



March 2020

Editorial

Mona Bhan
DePauw University

David Citrin
University of Washington

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya>

Recommended Citation

Bhan, Mona and Citrin, David. 2020. Editorial. *HIMALAYA* 39(2).

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya/vol39/iss2/4>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by the DigitalCommons@Macalester College at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in HIMALAYA, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact scholarpub@macalester.edu.



Editorial

We are excited to bring you Volume 39, Number 2 of *HIMALAYA*, with its emphasis on exploring religious diversity and social change in Ladakh. This special issue foregrounds the plural faith traditions and religions in Ladakh, and presents religion as a site of creativity, visuality, innovation, and social and political change. An array of academic articles, perspective pieces, and photo essays examine religion in Ladakh as a set of practices and epistemologies that are hardly insular, but rather embody decades of material and ideological encounters with the world outside. Taken together, the articles debunk the imaginaries of Ladakh as an isolated mountain frontier, and center religion to track and explore the rich regional and global connections that continue to influence Ladakh's profuse cultural and political heritage.

A focus on Ladakh's complex religious histories, as well as on the diversity and antiquity of both its Buddhist and Muslim traditions, is even more critical and timely within the context of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) recently passed in the Indian parliament. The act has spurred widespread protests across the country and transformed the relationship between religion and citizenship in India. The CAA prevents persecuted Muslims from neighboring countries of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh from seeking refuge in India, while at the same time, fast-tracking citizenship for Hindus,

Buddhists, Sikhs, and Christians. In tandem with the implementation of a nation-wide National Registry of Citizenship (NRC), Indian citizens will have to 'prove' their Indian ancestry, a move that will predominantly disadvantage Muslims, lower castes, *adivasis*, and populations from lower socio-economic classes. In September 2019, millions of Indians in the state of Assam, mostly Muslims, were stripped of their citizenship and rendered stateless. Although the long-term implications of these policies for Ladakh's Muslim and Buddhist populations remain uncertain, a slew of constitutional changes in August 2019 transformed Ladakh into a Union Territory and separated it from the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Such political maneuverings have further intensified Ladakh's regional and religious divisions.

In addition to the reorganization of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the BJP government also revoked Articles 370 and 35A that maintained the region's semi-autonomous status in India. As this issue goes to print, Kashmir suffers from an unprecedented media black-out, which has now entered its seventh month, and populations in Ladakh remain divided over the long-term implications of such unprecedented constitutional changes. For many, the revocation has triggered anxieties about Ladakh's cultural and political autonomy, while also raising concerns that Ladakh's ecology will be ravaged by external investments and worsen the impacts of climate change.

Within this fraught political context then, emphasizing the historical and aesthetic aspects of religion, and viewing religion as an important dimension of community building and belonging, as our authors show in this issue, is critical to foreground Ladakh's plurality and multiculturalism.

HIMALAYA is the result of the dedicated labor and commitment of a wonderful team of people; Jacki Betsworth and her diligent team of student aides at the Macalester College's Dewitt Wallace Library continue to amaze us with their efficient workflows and their meticulous and close reading of manuscripts. Special congratulations to Emma Wellman who is graduating this year. Our Pre-Production Editors, Emily Leischner at the University of British Columbia, and Megan Ramaiya, at the University of Washington, helped us standardize our style-guide in addition to working closely with the manuscripts, and Scott Halliday, our Managing Editor, as usual, was generous with his valuable time and wisdom.

We also welcome Mason Brown who replaces our wonderful former Editor, Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz, as our incoming Reviews and Reports Editor. Mason is a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Asian Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder, and we are delighted that he has joined the *HIMALAYA* team.

As always, please do reach out to us with any thoughts or feedback on the current issue. Additionally, we continue the search for the next editors of *HIMALAYA* and welcome your leads and referrals, so please do continue to send those our way at <@anhs-himalaya.org>.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

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

Correction

Sehnalova, Anna. 2019. Medicinal Mandala: Potency in Spatiality. *HIMALAYA* 39(1). Available at: <<https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya/vol39/iss1/15>>.

Table 6, row 2, column 5: original cell: “béken (earth, water)». The corrected table cell should instead read: «The cold and cooling water medicine».



A scene from the annual festival at Spituk monastery, Ladakh. Copyright: Elisa Read. Reproduced with permission.

(Elisa Read, 1928)

Front Outside Cover: Dancers at the Naropa festival in Ladakh.

(Stanzin Khakyab, 2016)

Photo adjusted using Prisma <<https://prisma-ai.com/>>. Copyright: Stanzin Khakyab
Reproduced with permission.

Back Outside Cover: Windows of a Namgyal Tsemo Monastery in Leh, India.

(Ashwini Chaudhary)

<https://unsplash.com/@suicide_chewbacca>, n.d. Photo on Unsplash <<https://unsplash.com/photos/QJDHrCCr0ac>>. Photo adjusted using Prisma <<https://prisma-ai.com/>>.

Front Inside Cover: Herd of goats walking beside lake near mountains.

(Simon Matzinger)

<<https://unsplash.com/@8moments>>, n.d., Photo on Unsplash <<https://unsplash.com/photos/Gpck1Wkgxlk>>. Photo adjusted using Prisma <<https://prisma-ai.com/>>.