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Editorial

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It has been accepted for inclusion in Himalaya, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies by an authorized.
As we were preparing to send this issue to press, Nepal was hit by a devastating magnitude 7.8 earthquake and many powerful aftershocks. The loss of life and livelihood has been immense, and the full impact of the earthquake is only now beginning to be understood. As a community of scholars who promote engaged scholarship from and about the Himalaya, all of us have been deeply affected by this tragedy, but none more than our friends and colleagues from Nepal itself, many of whom have lost relatives and witnessed their houses crumble around them. We dedicate this issue to the victims and survivors of this natural disaster, and stand united with the citizens of Nepal in this time.

By definition, “omnibus” means that which covers many classes of things. This omnibus issue of HIMALAYA is at once eclectic and diverse. The contributions to this issue take up a range of pressing social and scholarly concerns from distinct disciplinary perspectives: political science, anthropology, history, religious studies, and more. And yet they also coalesce around the multifaceted nature of naya Nepal and the changing Indian northeast, and around questions of ethnicity, identity, and belonging.

To begin, Jagannath Adhikari and Mary Hobley report on the dynamics of migration, agricultural production, and gender in two comparative districts from Nepal’s Tarai and middle hills. Ramesh Sunam and Keshab R. Goutam ask related questions from different demographic and methodological angles—exploring the relationships between subsistence at home and wage labor abroad.

In thinking about issues of identity and social practice, Susan Heydon takes a life history perspective, with medicines as expressions of relations between people and as a way of understanding larger socio-economic shifts in and through the Khumbu. She explores the culturally, economically, and geographically contingent choices that people have made with regards to their health. Picking up on this theme of health and illness, Thea Vidnes offers an apt review of how governmental and non-governmental policies and practices around childbirth have shaped and been shaped by women’s lived experiences of birth, survival, and loss in South Asian contexts. Vidnes also offers a case study from Gurung country to help argue against what Paul Farmer has called “immodest claims of causality” and provides evidence for why the presumption that a facility-based birth is always better or safer should be rethought.

The contributions by Michael Baltutis, Pawan Kumar Sen, Bal Gopal Shrestha, and Arkotong Longkumer each consider issues of identity and belonging more from
the perspective of ethnicity and nationalism, albeit with different emphases. Baltutis explores what religious billboards during the 2005-2007 period have to tell us about what 

naya Nepal might mean, from the perspective of the monarchy, and from its detractors and critics. Sen reflects on recent public opinion surveys on the nature of the Nepali state, exploring core questions around the place of religion, secularism, and ethnic federalism in the process. In a Perspectives piece, Shrestha asks that we consider what is and is not accomplished through the use of Nepal Samvat, commonly perceived to be the Newar calendar. Finally, Longkumer uses the landscape of cultural performance in Nagaland to examine issues of representation and the construction of a national culture in northeast India.

We are also thrilled to include in this issue the evocative black-and-white photographs and poems of Wayne Amtzis—at once incisive and tender in their portrayal of life in Kathmandu. Likewise, we are pleased to offer up a “classic,” if still contested, short story in translation by the Tibetan writer Dhondrup Gyal. The arresting, delicate paintings and prints of contemporary Nepali artist Bidhata K.C. grace our cover and the image gallery.

Perhaps another way to express a unifying theme among these contributions is to point to the authors themselves. To our knowledge, this is the first issue in the journal’s history to feature a majority of scholars from the region as primary authors and contributors. As editors, we are proud of this accomplishment, as we take seriously the journal’s mandate to be not only a voice for diverse scholarship of the region but also by and for the greater Himalaya.

In closing, we would like to remind you that the Association of Nepal and Himalayan Studies has now changed its funding structure for the journal, in an effort to bring HIMALAYA closer toward long-term financial durability. As of Volume 35, receiving a print copy of the journal will not automatically come with ANHS membership. Should you wish to continue receiving a hard copy of this beautiful publication, you must select the “hard copy option” (at a cost of $25 per annum) when you renew your ANHS membership in order to cover the costs of mailing and printing. We sincerely believe that there is value in a printed, color, hard copy of each issue, but going forward, this is for each of you to decide. Donations to the journal savings fund can also be made through the ANHS membership portal, and we are grateful for any support that you can cover HIMALAYA as we work towards a sustainable future for this open access scholarly publication.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Sienna Craig and Mark Turin