EDITORIAL

The first subscription "round" ends with this issue, so we ask our readers to renew it (again for four issues to be published over the next two years), and possibly extend the circle of subscribers. Forms are included at the end of the bulletin. Unfortunately we have had to raise the fee because of increased mailing costs. But we are confident that with the present interest and support we will be able to continue to develop this publication.

To clarify our rates, it should be stressed that for international money transfers within Europe payment by Eurocheque generally involves lower banking fees for the receiver than bank transfers. Though for inland transfers this does not apply, we have, in view of the circulating editorship, opted for a uniform system.

It is our aim to cover the whole Himalayan region, but so far most contributions we have received focus on Nepal. Therefore we want to stress again that all scholars working on areas from the far western to the far eastern Himalayas are invited to send reports etc. In order to fill this gap, we plan to include a review article on recent research on the western Indian Himalaya in No. 8. Of course, all other contributions concerning any part of the Himalaya, reports, review announcements, news, are welcome as always.


Foreign students of Nepali have traditionally been less well-served by lexicographers and grammarians than learners of 'larger' South Asian languages such as Hindi or Bengali. There are a number of Nepali-English and English-Nepali pocket dictionaries, but until the appearance in 1993 of A Practical Dictionary of Modern Nepali (hereafter PDMN) the only thorough bi-lingual documentation of the Nepali lexicon was that published by Ralph L. Turner in 1931. This stupendous work of scholarship, described by Clark (1969: 257) as the 'supreme landmark in Nepali lexicography', was the forerunner to Turner's magnum opus, the Comparative Dictionary of Indo-Aryan Languages. Nonetheless, it has several disadvantages for the foreign learner of Nepali in the 1990s. First, it employs a spelling system that consistently opts for the short (krasva) vowel. Turner explained this system by stating, '[o]f late years there has been a certain tendency to write the short forms in the interior of words, the long when they are final. But there is no justification for such a practice. And since there is no distinction in pronunciation I have uniformly used the short forms' (1931: xvii). Although this had the merit of being consistent, whereas modern Nepali spelling is not always a faithful representation of pronunciation (a classic example is the word didi, 'elder sister', in which both vowels are pronounced 'long'), it was in some regards wrongheaded. For instance, the pronunciation of the first vowel in binā, 'without', is definitely short, whereas in binā, 'lute', it is long. Similarly the u in unī, 'he/she', tends to be pronounced as a short vowel, while in ā, 'woolen', it is somewhat longer, despite Turner's claims to the contrary (1931: xvii). On the basis of pronunciation, Turner dispensed with the aspirate letters ḍha and ḍha, spelled vidiyā bidyā, sātoś santok, kāpā kirpā and so on. Unfortunately, not all of these conventions, as Clark (1969: 257) was later to observe, 'commended themselves to native lexicographers', and the modern spelling system, now standardised, at least in theory, diverges strongly from Turner's in many respects. The second shortcoming of Turner's dictionary is the absence from it of the horde of neologisms and Sanskrit loans that have entered the language at every level over the past sixty-four years, partly as a result of bikās ('bloom; blooming, expanding, development' (Turner 1931: 567); 'development, progress, expansion' (PDMN: 446)). Turner seems not to have made recourse to textual sources for his vocabulary, reflecting perhaps the British perception of Nepali then as the spoken language of Gurkha