

Editorial

Presenting six well researched and duly peer-reviewed articles, this issue explores people's everyday life in the Himalayan regions and bordering areas. Everyday life in the present context reflects life beyond mere routine or the habitual. The authors have dug deep into lifestyles that vary from region to region. It is worthwhile to focus on daily tasks, household chores and other routine activities since these routines tend to occupy a large portion of human time and energy and illuminate cultural practices and values of a given region. While the extraordinary and unusual have appeal, the minute details of everyday life of those of different cultures and time periods are equally deserving of attention.

This multi-disciplinary issue of six papers contributes to anthropological and ethnographic studies, literary analyses, educational studies and development research. Three contributions are based on field-work, one on participant observation and two on literary sources.

Based on years of field-work, Elisa Cencetti presents the life of a particular family in mTsho lho (Qinghai, People's Republic of China) whose lifestyle, due to State development policy, has undergone dramatic change. Likewise, Juha Yliniemi, as a result of field research, presents the everyday life of a family in Lingdum village in Sikkim (India), whose lifestyle he categorises as semi-urban. A micro-level study of daily life among Tibetan herders in gCan tsha thang in mTsho sngon (Qinghai) comes from Sangjie Zhaxi and Charles Kevin Stuart. Sangjie is a native of gCan tsha thang and, therefore, the paper is based on his life and experiences.

Two articles are based on literary and library research. Their main sources of data are literary works, and other written sources. Pilvi Vainonen presents daily life in the Scandinavian Alliance Mission stationed in Sikkim (India) from 1895 to 1910 while Riika Virtanen discusses the depiction of ordinary Tibetans in fiction through an examination of characters in two novels by two Tibetan contemporary writers.

The sixth paper by Päivi Ahonen, Eila Jeronen and Riitta-Liisa Korkeamäki relates to educational and development studies. Based on field-work, the paper explores the Bhutanese school children's perception of the much-discussed Gross National Happiness of Bhutan by analysing the children's paintings and drawings.

The Himalayas cover a vast land with some of the world's highest mountains, separating the Indian sub-continent from the Tibetan plateau, and spreading across India, Nepal, Bhutan, China and Pakistan. Besides its towering majestic mountains, the Himalayas is home to millions of people of diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles. As with all human societies, the daily lives of the elites and commoners have distinctive characteristics. This journal's current volume concerns the latter, rather than the former. Indians refer to Himalayans as *Pahari*, meaning hill people or highlanders. These hill people dwell in full or in part, in several states of the Indian sub-continent as well as that of the Tibetan Plateau, not to mention two Himalayan states, known as the Himalayan kingdoms. Of course, Nepal is no longer a kingdom now.

Himachal Pradesh state, with its neighbour Jammu and Kashmir state in the north, is a portal to the Himalayas from the Indian sub-continent. To the east, regions include Uttarakhand, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and the northern parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. Smaller states, including Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and

Meghalaya bordering Myanmar and Bangladesh are also situated in the Himalayan foothills. The inhabitants' ethnic backgrounds are diverse, as are their languages, cultures and religions. Religion has proved a powerful factor in shaping the people's belief system, which in turn directly impacts their lifestyle.

Apart from certain local animistic and shamanistic beliefs and practices, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Buddhism are major religious forces dominating spiritual and everyday life. Christianity is practiced by a majority of people in the easternmost states, including Nagaland and Mizoram. Islam dominates in Jammu and Kashmir state and in Pakistan's Himalayan regions. Hinduism has a stronghold in Himachal, Uttarakhand and elsewhere. Meanwhile, Tibetan Buddhism is deeply rooted in some parts of Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal and Jammu and Kashmir; and of course, Bhutan and parts of Nepal. Religious influence on people's life is evident in clothing, food and in certain cases, the languages they speak.

However, on the other side of the Himalayas (i.e., the Tibetan plateau), the entire land from east to west is inhabited by ethnic Tibetans whose religion, culture and language are more or less uniform. Since the 7th century, Buddhism influenced Tibet, but it is important to realize that Tibet also has an indigenous religion - Bon. Though the main topic in this issue of the journal appears mundane, religious beliefs and their impacts on everyday life are reflected in the contributions. For example, Vainonen provides information on missionary activities in Sikkim, and Yliniemi details ritual activities in Lingdum village. Also, Sangjie Zhaxi and Stuart provide small details of a living space and its immediate environment, such as altars, revealing information about religious beliefs.

The papers presented in this volume cover the life of commoners in Sikkim and Bhutan in the Indian sub-continent and mTsho lho and gCan tsha on the Tibetan Plateau in mTsho sngon (Qinghai). Consequently, this issue is revelatory in providing insights into the life of commoners on both sides of the Himalayas. A close reading of this issue allows for comparisons between everyday tasks and routines of inhabitants in different localities and also between the real life of people and fictional representations.

The time range of the issue is from the late 19th century to the present day, although most of the articles discuss contemporary life. The life-style of the individuals or populations (in one case fictional ones) varies. We learn about the life of pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and also persons whose life-style includes elements of both agriculture and a more urban life-style. Changes as encouraged by development and other policies that impact people's life-styles, and also in literary representations of people's life, are also evident.

Several years have passed since circulating a call for contributions in 2014 for the publication of this second issue of *Himalayan Discoveries*. We wish to thank each contributor for their patience in a long editorial process. We also thank several individuals who helped, supported and encouraged us, including those not mentioned here by name. The articles in this second issue have been peer-reviewed by at least two anonymous peer-reviewers, whom we warmly thank.

We thank Charles Kevin Stuart for his help and advice at different stages of the editorial process. We are grateful to Dr. Klaus Karttunen for always being ready to advise us whenever needed. In the initial stage of the process leading to the creation of this second issue, the encouragement received from Prof. Emeritus Hannu Riikonen was very helpful and inspiring. He pointed out the importance of starting the work with the

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second issue immediately after the appearance of the first one. The members of the governing body of the Society of Himalayan Studies in Finland were admirably patient in attending several meetings to discuss issues related to this publication. During the editorial process, the governing body of the society experienced changes. We thank old and new governing body members: Dr. Erika Sandman, Ilkka Tanner, Jean-Paul Silvan, Jaakko Takkinen, Pekka Lehtisalo, Päivi Ahonen and Anni Paltta. Special thanks are due to our Society's long-time treasurer Anni Paltta, who in addition to ably attending to the society's financial matters, has generously contributed her time to create and maintain the society's webpages making it possible to publish the journal's electronic version in the "Publications" section of the society's website.¹

In 2018, more than a decade has passed since the establishment of the Society of Himalayan Studies in Finland in 2007. These years have seen several scholarly gatherings and lecture events organized by the society. Its journal is a valuable platform for publishing and finding information about the Himalayan region and its cultures. We hope that the journal will continue to appear, and bring the readers information about the unique peoples and cultures of the Himalayan region.

—The Editors

¹ To read the first issue of *Himalayan Discoveries* in e-format, see the link: <https://shsfinland.net/julkaisut-publications/>.