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## Editorial

Mona Bhan

*DePauw University*, [monabhan@depauw.edu](mailto:monabhan@depauw.edu)

David Citrin

*University of Washington - Seattle Campus*, [dcitrin@uw.edu](mailto:dcitrin@uw.edu)

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# Editorial

We are excited to bring you issue 38.2 of *HIMALAYA*, with its emphasis on exploring the diversity of Islam across the Himalayas. This special issue foregrounds the heterogeneities among Muslim populations in the Himalayan region, as well as the complex ideological, ritual, and spiritual worlds that unite them. This volume is particularly exciting because it will likely take our readers into unfamiliar worlds, illuminating communities and lifeways that have not received adequate attention in the past. With this issue, we move a step closer towards our goal of expanding the ambit of the journal by including areas and communities that have remained marginal in dominant scholarship on the Himalayas, despite their centrality to global and regional politics. Our guest editors, Megan Adamson Sijapati and Jacqueline H. Fewkes, have curated articles from multiple disciplinary perspectives to explore the ways in which Islam shapes people's conceptions of piety and politics, and informs their ethical and moral universe. The rising Islamophobia across the globe has tended to conflate Muslimness with terrorism and religious radicalism, and perpetuated dangerous stereotypes about a complex religion. This issue foregrounds the lived histories of Islam in the Himalayan region, and is an urgent corrective to reductive conceptions of Muslims that have become ubiquitous in our public narratives.

Through a series of essays based in China, India, and Nepal, this special issue troubles the easy binaries between the local and global, political

and social, as well as religious and secular, and uses grounded ethnography to assess how Muslim communities practice their religion within fraught sociopolitical global, regional, and national contexts. This special issue invites us to (re-) consider how Muslim identities in the Himalayas are localized and place-based, but also forged continually through cross-national trade and movement. We see communities across the Himalayas challenge notions of identity that fixate on rootedness, and an articulation of complex and conjoined histories of belonging that cut-across the linearity of space and time. The essays in this volume do not assume a natural relationship between identity and territory; on the contrary, they defy such easy associations, and challenge us to consider how Himalayan regions have historically witnessed the movement of people whose itineraries of travel and trade, and relations of blood and kin, blur imposed national borders.

Our contributors discuss the historic context of how Kashmiri Muslim identities interfaced with state policies of the 19th century. Such insights further our understanding of the events that led to Kashmir's armed rebellion against the Indian state in 1989, and put in context the historic denial of Kashmiri rights in India's long war against Kashmiri civilians. In addition to focusing on key historic and political moments that shaped Muslim identities in Kashmir and beyond, the authors in this issue use ritual objects and ceremonies to understand their significance

to people's sacred worlds, while emphasizing the tenuous boundaries between the ritual and political. The perspective pieces in this special issue foreground unedited interviews from female *ulemas* in Ladakh, and from Nepali Muslim pilgrims who forge faith-based collectivities through religious travel. We also get a short glimpse into how Chinese Muslim communities forge social ties through networks of trade with Muslim communities elsewhere.

On the whole, we are delighted that our special issue editors chose *HIMALAYA* as a venue for starting this important conversation on Islam and the Muslim *Ummah*, and introduce our readers to a rich and complex tapestry of linguistic, religious, ethnic, and national differences.

This issue also features one omnibus research piece on how divination iconography travels across multiple semiotic and territorial borders, and a thick Reports and Reviews section that covers a wide variety of issues, from Thangmi phonology in northeastern Nepal to issues of governance, state formation, and ethnic minorities in Pakistan and China. We also get a glimpse into some early findings from the work of the 2017 recipient of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies Senior Fellowship Award, Jan Brunson, who, along with her colleague Suman Raj Tamrakar, is exploring the multiple meanings and interpretations of the timing of birth in Nepal. We also pay tribute to two scholars that the Himalayan studies community lost this past year, Andreas Gruschke (1960–2018) and Tsering Dhundup Gonkatsang (1951–2018).

Of course, a whole collective of people behind the scenes make this issue possible. Our deep gratitude to Jacki Betsworth and her diligent team of student interns at Macalaster College for their committed work on the journal: Rebecca Krasky, Amelia Medina Blanco, Stella Wang, and Pa Houa Xiong. Graphic designer Angie Hurlbut produced another stunning cover for the issue, and much thanks to Pre-Production Editor, Emily Leischner, at UBC for meticulous preparation of these pieces before they go to layout. Scott Halliday, the journal's Managing Editor, also helped out with copy-editing, going—as always—above and beyond. We also want to thank Doug Tiff of the University Press of New England (UPNE) and the staff at Maple Press for their dedicated service to the journal since 2013. We are sad to report to our readers that the UPNE is shutting its operations by year end, and will no longer be involved in the production and publication of the journal. Without the UPNE and the sustained contributions of its remarkable team, the journal would not have reached the levels of excellence that it has over the past five years. We want to assure you that the search for alternative publishers is on, and we have been in conversations with a few University presses over the past few months. As we all know, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain open-access publishing, and do so without incurring costs to contributors. We remain firmly committed to this ideal, and to ensuring that the journal remains open-access and freely available to our wide and growing readership across the globe.

We are happy to report that our brilliant social media team headed by Jessica Bachman at the University of Washington has made some impressive strides this past year.

*HIMALAYA* now has more than 1000 followers on Twitter, an active presence and voice on social media, and our articles were downloaded 2129 times over the past five months in locations all over the world. We aim to continue this growing interest in the journal, and deepen our commitment to working with scholars outside the global North; we need your help and guidance to do so, please do reach out to us to help further these efforts.

We thank you for your continued support of *HIMALAYA*, and look forward to receiving your submissions in the future.

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



Nicholas Roerich, *Pir Panjal*, Tempera on canvas laid on cardboard, 1925. The Nicholas Roerich Museum, New York (public domain).