

Local Effects of Global Changes in the Himalayas: Manang, Nepal

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This book presents results from cooperative research between the University of Bergen, Norway, and Tribhuvan University, Nepal, funded by the Norwegian government from 2002 to 2006. The research focused on one of the most remote parts of Nepal—Manang—tucked away against the border with China/Tibet in central Nepal. The book is divided into four parts, which illustrate the breadth of topics explored during the research program: “Productivity and Livelihood,” “Culture and Ethnicity,” “Vegetation and Forest,” and “Medicinal Plants and Ethnomedicine.”

The four chapters in the section “Productivity and Livelihood” address livelihood strategies emerging as a mix of traditional practice and the opening up of the region to trade, migration, and tourism; changes in the natural landscape, especially glaciers; and nutrition and changing diet. These papers catalogue a mix of positives and negatives typical of a society in the process of opening up to the forces of globalization. While there is nothing particularly new in the generic picture that emerges, the place-specific results provide a nice illustration of these issues. The section “Culture and Ethnicity” follows on seamlessly from the first section, providing more detail on specific aspects of how the Manang society is changing and retaining aspects of traditional cultural identity. The four chapters describe issues around cultural ecology, water, tourism, and farming.

The third section, “Vegetation and Forest,” looks at forestry issues in its two chapters: the first catalogues the diversity of plant species in forests across two study sites, some

147 taxa of flowering plants, and the second looks at rates of regeneration of the Himalayan silver fir in a subalpine forest in the upper Manang Valley. The two chapters of the final section, “Medicinal Plants and Ethnomedicine,” contain some unique documentation of medicinal plant species and traditional medicine practice in Manang—a potential gold mine for bioprospectors?

Overall, the book has something for everyone. It provides a detailed archive of natural, socioeconomic, and cultural information for one of the more remote regions of Nepal. For people with direct interests in Nepal, it brings together into a single volume a wide range of information that would otherwise be difficult to access. The book will be of interest to many readers of this journal.

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