), and the process through which the policy is formulated (democratic) all temper the strategies adopted by linguistic minorities in India to safeguard their interests.

Legalizing Patriarchy
Seira Tamang
American University

The emphasis on the “legalization” of women’s rights in Nepal (for example the bills for equal property rights for women and limited rights to abortion currently being presented in parliament) are usually read in the context of the official rhetoric of the march to modernization and progress — the steady accumulation of rights that is leading to the erosion of the power of traditional patriarchy. In this paper I will show how a closer examination of the rights that have been accumulated by Nepali women reveals the need for a more ambiguous reading that problematizes any straightforward claim of legal discourse of progress. More specifically, the historical progression of legal rights can be seen as mapping a shift in the forms of control under which women in the political community of Nepal live. With this in mind, the strategies undertaken to further women’s rights need to be more rigorously thought through for their implications.

How Does Modern Schooling Shape Caste Practices Amongst Nepali Youth?
Karen Valentin
University of Copenhagen

Based on ethnographic material collected regularly since 1994 in an urban squatter settlement in Kathmandu, this paper addresses the relationships between the process of formal schooling and caste identity of urban Nepalese children. When talking about caste, children as well as adults often reject traditional caste values and norms. However, when it comes to the influence of caste in everyday practice, there are significant empirical differences between children and adults. Children are taught and learn the practice of caste from an early age, they know caste rules and restrictions, yet they often act and interact across traditional caste boundaries, for example in relation to commensality, and contrary to the prescribed rules to a degree which is seldom seen among the adults. The aim of this paper is to
analyze these changing caste practices in relation to children's experiences of modern schooling. Even though school enrollment rate and attendance is still relatively low in Nepal, there has been a significant increase in the number of children attending school, particularly in the urban areas, compared to their parents and grandparents generation. Not only does the school occupy an increasing amount of children's time, it also provides new opportunities for social interaction between children from different castes.

In the theoretical literature, the relation between children and caste has mostly been explained within the framework of classical socialization theories which assume that children gradually acquire and passively transmit the culture of the society in which they grow up from one generation to another. From this point of view, children will learn and internalize caste values, rules and behaviour as they grow up, but they are reduced to passive recipients of cultural values and not considered agents in social change themselves. Drawing on recent theories of children as actors in social and cultural reproduction, the aim of this paper is to throw light not only on children's own experiences and reconstructions of caste, but also on the changing role and meaning of caste in modern Nepal.

Nepalese Visa-Overstayers in Japan: Communities and Organizations for Social Survival
Keiko Yamanaka
*University of California, Berkeley*

By the mid-1990s an estimated 3,000 Nepalese had joined 300,000 other immigrants to provide Japan with a pool of unskilled, undocumented foreign workers. This study reports on the social lives, community activities and mutual support organizations of these Nepalese visa-overstayers, based on interviews, surveys and observations conducted in Nepal and Japan between 1994 and 1998. The population comprises primarily working age males of Tibeto-Burman speaking groups from western and eastern Nepal. They are willing to endure the hardships inflicted upon undocumented laborers and foreigners in jobs that are demanding and dangerous, in exchange for the relatively high wages they can earn. In their scarce free time they have established a variety of both intra- and inter-ethnic/ caste based organizations. They sponsor Buddhist and Hindu ceremonies, provide cultural and sports events, publish newsletters and magazines, collect donations for ailing and injured compatriots, contribute to Nepalese charities, and collaborate with Japanese voluntary groups to negotiate labor issues with employers. I examine the ways in which these undocumented immigrants defend, define and assert their humanity, identity and culture away from home, while enduring hard work, social isolation and the constant threat of deportation.

**NINTH INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LADAKH STUDIES**

*Leh-Ladakh (India) 25-27 August 1999*

When military clashes in Ladakh subsided towards the end of July, the local International Association for Ladakh Studies committee offered to go ahead with the Ninth Colloquium, the second IALS meeting to be held in Ladakh (the first was in 1993). Most foreign scholars who had indicated their interest in participating had not yet cancelled their travel plans, so a considerable number of local and international participants filed into the Moravian Mission School assembly hall for registration. Unfortunately but understandably there were no participants from Kargil and few from other parts of India, and a couple of papers had to be cancelled as the presenters did not make it to Leh after all. Despite the brief time for preparation, local organizers—in particular Abdul Ghani Sheikh, David Sonam Dawa, Revd Elijah Gergan, Dr Nawang Tsering, and Nawang Tsering Shakspo—had managed to make excellent arrangements for the meeting. In all, some seventy-five participants from nine countries, including Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Poland, Switzerland, the US, and UK took part in the meeting. As usual, a wide range of topics was addressed in the presentations.

**CONFERENCE DIGEST**
The inaugural ceremony, chaired by Spalzes Angmo, was graced by the presence of Diskit Angmo, Queen of Ladakh. After a word of welcome by Dr Nawang Tsering, Hon. Sec. John Bray formally released the volume of proceedings of the Eighth Colloquium held at Aarhus in 1997. Thanks to the efforts of the publisher and the carrying capacity of John Bray, a few pre-publication copies of the book reached Leh in time for the colloquium. The volume, entitled *Ladakh: Culture, History and Development between Himalaya and Karakoram* (edited by Martijn van Beek, Kristoffer Brix Bertelsen, and Poul Pedersen, Aarhus University Press 1999), is dedicated to the founder and current president of the IALS, Dr Henry Osmaston. First copies of the book were presented to the Queen and Henry Osmaston. After a vote of thanks by Revd Gergan, artists of All-India Radio, Leh, presented a colourful cultural show, while Doordarshan Kashmir broadcast a brief report on the conference and opening ceremony the next day.

After lunch, the academic programme began with a session on “Representing Ladakh in Local and Global Contexts.” John Bray presented a paper on an eighteenth-century Bhutanese Lama’s visit to Ladakh. Martijn van Beek discussed the political, economic, and rhetorical marginalisation of Ladakh and local efforts to counter these processes, while Helena Norberg-Hodge shed light on the dangers of the global economy for Ladakh. The session concluded with a lively discussion. The final session of the day dealt with “Historical places” including a paper by Tashi Dawa Tshangspa on rock carvings. In the evening, Janet Rizvi of the Institute of Ladakh Studies presented a slide show of images of old Ladakh, mostly reproductions of photographs from rare travel books. The pictures of the old bazaar, the city gates and other landmarks elicited much interest and excitement among the spectators.

The second day began with a session on “Education in Ladakh.” After Prem Singh Jina’s discussion of the history of education in Ladakh, Christian Heyde discussed the work of the early Moravians in this field, including his own great-grandfather, Revd A.W. Heyde. Gabriele Reifenberg, drawing on archival sources, also discussed the Moravian contribution to education, in particular A.H. Francke’s views on schools in Ladakh. A session on “Ritual and Performance” included interesting contributions by Spalzes Angmo on “Losar Baks in Tang-tse,” by Sonam Phuntsog on Dard culture, and by Mipham Otsal on the state of contemporary theatre in Ladakh.

The first afternoon panel dealt with gender issues in Ladakh. Tashi Cho discussed the problems of women in Ladakh, Dolma Tsering talked about the Women’s Alliance (*ama’i tshogspa*), and Sonam Dolma looked specifically at the central role of women in agriculture and its relation to sustainable development. Ravina Aggarwal offered a rich paper on the recovery of women’s voices in Ladakh, showing how these can be heard for example in songs, and Kim Gutschow discussed the education of nuns in Zangskar.

For the final afternoon session, the entire colloquium was shifted to Ladakh Serai in Ayu, where we had been invited for tea by an apparent descendant of Zorawar Singh, the Dogra general who conquered Ladakh in 1834-42. The session took place in a willow grove accompanied by steadily increasing winds and rapidly dropping temperatures. Nevertheless, the audience was treated to a discourse on philosophy by Lobzang Tsewang, who compared the theories of streams of consciousness in Vasubandhu and Freud, and Tashi Stobdan who discussed the Gyanjung Nagpo in Stok. In the evening there was another slide show, this time by Ajit Chaudhuri on the Changpa nomads.

On Friday, the day began with a series of papers on “Modes of Livelihood.” Ajit Chaudhuri presented results of surveys conducted among the Changpa, focusing on survival strategies, and Toshihiro Tsukihara offered a paper on livestock and farming systems. The session then broadened the geographical scope of the seminar with two papers on Kinnaur, by Przemyslaw Hinca on pastoralism and by Rafal Beszterda on bee-keeping. Karin Helbig discussed the need for and potential contributions of a building centre for Ladakh. The next session focused on health. Dr Tsering Norboo (physician) discussed a series of cases of high altitude cerebral oedema, and Cynthia Hunt delivered an impassioned plea for greater attention to health education in Ladakh. During the conference a poster prepared by Dr Niels Krag provided information on portable solar refrigeration systems and other solar-powered medical technologies for remote areas.

The afternoon continued this focus on contemporary issues with a session on the “Impact of Modernization and Development.” Seb Mankelow reported on his research into the effects of modern chemical fertilizers in Zangskar, and Vibha Krishen Sood presented her work on the impacts of tourism in Ladakh. Subsequently, the formal membership meeting of the IALS was held. Henry Osmaston and John Bray gave short speeches and the meeting was concluded with a vote of thanks. A final paper session included a presentation by Peter Marczell on pseudonyms of Csoma de K_rös and a speed-reading by Clare Harris of Parvez Diwan’s paper on the history of Kargil. Hans-Jürgen Trebst reviewed the controversies surrounding a gospel allegedly kept at Hemis monastery, and Thierry Dodin addressed the problems of Ladakhi language standardisation. In the evening the participants gathered for a special screening arranged by Phuntsok Ladakhi of his film “Sonam Dolma.” A delicious dinner at the Monalisa Restaurant served as a joyous end to the conference programme.

On Saturday, the organizers arranged a guided tour of
Shanti Stupa, the Mahabodhi Society's compound in Choglamsar, and the royal palace at Stok. In the afternoon, finally, the Institute of Ladakh Studies (a separate initiative without formal links to the IALS) had arranged a polo match in honour of the IALS. Henry Osmaston was guest of honour, a status marked by his casting of the ball to begin play and a chat with the players during the intermission, from which he was returned on horseback to his seat of honour.

As is customary, efforts are under way to publish most of the papers as a volume in the Recent Research on Ladakh series. John Bray and Dr Nawang Tsering will edit the proceedings and a publisher is being sought.

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