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Report on the 2016 ANHS Members Meeting

Heather Hindman
president@anhs-himalaya.org

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ANHS Report

This marks my first message in our journal *HIMALAYA* as president of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies. I am honored by the confidence that the Executive Committee has placed in me and grateful for their support, as well as for the guidance of our former president Mary Cameron.

As is often the case, the Association has had triumphs and challenges in the past six months. Ongoing Nepali attempts to rebuild after the Spring 2015 earthquakes have been hampered by shortages and political protests. Despite this, Manohari Upadhyaya, the director of our Kathmandu Research Center (KRC), has continued to develop this institution and host lectures by visiting scholars. The KRC also distributed grants to eight organizations in Nepal that provide support for educational programs in earthquake devastated areas, including Hamro Pahunch (Our Access) which has been running programs on health, gender and the environment in Nepal since 2012.

In North America, Himalayan scholars have been active in hosting events to make the public more aware of post-earthquake conditions in the region. At both the Madison South Asia Conference and the American Anthropological Association meetings, ANHS organized roundtables to discuss earthquake response and the role of scholars in rebuilding efforts. Association members hosted a symposium at the University of Toronto and a summit

at Dartmouth. For many of us, such events have brought a greater sense of community with fellow scholars as well as with non-resident Nepalis and members of Himalayan diasporas in our home towns.

In February, I convened the fourth Himalayan Studies Conference at the University of Texas, Austin. Over 150 people registered for the conference, which included more than 40 panels and events, in addition to enjoying beautiful weather and sampling the Austin music scene. Many of us are already looking forward to the next HSC conference to be held in Boulder, Colorado. For me, as a new president, one of the highlights of the Austin conference was hearing from members at our open meeting. Issues discussed there included creating programs to link Himalayan scholars with researchers working in North America and Europe, and potentially offering short courses in Nepal on academic writing and publication.

Many of us who do research in the region also continue to face challenges in navigating bureaucratic hurdles, and this is something that ANHS can work to facilitate. The KRC office currently offers assistance in acquiring permits, but the Association is also working to support those seeking research visas to Nepal and streamlining the process of ethics review in country. The challenge of incorporating all areas of the Himalayas into the Association's mission and activities is

a continual challenge and we will be reaching out to scholars and institutions working in Bhutan, Tibet, Pakistan and India. This issue of *HIMALAYA* focusing on 'The Secular in Tibetan Cultural Worlds' helps to further that goal.

One of the great joys of the HSC in Austin was meeting so many graduate students working in the region. We will be working with them to create professionalization workshops and opportunities to share their research. We also welcomed a significant number of scholars from Nepal and India to Texas. We look forward to their continuing participation in the Association and future opportunities for collaboration. In talking to members at the conference, I was excited by the energy and commitment of those present. I hope that spirit continues, and I am eager to hear from members with ideas for the organization as well as offers of assistance.

Heather Hindman

President, Association of Nepal and Himalayan Studies

president@anhs-himalaya.org