

Notes from the Archive

Publishing primary materials related to the Nepali history in English translations was the core occupation of Mahesh Chandra Regmi's serial publication *Regmi Research Series*. The series was suspended from January 1990. Its contents are now available for download in the Digital Himalaya <http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/collections/journals/regmi/>, and in searchable formats in the Cornell University Library, <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/r/regmi/about.html>. Two state periodicals, the quarterly *Ancient Nepal*, published by the Department of Archaeology, and the annual *Abhilekh*, published by the National Archives, often contain translations of source texts on the subject. *Voice of History*, the journal of the Central Department of History, Tribhuvan University, aims at making archival materials available to researchers interested in Nepali history. The journals *Kailash*, published by the Ratna Pustak Bhandar, and *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, published by the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, did/does sometimes contain primary materials. Several periodicals and occasional publications in Limbu, Maithili, Nepali, Nepalbhasha and other languages also concern mainly with publishing archival materials in the languages. *Purnima*, the historical quarterly of Samshodhan-Mandal, leads the field by devoting a total of 142 issues (over 15,000 pages in the last 50 years) of critically edited primary texts. A few international collaborative projects have also published in print or on-line some of the primary sources they intend to preserve or engage with. *Journal of Nepal Research Centre* (JNRC), published by the German-Nepal collaboration on microfilming the manuscripts in Nepal is an example of the print dissemination. The on-going *Documenta Nepalica* venture that has been providing free online access to the results of their engagements with the documents from pre-modern Nepal (Preliminary outputs of the project are available at www.haw.uni-heidelberg.de/forschung/forschungsstellen/nepal/index.de.html) is an example of the latter.

Some of these outlets, for instance the journals *Kailash* and *JNRC*, are now defunct, and others are irregular. Many others, published in local languages, remain useful only to the specialists of specific language or society. There are therefore limited avenues for the SINHAS readers in getting the primary materials on Nepal in more accessible formats. More significantly, the access to the local repositories remains critical owing to the closed nature of the archival institutions in the country. Their peculiar nature becomes evident in part to the ways collections are deposited and listed, and in part to the design of the process of granting access to the users. The need for expanding access to archival materials from Nepal for the SINHAS readers cannot thus be overemphasized. Particularly if these texts are transliterated in Roman/Devanagari and translated in English/Nepali, and accompanied with an insightful note on their significance, they will clearly have wider appeal among the Nepal scholars. The section 'Notes from the Archive' is intended to fill this gap in Nepal Studies. By starting this section in SINHAS from volume 20, we thought we could firstly, help generate new questions and help revise old questions in the history and society of Nepal, and secondly, provide a forum for various perspectives of scholars regarding the intent, making and use of these archives. We also hope that the section will trigger conversations among the SINHAS readers that would eventually lead to more sharing of their own personal notes, primary materials and collections with others and to opening up wider avenues for continuing critical dialogue on the state of their knowledge about Nepali society and history.