

precarities and disasters; the political ecology of junipers and poplars; road building and other infrastructures of development in a geopolitically eventful period. With migration, these place-based ways of knowing travel too, creating new geographies of dislocation and belonging. Indeed, the evocative description of a Brooklyn apartment that is occupied entirely by Mustangis encapsulates the observation that “we remake geographies of dislocation into geographies of home” (p. 175).

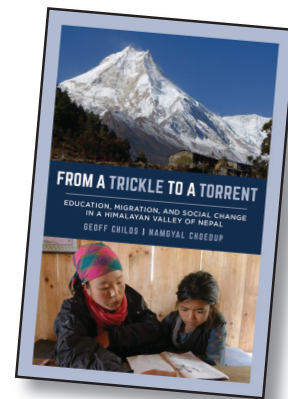
In part VI, Craig asks: “to what extent are the ends of kinship bound up with the ends of life?” (p. 197). The end of life does not equal the end of kinship but rather represents just a single cycle in the *khorma* of existence. By narrating the stories of three women in their seventies, Craig delves into the challenges Mustangi elders are facing and the ways in which they are learning to adapt within the *khora* of migration. In the wake of new mobilities, Mustangis have had to change their way of taking care of elders (e.g. via virtual networks of care such as WeChat or hiring a caretaker) but the values around caretaking have persisted. Despite geographical distance, the ethnography illustrates how Mustangis still honor their connection to and care for their elders.

The Ends of Kinship is a poignant journal of the fascinating voyage of Mustangis from the Forbidden Kingdom in the high Himalaya, via the dusty streets of the Kathmandu valley, to the cosmopolitan boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens in NYC. It is a treasure for the Mustangi community and an excellent resource for both Himalayan scholars and scholars of the Himalaya. It is an important book for those interested in contemporary Nepal, Tibet, South Asia, and North America as well as in translocality,

belonging, and identity in the context of migration in cognate fields of anthropology, geography, and development studies.

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Phurwa D. Gurung, born and raised in Dho-Tarap, Dolpo, is a doctoral student in the Department of Geography at the University of Colorado Boulder working with Dr. Emily T. Yeh. He is broadly interested in political ecology, infrastructure studies, and more-than-human geographies. His research examines the political ecology of caterpillar fungus in Dolpo to explore the production and transformation of Himalayan landscapes at the intersections of state-building, indigeneity, and multispecies world-makings.



From a Trickle to a Torrent: Education, Migration, and Social Change in a Himalayan Valley of Nepal.

Geoff Childs and Namgyal Choedup.
Oakland: University of California Press, 2018. 248 pages. ISBN 9780520299528.

Reviewed by Rune Bolding Bennike

Despite the increasing popularity of mixed-methods research, it is rare to find studies that successfully combine original quantitative data with fine-grained ethnographic sensitivities. *From a Trickle to a Torrent* is such a study. There is a lot to learn about contemporary Himalayan life in this book.

The core focus of the book is the relationship between education, migration, and social change. Over the past two decades, the Himalayan valley of Nubri has seen a massive increase in youth outmigration. This migration is largely driven by the increasing availability of scholarships for Himalayan students sponsored by Tibetan Buddhist institutions and foreign donors. Going from a small trickle in the late 1990s (when Childs first began studying the valley) to a ravaging torrent in recent years, this outmigration is causing rapid change in village life as well as in the life of the young migrants. Labor is

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Bennike on *From a Trickle to a Torrent: Education, Migration, and Social Change in a Himalayan Valley of Nepal*

getting increasingly scarce in villages where up towards three quarters of young household members have moved out. Currently, the future location of many of these young men and women’s lives is uncertain to themselves as well as to their parents back home. In a valley currently subject to multiple, intersecting transformative processes—including a boom in the collection and sale of caterpillar fungus (*yartsa gunbu*; *dbyar rtswa dgun ‘bu*), the prospects of increasing trekking tourism, and ongoing road construction—local residents readily put forward the past two decades of educational outmigration as the most significant change to rural life.

Cutting to the heart of these processes of rural transformation, the book combines thorough demographic documentation of the magnitudes of migration with detailed ethnographic insights into family decision making and experiences with migration. In the authors’ own words, the book asks, “what is happening, why is it happening, and what is at stake (p. 5)?” Answering these questions, the book tells a nuanced story about aspirations, household management, social networks, marital norms and household succession, labor scarcity, vernacular Buddhist ethics, transforming traditions, and the contemporary village as “a flexible set of social relations” (p. 5).

The brevity of the book (175 pages excluding notes and bibliography) and its relatively narrow framing in

terms of educational migration belies the vastness of empirical material on which it draws. The research behind the book is vast and meticulous and the book provides an outstanding example of how to combine different kinds of material—archival, ethnographic, demographic—to illuminate a central process in contemporary rural transformation. This is mixed methods at its best; thoroughly focused on illuminating empirical reality, rather than methodological discussions. The book’s well-written narrative bears lucid testament to the authors’ intimate and long-term connection to the Nubri valley. Throughout the book, it is abundantly clear that people are never reduced to numbers. For every piece of aggregate information, the reader gets a fine sense of the lived lives and choices that make up the numbers.

The authors’ treatment of contemporary changes is contextualized by a historical investigation that merits attention in its own right. Combining local archival material and oral history, the book pioneers a long history of earlier migration and settlement patterns in an area where history-writing requires a considerable measure of ingenuity and hard work given the scarcity of sources and already published material. This historical work (chp. 2), along with the book’s well-grounded depiction of local, village governance (chp. 3), provides the grounds for a thick

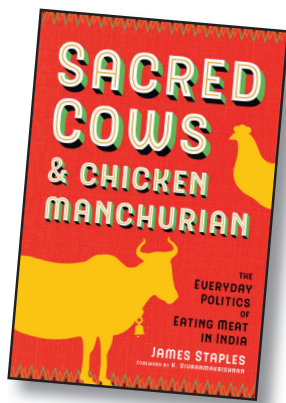
contextualization of contemporary change.

Doing all this, the book provides important insights into contemporary rural life in the Himalaya that, I believe, resonate well beyond the Nubri valley as well as the field of migration studies. The story of outmigration and its effects seems to echo—in its own tone and uniqueness—a wide range of changes taking place in rural areas across the world over the past century. In the case of Nubri, however, these changes are condensed into just one generation. Ostensibly simple observations such as “most young men and women view the prospect of pursuing an agrarian lifestyle as a reversion to something they evaded through education” (p. 170)—resonate well beyond the local context and speak back to the widespread tendency to discuss rural transformation first and foremost in terms of the continued viability of peasant livelihoods.

My only real quibble with the book is the narrowness of its conceptual framing. The book deals first and foremost with migration and its framework for analysis and reflection is drawn almost exclusively from migration studies. Occasionally, this narrow framing runs the risk of flattening the rich empirical material presented into e.g. discussions of modernization theory or progressive individualism (chp. 9). Yet, the book tells us so much more about Himalayan history, remoteness, state making, local governance, and rural

transformation than what is reflected in this framing. I truly believe the book deserves the widest possible readership and hope that its narrow framing will not distract from its wider resonances beyond Nubri and migration studies. I can easily see the book being a virtual gold mine of inspiration for students of agrarian change and rural transformation elsewhere in and beyond the Himalaya.

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Sacred Cows & Chicken Manchurian: The Everyday Politics of Eating Meat in India.

James Staples. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020. 248 pages. ISBN 9780295747873.

Reviewed by Jonathan Dickstein

Sacred Cows & Chicken Manchurian adds to the extant literature on the anthropology of food in India with a focus on beef-eating and meat-eating more broadly. James Staples problematizes the facile binaries of beef-eating/non-beef-eating, vegetarian/non-vegetarian, and pro-cow protection/anti-cow protection

to illustrate the complexity and fluidity of the real-world socio-gastronomic terrain. Staples ushers us beyond binaries and into the lives of everyday eaters whose thoughts and politics rarely fall neatly into any standardized categories.

The book draws primarily from years of ethnographic research in rural Andhra Pradesh and urban Hyderabad (Telangana), as well as Delhi, Mumbai, and elsewhere. Preferring the discursive space between violent Hindu cow vigilantism on the one hand and staunch pro-beef Dalit activism on the other, Staples engages the “large and amorphous group” (p. 19) unaffiliated with either pole, and whose members toggle between myriad—at times seemingly contradictory—perspectives and practices. Staples’ informants are everyday Hindus, Christians, and Muslims, and both caste people and Dalits.

Following D.N. Jha (2002), Staples emphasizes that contrary to popular assumptions about the antiquity of vegetarianism in ancient India, both meat- and even beef-eating were common in the Vedic period and through the first millennium CE. Yet despite the reality of beef-eating, in the Vedic period the “mother cow” was granted *some* privileged status owing to the indispensable usage of her secretions for ritual performance and everyday sustenance. The colonial period saw the Arya Samaj deploy the symbol of the cow to rally Hindu Indians against both “mother”-killing, beef-eating British colonizers, and the minority Muslim population. Post-independence India carries this legacy, marked by an ebb and flow of Hindu nationalism at the highest levels of governance, resulting in controversial insistences on legislating cow-killing and beef-eating, as well as violent clashes

between (allegedly) beef-eating and (allegedly) non-beef-eating citizens.

The terrain is certainly muddy, for while at least sixty percent of all Indians are not vegetarian, their rice-centered diets remain *predominantly* vegetarian (p. 53). Moreover, many Hindu “vegetarians” (usually men) confess to periodic surreptitious meat-eating. Staples also notes that on the production or “beef chain” side of the equation, many vegetarian Hindus profit from, or are otherwise complicit in, the selling and killing of bovines for flesh. There is rampant “willful ignorance” (p. 95) in the Indian beef chain, whether in the context of a Hindu or non-Hindu’s responsibility for bovine death when they sell and/or eat cows, or in the pervading—and oftentimes preferred—ambiguity about whether the beef one sells or buys is *āvu mānsam* (cow meat) or *eddu mānsam* (buffalo meat).

Yet why, with the greater availability, affordability, and personal safety of eating alternative animal meats, would one continue to consume beef? (p. 102) While some eaters attest to the “purity” and health benefits of beef compared to other meats (p. 67), Staples stresses how beef-consumption is still perceived as integral to one’s Muslim, Christian, or Dalit identity. In fact, “[n]ot to eat beef . . . could be interpreted as a snub, a tacit acceptance of the dominant Hindu thinking that normalized the oppression of those from Dalit castes” (p. 111). However, the gastronomic landscape in contemporary India is rapidly changing, largely due to the industrialization of chicken production. Chicken is also, rather uniquely, a taboo-less meat, a fact that neutralizes its consumption relative to beef or pork (p. 129). Hence with persisting stigmas around beef- (and pork-) eating, shrinking pastures limiting goat production,