

Rituals to Make the Rain Fall on Time and Mend the Concrete Caves: Propitiating the Land as Repair and Care in Sikkim

Kalzang Dorjee Bhutia

Abstract: Since Sikkim became a part of India in 1975, the landscape of the state has been fundamentally transformed by projects that are presented as forms of “state development.” Roads have been cut into cliffs to reach even the most remote villages; huge tunnels have been dug into mountains; and rivers have dried up or stand stagnant as a bright turquoise green where they are contained by dams. These new interventions of the landscape can be interpreted as ruptures in Sikkim’s sacred landscape, and much of the powerful activism that has taken place in Sikkim has been inspired by traditional narratives from Indigenous and Buddhist worldviews that position these interventions as part of narratives of the damage, decline, and loss of Sikkim’s spiritual wellbeing. This activism has successfully halted a number of large-scale projects. However, scars and gashes in the landscape have been left behind in the form of half-built dams, tunnels that are filled with water, and large abandoned pieces of construction machinery left to rust. These forms of disturbance have taken place at a time when climate-related disasters and disruption have become part of daily life in the mountains.

Rather than posit that these changes represent a decline without hope of return, in this paper I explore how these interventions and changes can be enfolded within Sikkim’s sacred geography, as processes of prophetically-inspired remaking and reimagining of inter-dimensional relationships and conceptions of abundance. By engaging with the ritual of the *Nesol* (*Propitiation Prayer for the Sacred Landscape*), I demonstrate how this ritual provides a history and ritual communication that acknowledges the continued sacrality of the land. This vision of the land posits an alternative for how

relationships between human and more-than-human forces in the land may be rehabilitated with care, and how they may continue to provide futures as they have historically done in communities in west Sikkim.

Keywords: abundance, more-than-human relations, environmental care, Buddhist ritual, Buddhism and Indigenous cosmologies, Sikkim Himalayas.

The mountains and valleys of the eastern Himalayan state of Sikkim are considered sacred by multiple religious and ethnic communities.¹ In Indigenous² and Buddhist traditions, the mountains, caves, rivers, rocks, and forests of Sikkim's landscape are all home to deities and more-than-human forces. Buddhist communities have interwoven *terma* (Tib. *gter ma*³), or treasure traditions, and imported Buddhist rituals with Indigenous traditions to develop systems of ritual communication that allow for human communities to interact with the powerful unseen beings who reside with them in the land. These traditions have developed as part of a Buddhist prophetic history that acknowledges

¹ For more on the diversity of contemporary Sikkim, see Chettri, *Ethnicity and Democracy*.

² I acknowledge that indigeneity is a complicated category in the Himalayas, especially due to the histories of migration have taken place throughout the history of the eastern Himalayan region. Additionally, Buddhism is an imported tradition, but numerous scholars have discussed how it has interacted with indigenous Rong culture and this has led to distinctive forms of Buddhism in Sikkim. See, for example, Balikci, *Lamas, Shamans, and Ancestors: Village Religion in Sikkim*, and C. Lepcha, "Religion, Culture, and Identity: A Comparative Study of the Lepchas of Dzongu, Kalimpong, and Ilam." In this article, I position Rong and Lhopo Buddhist epistemologies as indigenous because these are communities with long histories of relatedness with the land, and also because they are recognized as such by the Government of Sikkim. Other communities are also acknowledged as such, but since my research has predominantly taken place in Rong and Lhopo communities, I have focused on these communities. Most importantly, I use the category of indigeneity because it is used by these communities and speaks to how they identify themselves. This argument is not intended to marginalize other perspectives; indeed, the purpose of this article is to think about how different religious and ethnic communities can work together to respond to environmental destruction by drawing on their ancestral knowledge.

³ Non-English terms in this article are in Classical Tibetan, Lhokay/Bhutia, Rong/Lepcha, and Nepali. Wylie transliteration is provided for Classical Tibetan terms when they first appear. Words in other languages are phoneticised according to pronunciation in west Sikkim. All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

Sikkim as a “hidden land” (Tib. *sbas yul*), replete with special properties for the practice of Buddhism, and older Indigenous Rong⁴ cosmovisions that understand Sikkim as Mayel Lyang, a paradise of earth where humans have close kinship with the land.

In the west Sikkim region, one of the most important of the Buddhist *terma* traditions is the *Nesol* (Tib. *gnas gsol* or, in English, *Propitiation Prayer for the Sacred Landscape*), a treasure text that is held to have been discovered in the Dzongri area of western Sikkim in the seventeenth century by Lhatsun Namkhai Jikme (*Lha btsun nam mkha’ ’jigs med*, 1597–1653/4).⁵ In the *Nesol*, readers encounter Guru Rinpoche (Tib. *Gu ru rin po che*), or Padmasambhava, the Tantric saint famous throughout the Himalayas, as he instructs people how to communicate with the unseen beings of the land. Anthropologist Anna Balikci-Denjongpa argued that the *Nesol* is “a celebration of Sikkim as a hidden land or *beyul* and an offering ritual to Kangchendzönga and all the deities of the land.”⁶ This celebratory and descriptive element of the ritual is important. However, the ritual also goes beyond this, and functions as a manual for ritual communication between humans and more-than-humans, the forces of Sikkim’s landscape. The *Nesol* provides warnings about the repercussions of not propitiating the land appropriately. In one section, Guru Rinpoche warns that,

People should not burn impure substances, such as meat, or commit acts of violence and pollute the environment by cutting down trees. They should not stir up or pollute the lakes or the oceans, or dig into or break the mountains and rocks. If we disturb you in these ways, we apologise and admit to doing this, and ask for protection for all sentient beings. If humans do not keep this promise, you may take their lives to punish them.⁷

⁴ Rong is the indigenous term for the Lepcha community, the first people of Sikkim. In this article, I use terms used by local communities instead of colonially imposed terms to refer to communities in western Sikkim, including Rong for the community known as Lepcha and Lhopo for Bhutia. Western Sikkim is multiethnic and multicultural, and this discussion includes materials focused on these communities.

⁵ Lha btsun nam mkha’ ’jigs med, *’Bras ljongs gnas gsol*.

⁶ Balikci, *Lamas, Shamans, and Ancestors*, 89.

⁷ Lha btsun, *’Bras ljongs gnas gsol*, 31. All translations from primary sources are the author’s own, unless otherwise noted.

This warning represents the power of local deities and the importance of reciprocity, or what anthropologist Karine Gagné has written about in her study of Ladakh as a form of ritual care.⁸ The violence of this warning does not coalesce neatly with images of Buddhism and ecology that are promoted in contemporary global discourse. Instead, it points to the realities of the importance for humans to center care and awareness of various interdimensional residents when undertaking different forms of human activity to prevent negative consequences.

The reality is that in Sikkim today there is plenty of digging, breaking, and polluting. Since Sikkim became a part of India in 1975, the landscape of the state has been fundamentally transformed by projects that have been presented as forms of “state development,” which the state justifies by arguing that such interventions will lead to progress. Roads have been cut into cliffs to reach even the most remote villages; huge tunnels have been dug into mountains thereby creating concrete caves; new lakes have appeared due to erosion and blasting; rivers stand stagnant as a bright turquoise green, contained by dams or dried up. These new interventions can be interpreted as ruptures in Sikkim’s sacred landscape. I grew up in the midst of these changes, as a Lhopo scholar trained in both traditional Buddhist monastic and English medium educational institutions. I have seen firsthand the impact of new infrastructure and participated in activist movements in support of Sikkim’s environment, spearheaded by local Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. This research is part of a broader project on Buddhism and the environment in western Sikkim. Much of the powerful activism that has taken place in western and northern Sikkim has been inspired by traditional narratives from Indigenous and Buddhist worldviews that position these interventions as part of narratives of change and intervention. At times, these are understood as narratives of damage, decline, and loss of Sikkim’s spiritual wellbeing.⁹ This activism has successfully halted a number of large-scale projects. However, scars and gashes in the landscape have been left behind in the form of half-built dams, tunnels that are filled with

⁸ Gagné, *Caring for Glaciers*, 2018.

⁹ For more on these environmental interventions, see Gergan, “Living with Earthquakes and Angry Deities at the Himalayan Borderlands”; K. Lepcha, “The Teesta Hydro Power Projects: A Historical Analysis of the Protest Movement in North Sikkim (1964–2011)”; and C.K. Lepcha, “Lepcha Water View and Climate Change in Sikkim Himalaya.”

water, and large abandoned pieces of construction machinery left to rust. As a powerful example of the consequences of this environmental intervention, in October 2023, a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) destroyed the Teesta III Dam, leading to a tremendous loss of human and nonhuman life, loss of property, and environmental damage. Many people in Sikkim have discussed how they saw this event as inevitable. Scientists had warned of the danger of GLOFs and the need to implement a warning system.¹⁰ Activists had also long said that these dams were not sustainable and warned of the consequences. One friend told me, “the river has destroyed the dam” as an ultimate example of the river’s agency and rejection of the dam. This comment was not intended to belittle the loss of human life, but instead conveyed the sadness and frustration felt by many local people who had long felt deeply concerned about the dams and other forms of environmental destruction in Sikkim, but who had not been heard.

These events were inevitable because of the way that environmental intervention in the name of development has disrupted Sikkim’s landscape and led to the displacement of the many nonhuman beings in the landscape. The more-than-human beings of the Hidden Land are understood in Buddhist conception to be *chokyong yullha zhidak* (Tib. *chos skyong yul lha gzhi bdag*) or protectors. It seems that the negative consequences that the *Nesol* warned of are taking place, as disruptions in the landscape and the displacement of the interdimensional coresidents of Sikkim are contributing to the appearance of new health problems, as well as the loss of prosperity for human communities in the form of landslides, property destruction, and crop blights. As geographer Mabel Gergan has written, the negative implications of these literal interpretations of prophecy can lead to the hardening of religious and identity boundaries, and the scapegoating of other ethnic and religious communities.¹¹

However, in this paper I want to emphasize an alternative reading of this prophecy and of associated narratives of decline, loss, and displacement. Buddhist prophetic conceptions of time are cyclical and center impermanence. Within Sikkim’s Buddhist traditions, these narratives also suggest pathways

¹⁰ One example that has been widely cited is an academic article published in 2021: Sattar et al., “Future Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) Hazard of the South Lhonak Lake, Sikkim Himalaya.”

¹¹ Gergan, “Loss and Recovery in the Himalayas. Climate-Change Anxieties and the Case of Large Cardamom in North Sikkim.”

forward and alternative futures of abundance that connect with important work in Indigenous studies elsewhere in the world, such as Candace Fujikane's discussion of Kānaka Maoli conceptions of abundance.¹² *Terma* traditions, which could be seen as only concerned with history and the past due to their focus on historical figures,¹³ are in actuality examples of what Gergan has elsewhere described as vibrant flexible forms of futurity.¹⁴ They are pathways to abundance that reject capitalist understandings of the mountains as ripe for resource extraction and exploitation, and instead center relationships between humans and the environment as powerful visions for wellbeing in the mountains.

This article interweaves methods from Buddhist studies, ethnography, and Indigenous studies to engage with Classical Tibetan-language prophetic histories, the ritual traditions of the *Nesol*, and contemporary discussions and practices among Buddhist communities in west Sikkim to consider potential pathways for approaching the scarred landscape in alternative ways. I acknowledge the continued sacrality of the landscape despite its physical transformation, and discuss how Rong and Lhopo Buddhist communities see these ritual traditions as capable of healing. This paper is not intended to normalize or valorize short-sighted destructive forms of development, or claim that these are the only visions present in west Sikkim, but instead to suggest alternatives to state-driven development, including how human relationships with the environment may be rehabilitated and repaired with care by acknowledging relations beyond the human. I undertake this exploration by focusing on three important ritual actions in the *Nesol*: purification through burned offerings, or sang (Tib. *bsang*), to acknowledge all of the residents of the Hidden Valley; oblation or *serkyim* (Tib. *gser skyem*) to the different parts of the landscape, including the fields, forests, and waterways; and inviting back abundance, or *yangkuk* (Tib. *g.yang 'gugs*), to the mountains that preside over the sacred landscape and Sikkim's ecosystems. These ritual actions all demonstrate historical understandings of human relationships with the environment and their potential for transformation, even in the face of damage. I write this article as

¹² Fujikane, *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future: Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawai'i*.

¹³ For more on the history of *Terma*, see Tulku Thondup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, and Doctor, *Tibetan Treasure Literature*.

¹⁴ Gergan, "Living with Earthquakes and Angry Deities at the Himalayan Borderlands."

a way to share this knowledge with different communities: scholars interested in Buddhist conceptions of the environment, and in the very complex and nuanced ways different Buddhist communities think about their relations to the environment, specifically in the context of Himalayan *terma* traditions. This article also speaks to ritual studies scholars, as an example of how ritual care provides alternative viewpoints and ways of knowing, and serves to bridge Indigenous and Buddhist studies. It is also for activists in the Himalayas who are inspired by these worldviews in their efforts to care for the people and land around them.

The Hidden Valley of Abundance: The *Nesol* as a Guide for Relating to Sikkim's Landscape beyond Extraction

Rather than suggest that dams and new roads are examples of corruption or tragedy, in this article I explore how these interventions can be enfolded within Sikkim's sacred geography through ritual technologies, with specific attention to the *Nesol* and how it historically represented human-environment relations in order to forge new and abundant futures. My argument here does not mean an acceptance of destructive interventions in Sikkim's landscape; it is also not my intention to contribute to the co-option of these traditions in ways that marginalize non-Buddhist perspectives, as has taken place with religious discourses in Sikkim¹⁵ and elsewhere in South Asia.¹⁶ Instead, here I am inspired by efforts in Sikkim that have already taken place to draw on Indigenous and Buddhist frameworks to understand environmental change, to rehabilitate the damage already done, and to consider alternative pathways forward. Since the early days of anti-dam activism, Rong and Buddhist frameworks have been widely circulated by activists in their work to prevent extraction. The first anti-dam movement in west Sikkim against the Rathong project drew on multiple epistemologies, with Buddhist authorities explicitly discussing how the dam would destroy the sacred landscape as homes of Indigenous and Buddhist spirits

¹⁵ Gergan, "Loss and Recovery in the Himalayas"; Chettri, "Ethnic Environmentalism in the Eastern Himalaya."

¹⁶ Longkumer, *The Greater India Experiment: Hindutva and the Northeast*; Gohain, "Himalayan Environmentalism: Buddhism and Beyond."

and deities.¹⁷ There are many other ways to see the land, circulated by Hindu, Christian, Muslim, and other Indigenous and local communities, who are themselves also not homogenous. The most effective activism that has taken place in Sikkim since the 1990s has been when different communities have bridged their epistemologies. This article provides detail from Indigenous and Buddhist communities in western Sikkim, with acknowledgement that this is just one way to go about this work.

In Buddhist traditions of sacred landscape, Sikkim is known by the Classical Tibetan epithet of the Hidden Valley of Rice, or Beyul Demojong (Tib. *sbas yul 'bras mo ljongs*). The Hidden Valley refers to a Tibetan Buddhist prophetic tradition attributed to Guru Rinpoche whereby certain places were seen as safe havens for Buddhists in times of need.¹⁸ Sikkim was such a place, and Tibetan-language guidebooks to the sacred landscape (Tib. *gnas yig*) emphasized the excellent conditions of the land and water, along with the spiritual properties that made it a desirable place for migrants to settle due to political upheaval on the Tibetan plateau.¹⁹ The Hidden Valley of Rice was excellent for rice cultivation, and was considered a place of abundance and prosperity. For this reason, I choose to translate Beyul Demojong as the Hidden Valley of Abundance. This concept of prosperity or abundance is found in Tibetan and other Himalayan languages, including Lhokay, in the term *yang* (Tib. *g.yang*), and also in other guidebooks as “increase” (Tib. *rgyas pa*).²⁰ These ritual texts and guidebooks use this language to reflect conceptions of abundance in association with these sites. I will argue that this abundance is generated and restored upon depletion by continued ritual communication and care.

In her exploration into Kānaka Maoli “abundant cartographies,” Candace Fujikane argued for the importance of envisioning futures beyond capitalist extraction by centering Kānaka Maoli concepts of abundance, and more specifically of *ea*, an “emergence,” or “rising of the people to protect the ‘āina [land]

¹⁷ For more on Buddhist discourses in the Rathong project activism, see Balikci, *Lamas, Shamans, and Ancestors*, 234–39. Rong frameworks have been discussed extensively in scholarship; see Gergan, “Disastrous Hydropower, Uneven Regional Development, and Decolonisation in India’s Eastern Himalayan Borderlands,” for a helpful overview.

¹⁸ For a helpful overview of the spiritual and political dimensions of the Hidden Land tradition, see Garrett, McDougal, and Samuel, eds. *Hidden Lands in Himalayan Myth and History*.

¹⁹ Balikci, *Lamas, Shamans, and Ancestors*, 87.

²⁰ Hall, “How is this Sacred Place Arrayed?” 307.

who feeds physically, intellectually, and spiritually.”²¹ She writes that,

The struggle for a planetary future calls for a profound epistemological shift. Indigenous ancestral knowledges are now providing a foundation for our work against climate change, one based on what I refer to as Indigenous economies of abundance—as opposed to capitalist economies of scarcity. Rather than seeing climate change as apocalyptic, we can see that climate change is bringing about the demise of capital, making way for Indigenous lifeways that center familial relationships with the earth and elemental forms. Kānaka Maoli are restoring the worlds where their attunement to climatic change and their capacity for kilo adaptation, regeneration, and transformation will enable them to survive what capital cannot.²²

These visions of the potential for adaptation and regeneration are predicated on a rejection of colonial discourses about the inevitability of decline and loss. Potawatomi philosopher Kyle Whyte has cautioned against the ways that discourses of climate and environmental “crisis” limit potential alternative ways to cultivate relationships between humans and their environments. This is because framing the impacts of climate change and other forms of environmental challenge as a crisis justifies colonial intervention by pushing a narrative of urgency. This narrative ignores older, layered relationships and “epistemologies of coordination.”²³ These epistemologies of coordination refer to worldviews that foreground kinship between humans and nonhumans, and Whyte argues that they can allow for alternative visions of interspecies justice and models of care to develop. In this article, the *Nesol* ritual outlines an epistemology of coordination as it acknowledges all of the different types of beings present in Sikkim as well as the importance of reciprocal cooperation and awareness for all of those beings to survive. This survival is crucial to consider in the contexts of climate change and the Anthropocene in the mountains. Anthropologist of the Himalayas Pasang Yangjee Sherpa has discussed the significance of including multiple knowledge systems and worldviews in climate change adaptation and response.²⁴ The *Nesol*

²¹ Fujikane, *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future*, 10.

²² Fujikane, *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future*, 3.

²³ Whyte, “Against Crisis Epistemology.”

²⁴ Sherpa, “Nepal’s Climate-Change Cultural World.”

and the multi-layered Indigenous and Buddhist perspectives and practices in west Sikkim are a vivid example of these knowledge systems and worldviews that have historically provided local communities with guidance on how to act, and continue to do so.

Propitiating the Valley of Abundance: Introducing the *Nesol*

The history of the *Nesol* is tied to the history of Sikkim's landscape. The ritual is part of the broader ritual corpus of the *Rigdzin Srokdrup* (Tib. *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub* or *The Gathering of the Vidyadaras*). This corpus is attributed to Guru Rinpoche, who is held to have hidden it in the landscapes of Sikkim to be revealed at a later time by a practitioner with appropriate karmic connections or *tendrel* (Tib. *rten 'brel*). This practitioner was the yogi Lhatsun Namkhai Jikme, who is more popularly known in Sikkim as Lhatsun Chenpo. Lhatsun Namkhai Jikme was originally from Kongpo in southern Tibet and traveled to Sikkim in the mid-seventeenth century, where he participated in the revelation of treasures and had visions (Tib. *dag snang*) that led him to enact the prophecies of Guru Rinpoche. He also set in motion the state history of Sikkim's Buddhist monarchy by helping to enthrone the first king of the Buddhist Namgyal dynasty, and also founded Pemayangtse Monastery in west Sikkim.²⁵ The *Rigdzin Srokdrup* contained many other rituals, meditative instructions, and texts related to Sikkim's sacred geography.

The *Nesol* is just one of the many rituals in the corpus, but it is important and distinctive due to its ties to the land. While other rituals in the *Rigdzin Srokdrup* are performed elsewhere in the Himalayan Buddhist cultural realm, and now around the world in diaspora communities, the *Nesol* is specifically about Sikkim. In it, Guru Rinpoche lists all of the seen and unseen beings and instructs practitioners on how to present appropriate ritual respect, or propitiation, to them. He begins by giving general burned offerings to all of the beings, and then more specifically to the gods. This burned offering acts as a purification and also as nourishment for unseen beings.²⁶ He then instructs the propiti-

²⁵ For more on the Buddhist history of Sikkim, see Khenpo Lha Tsering, *A Saga of Sikkim's Supremely Revered Four Pioneer Nyingmapa Reincarnates and Their Torchbearers*.

²⁶ See Tan, "Differentiating Smoke," on burned offerings.

ant on how to give liquid offering, or oblation, to the local dharma protectors or *choskyong yullha zhidak* (Tib. *chos skyong yul lha gzhi bdag*), as they are known in Sikkim. This is followed by an oblation to the powerful mountain deity, Pawo Hungri (Tib. *dpa' 'bo hung ri*) in west Sikkim, followed by an oblation to Pemacan (Tib. *pad ma can*), the mountain source for all of the water bodies in Sikkim, including the rivers and streams that flow from the glaciers and the waterfalls, lakes, and hot springs. He then instructs for a general oblation to be presented to the gods; and then to the *tshoman*, the deities of the lakes. This section represents a building up to Dzonga or Kanchendzonga (Tib. *gangs chen mdzod lnga*), the deity who presides over the Hidden Land. Kanchendzonga, the third highest mountain in the world, towers over the valleys of Sikkim and, as Balikci-Denjongpa has discussed, is an ancient deity whose propitiation predates Buddhism.²⁷ In the Rong worldview, the mountain is an ancestor and the mountain of origin for Rong communities.²⁸

This concludes the oblation section. After this, the ritual turns to praises (Tib. *stod*), beginning with praise to the Wish Fulfilling Jewel (Tib. *yid 'dzin nor bu*). The ritual then includes praises to all the beings of the specific places: the *sungma* (Tib. *gsung ma*) or protectors; the twelve *tenma* goddesses; and then the *tsen* (Tib. *gtsan*), the spirits of places, and the spirits of the valleys (Tib. *rong gstan*). The praises are directed down through the hierarchy to the door guardians of households and the deities associated with life forces, specifically for prayer flags.²⁹ Following these praises, the *Nesol* discusses how to perform *yangkuk*, or the calling of wealth ceremony. The major *yangkuk* is directed at Dzonga as the highest guardian of the land and of the five treasures. The *Nesol* ends with a feast offering (Tib. *tshogs*) to feed all of the beings above.³⁰

In the sections above, the seen and unseen deities, nāgas, and demons (Tib. *Lha lu bdud*) of different parts of the landscape—including the mountains, hills, cliffs, rivers, lakes, swamps, trees, and valleys—are all recognized. The performance of the *Nesol* is seen as an opportunity to reenact and revitalize an

²⁷ Balikci-Denjongpa, “Kangchendzönga: Secular and Buddhist Perceptions of the Mountain Deity of Sikkim among the Lhopos.”

²⁸ Lepcha, “Religion, Culture, and Identity.”

²⁹ There are two types of prayer flags: *lungta* are horizontal and *tarchod* are large and vertical.

³⁰ This is an overview of the *Nesol* that I have summarised from studying the 1999 version of the text, published as *Lha btsun nam mkha' 'jigs med*, ‘*Bras ljongs gnas gsol*’.

agreement made between Guru Rinpoche and all the powerful beings of Sikkim in the eighth century when they became protector deities. Though this agreement is often rendered as the binding under oath (Tib. *bdul 'ba*) or subduing³¹ of these deities, and there are violent narratives associated with some of these events, interpretations of such accounts are often simplistic. It is important to note that in the *Nesol* there is great care to acknowledge the agency of the many beings in Sikkim, which would instead suggest a negotiated relatedness between Guru Rinpoche and his later representatives, in the forms of subsequent Buddhist practitioners and the beings of the land who predate Buddhism.

The *Nesol* is quite insistent that this ritual should be undertaken on time at specific points in the ritual calendar. The most well-known of these performances is Pang Lhabsol, which happens during the twelfth and fifteenth days of the seventh month of the lunar calendar. Today, this ritual is performed throughout Sikkim and has become a tourist event due to its vibrant masked dances, attributed to the third king of the Namgyal dynasty, Chakdor Namgyal (Tib. *Phyag rdor rnam rgyal*, 1686–1717).³² Historically, the main ceremony was undertaken at Tsuklhakhang, the royal monastery in Gangtok, as it was seen as a crucial annual reconsolidation of the relationship between the human communities of Sikkim led by the Namgyal monarchs and the deities and spirits of the land. Smaller satellite rituals were held concurrently by monasteries throughout Sikkim, especially at Pemayangtse, the royal monastery, and its connected network throughout the Sikkim-Darjeeling region.

While Pang Lhabsol is the most well-known performance of the *Nesol*, the *Nesol* is also undertaken on many other occasions throughout the year. Monasteries and temples throughout Sikkim will perform it on the fifteenth day of each lunar month, and also during significant rituals, including weddings, funerals, and consecrations of new building projects (Tib. *rab gnas*). There are different layers to this ritual, including protection, purification, and also the feeding of the different beings of the land. The frequent performance of this ritual points to its significance for the maintenance of good relations between humans and more-than-human beings in Sikkim; it demonstrates the need to regularly acknowledge and reaffirm relationships, and to invoke and invite abundance in its different forms, including as fertile landscapes and in humans in the continuation of family lines.

³¹ Balikci, *Lamas, Shamans, and Ancestors*, 89.

³² Vandenhelsken, “The Enactment of Tribal Unity at the Periphery of India.”

Burned Offerings (*Sang*): Acknowledging all the Beings in the Valley of Abundance

What is meant here by “more-than-human”? I use this term to refer to non-human co-residents of Sikkim, and to acknowledge the wide diversity of these beings, who may include spirits and deities in corporeal and noncorporeal forms. Thinking of them as more-than-human is appropriate since many have human characteristics and may even manifest as humans, but are far more powerful in different realms. The *Nesol* contains a great amount of detail about these beings. As part of the prayer, residents who live in different parts of the landscape are invoked, from the upper echelons through to the lowest points. The initial part of the *Nesol* involves burned offerings, and the ritualist calls out:

Praise to Dzonga! Praise to the hundreds of big mountains, and thousands of lesser mountains, and to the *la lu zhidak* – to all of you I offer *sang*!³³

The upper echelons correspond with the highest altitudes of Sikkim’s landscape, and include the mountain deities, with Kanchendzonga at their pinnacle, as well as the buddhas and bodhisattvas associated with Sikkim’s prophetic histories. The middle section corresponds to the foothills of the mountains, which are populated by the spirits of the hills, as well as to the different beings associated with parts of the landscape. These include *tsen* that are often associated with trees; *lu* or reptilian deities that live in the water, including lakes, rivers, and hot springs; and other *sadag* or lords of the land. The lower section corresponds with spirits and deities that live in the valleys, and are associated with specific residences and individuals, as well as to hungry ghosts and other spirits. In classic Buddhist studies literature, these beings were often understood as corresponding to two categories: enlightened deities who are concerned with soteriological goals, and unenlightened or worldly deities who need to be cared for carefully lest they wreak vengeance on humans who are not appropriately respectful.³⁴ However, in practice, these classifications are more complicated, and different beings may be part of both classes or hold

³³ Lha btsun nam mkha’ ’jigs med, *’Bras ljongs gnas gsol*, 19.

³⁴ For more on these categorisations, see Samuels, *Civilized Shamans* and Balikci, *Lamas, Shamans, and Ancestors*.

multiple responsibilities. All of them are often referred to as *chokyong yullha zhidak* or dharma protectors. As folklorist Kikee Bhutia has pointed out in her research on north Sikkim, this means that human communities need to remain careful and aware in their daily activities which could disturb or injure any number of different types of spirits.³⁵

Part of the way humans apologize for wrongdoings or infractions is through *sang* or purification. The *Nesol* contains a number of *sang* offerings that are dedicated to the different parts of the landscape.³⁶ This *sang* involves the burning of juniper, which has been associated with purification in different Himalayan communities dating back to times before the arrival of Buddhism.³⁷ In the *Nesol*, these burned offerings function as a way to cleanse the land, and after invoking specific deities, the ritual discusses how the burned offerings work to expel and remove sickness, illness, obstacles, and purify the body, speech, and mind of all species.³⁸

While the *Nesol* discusses unseen beings and how they must be attended to, there are also beings that can be seen, and can even manifest as humans at specific times. The *Nesol* discusses nonhuman animal beings, such as cows and other domesticated animals, calling for them to “not be diseased or die.”³⁹ This application to the *Nesol* is particularly apt since in many parts of the Himalayas, including Sikkim, Buddhist traditions hold that nonhuman animals are more than they seem. At times, they are considered to be powerful protectors that must be venerated, lest they be angered or become ill, which is read as a sign of broader imbalance. As anthropologist Toni Huber has pointed out, this does not mean that they were not eaten and hunted, but it does mean that their appearance and behavior is regarded carefully.⁴⁰

We still see examples of how *sang* is used in many contexts in west Sikkim. One such example took place on a morning during the summer

³⁵ Bhutia, “I Exist Therefore You Exist, We Exist Therefore They Exist.”

³⁶ Lha btsun nam mkha’ ‘jigs med, ‘*Bras ljongs gnas gsol*, 6–30.

³⁷ Karmay, *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals, and Beliefs in Tibet*, 380–412; Bhutia, “Purifying Multispecies Relations in the Valley of Abundance.”

³⁸ Lha btsun nam mkha’ ‘jigs med, ‘*Bras ljongs gnas gsol*, 28–30.

³⁹ Lha btsun nam mkha’ ‘jigs med, ‘*Bras ljongs gnas gsol*, 149.

⁴⁰ Huber, “The Chase and the Dharma: The Legal Protection of Wild Animals in Pre-modern Tibet.”

months of 2022, when a bear was sighted on a road near my village, Sindrang, in western Sikkim. As soon as word got out that a bear had been sighted near the road, villagers burned *sang* and offered the *Nesol* prayer. I have seen this response elsewhere in west Sikkim, especially when villagers find that bears have spent the night in their kitchen gardens and left distinctive body prints in the vegetables. For local people, burning *sang* is seen as a way to apologize to the protector deity that the bear is manifesting, who they may have agitated or harmed through their human activities. It can also be seen as a thanks to the bear in instances where other domestic animals, particularly chickens, have been left to lay eggs for another day instead of being eaten.

In the last two decades, nonhuman animal incursions into human communities and conflict with humans have become more widely known. In west Sikkim, there are regular social media postings about avoiding bears which have ventured into human vegetable gardens and, when caught off-guard, have attacked humans. People also report their frustration with boars, monkeys, and civets that attack their crops. Very occasionally, spotted leopards are found in office buildings in urban settings throughout Sikkim. These incursions are becoming more frequent as human communities expand into forested areas, especially with the building of tourist accommodation. Climate change also impacts the availability of wild food on which these populations historically depended. Climate change also leads animals into higher altitudes, which is causing more conflict over resources.⁴¹

Sang is also used after boars, monkeys, and civets attack human crops. Attacks on cardamom have been a particular concern in the last decade, as cardamom is Sikkim's predominant cash-crop and has been affected by a fungal blight and a virus since the turn of the twenty-first century.⁴² Historically, civets attacked cardamom at times of drought when other food was not available, and were of special concern because, due to the dexterity of their hands, they can open growing fruit and eat it, leaving farmers with gutted harvests. Monkeys used to be found around lower rivers but, since 2015, they have climbed to higher altitudes, where they have also taken to attacking cardamom for food.

⁴¹ Jamwal, "Climate Change Exacerbates Human-Wildlife Conflict in Sikkim."

⁴² Gurung et al., "*Curvularia Eragrostidis*, A New Threat to Large Cardamom (*Amomum Subulatum* Roxb.) Causing Leaf Blight in Sikkim."

Monkeys are less discerning about the parts of the plant and will often tear up seedlings, thereby impacting entire fields. This has led to new conflicts as many farmers have already had their livelihoods badly impacted by the blight and the virus. These conflicts have even led to violence, as frustrated humans throw sticks and stones at monkeys and, in rare cases, monkeys have been killed. In these instances, farmers and villagers in the area will be especially careful to offer *sang* as a form of apology and reparation. When cardamom blight impacts the village's crops, they will warn those who engaged in violence that this violence directly contributed to the loss of abundance.

The *Nesol* also discusses other beings who are seen as *chokyong yullha zhidak*, paying special attention to these beings and the spiritual capacity that allows for humans to see them. Yetis, for example, have historically been seen as protectors of the mountains and forests and of the meditators who live in these regions. With the coming of dams and roads, older community members now frequently express their concern that yetis and other beings have been displaced and are no longer found in the forests. Instead of increased conflict, they are merely absent, either because they have been pushed out or because their homes have been destroyed or taken by humans. Reenacting the *Nesol* and offering burned offerings on a regular basis is seen as an act of recognition of these beings, as well as an act of repair. For example, before large scale construction projects, consecrations are undertaken to ask permission from the *sadag*, lords of the land, for the undertaking. In instances where there are disasters, such as destructive landslides, burned offerings are made to apologize for the wrongdoings that contributed to the disasters.⁴³ In Buddhist cosmology, disasters are not seen as natural but are intimately connected with human activity.

Oblations (*Serkyem*): Outlining the Landscape of the Valley of Abundance – The Forests, Valleys, and Waterways

These disasters demonstrate the agency of the landscape. The *Nesol* outlines the many elements of Sikkim's landscape, including the mountains, forests, valleys, and their many waterways, such as lakes, rivers, and streams that

⁴³ Bhutia K. D., "Purifying Multispecies Relations in the Valley of Abundance."

come from the glaciers of the mountains. After the burned offerings, the *Nesol* outlines liquid offerings or *serkyem* (Tib. *gser skyems*), which refers to a golden libation. This section of the text lists all of the many beings of the landscape, including the mighty hill Pawo Hungri,⁴⁴ a powerful deity, and then describes offerings to all of the lake goddesses and water beings.⁴⁵ Sikkim is famous today in tourist literature for its biodiversity, and according to Buddhist guidebooks and ritual texts, this diversity was directly due to the blessings of the many deities and spirits of the land.

It is these deities who allow humans to thrive in Sikkim. In a section of the *Nesol* that is repeated several times during the ritual, the propitiants ask the deities to:

...let the rain fall on time; let there be a good harvest; may all war, bad disease, and famine for humans and animals be warded off; then may there be long life and peace and prosperity all over the world!⁴⁶

This section is important, for it demonstrates how the *Nesol* acknowledges the interconnections between climate, human and nonhuman relations and activities, health, and abundance. Abundance here does not merely refer to financial wealth, but is broader. In the *Nesol*, abundance refers to the landscape of Sikkim, and more specifically its flora and the fertility of the land. In this section of the *Nesol*, the power of the deities is acknowledged to ensure that the circumstances for abundance remain – they are asked to generate rain and food and ward off any negative events.

Historically, oral traditions and Classical Tibetan language sources provide vivid illustrations of Sikkim's landscape. In the guidebooks or *neyig* (Tib. *gnas yig*) attributed to *tertons*, or treasure revealers, there are many descriptions outlining the many types of food. For example, the Bhutanese treasure revealer Pema Lingpa's guidebook discussed how:

There are about one hundred and fifty-five varieties of fruits with different tastes and nutritional values. [These include] a walnut that tastes like butter;

⁴⁴ Lha btsun nam mkha' 'jigs med, 'Bras ljongs gnas gsol, 46.

⁴⁵ Lha btsun nam mkha' 'jigs med, 'Bras ljongs gnas gsol, 109

⁴⁶ Lha btsun nam mkha' 'jigs med, 'Bras ljongs gnas gsol, 55–56.

a fruit known as *wallay*... and a grape with the taste of wine. There are fruits called *tingding* with the taste of meat, and *sedey*, which can be eaten as the equivalent of an entire meal; turnips, and thirty-seven other types of root vegetables are available.⁴⁷ There are twenty different varieties of garlic. Altogether, among the edible plants, there are three hundred and sixty varieties available. There are wild radishes, along with *tsolay*, *nyolay*, and grapes in the valley. In the trees, among the rocks and hanging from the cliffs there are beehives.⁴⁸

These many varieties of crops formed the basis for agricultural crops in Sikkim as well. The traditional name for these crops in Tibetan, *de*, literally refers to the “Rice” in the Valley of Rice, and rice is indeed a major staple crop and food source.

The wellbeing of crops was not just of economic concern. Instead, this abundance was connected to spiritual abundance as well. This is evidenced by the many harvest-related rituals present in west Sikkim. The most famous of these takes place during the *Nesol*. As part of the *Nesol*, Pemayangtse Monastery dispatches lamas to different parts of the sacred landscape to present offerings to Kanchendzonga and his retinue of many other unseen beings. These offerings include parts of the harvest, including rice, maize, cardamom, and vegetables.

This offering is not the only one that takes place during the year. Black cardamom is a significant cash-crop in contemporary Sikkim, but its history is much longer and oral traditions attest that Rong communities used cardamom for medicinal purposes from a very early period in the history of their land cultivation. Cardamom is planted between May and July during the rainy part of the summer, and the mist and fog of the monsoon creates the necessary humidity for cardamom to grow. It is then harvested in autumn, between September and October. At the time of harvest, a *Nesol* is undertaken in villages in western Sikkim. As part of this *Nesol* in the village of Sindrang in western Sikkim, a pile of cardamom is prepared and a sickle is placed on top of the pile for the deities to use. This action mirrors the offerings during Pang Lhabsol, when rice, carda-

⁴⁷ This term is often used in Lhokay language to refer to local avocados.

⁴⁸ Pe ma gling pa in Tshé ring, *Mkha' spyod 'bras ljongs kyi gnas yig phyogs bsdebs bzugs*, 250.

mom, and other goods are carried to base camp and offered at Men Drepung, the mountain also known as Black Kabur. In oral traditions, this mountain is said to resemble a pile of rice, or a torma ritual cake. The piling of offerings in a way that resembles the shape of the mountain is believed to create a resonance between the mountain and the offerings.

These offerings are physical manifestations of reciprocity. Humans do not, and cannot, keep all of their crop; instead, they need to return it to the mountains through ritual action, in order to ensure that in the future, the spirits of the land will ensure crops remain healthy and abundant. In contemporary Sikkim, the cardamom offerings take on a new level of concern due to the fungal blight that has plagued them since the late 1990s. The blight has been attributed to a number of different causes, but farmers and scientists agree that the blight and virus are related to the warming climate. The blight and virus have been devastating for communities throughout Sikkim who are dependent on the cash-crop for revenue.⁴⁹ Scholars have noted how local communities have developed creative methods that combine local Indigenous knowledge with science. These include transplanting new healthy seedlings from unaffected parts of the state; revolving planting locations to ensure that the soil nutrients are not decimated by overuse; and the sharing of knowledge through word of mouth and social media.⁵⁰ Ritual knowledge in the form of *Nesol* is another response to the cardamom blight and fungus, which is intended to rejuvenate and, importantly, restore the land, so it can continue to allow for all beings to thrive. When some of the experiments undertaken by local communities are successful, people often discuss how this success should be attributed to the maintenance of the *Nesol* in villages, as well as the creativity of the farmers.

Repairing and Inviting Back Abundance (*Yangkuk*): Relating to the Mountains

The success of the performance of *Nesol* is connected to outcomes: the successful growth of a new cardamom field, the warding off of a wrathful bear from a

⁴⁹ Gergan, “Loss and Recovery in the Himalayas.”

⁵⁰ Gurung et al., “Climate Smart Practices Revive Cardamom Farming in Eastern Himalayas.”

flock of village chickens, and the social harmony of local human residents in the village. All of these positive outcomes are often interpreted as manifestations of abundance, or in Classical Tibetan and Lhokay language, *yang*. *Yang* is a powerful concept throughout different parts of the Classical Tibetan-language realm of the Himalayas and refers to wealth and fertility. In Sikkim, it is maintained through ritual traditions, and specifically through the ritual of calling of abundance back (Tib. *g.yang 'gugs*). Balikci-Denjongpa has discussed how *yang* is depleted through daily activities, but especially through marriage and death, major life cycle events that lead to changes in family structures.⁵¹ In the ritual traditions of west Sikkim, Kanchendzonga is vitally connected with *yang*, as he is often seen as “an emanation of the king of the north or God of Wealth (Tib. *rGyal chen rnam thos sras*), red of colour, wearing a suit of armour, riding a snow lion and carrying precious stones, a spear, a turban-shaped hat and a banner of victory over his head symbolizing external victory over the evil forces.”⁵² In this emanation, he protects the “five storehouses” in the mountain.

These storehouses should not be understood in a simplistic way as mineral or water resources that are waiting to be extracted, despite the huge number of dams installed and planned for installation since the 1990s.⁵³ Nor are they sand to be mined on the banks of Sikkim’s rivers, despite the many tunnels that have facilitated exploratory digging into Sikkim’s mountains. According to the *Nesol*, the *yang* held by Kanchendzonga is not just physical wealth. The *Nesol* conveys the aspiration held by the person who performs it and by the sponsor of the ritual, and that their wishes will come true—whether this be a smooth journey if they are travelling, or a successful crop, or even a triumphant battle.⁵⁴ The abundance in this ritual tradition is connected to many other forms of physical and spiritual abundance and wellbeing more generally.

The *yangkuk* is part of most significant ritual traditions, but especially the *Nesol*. At the culmination of the ritual performance in both monastic and domestic settings, the ritual practitioners will join together with the main spon-

⁵¹ Balikci, *Lamas, Shamans, and Ancestors*, 265.

⁵² Balikci, *Lamas, Shamans, and Ancestors*, 89–90.

⁵³ Gergan, “Disastrous Hydropower, Uneven Regional Development, and Decolonisation in India’s Eastern Himalayan Borderlands.”

⁵⁴ Balikci, *Lamas, Shamans, and Ancestors*, 44.

sors, waving rainbow silk wands to call in favorable circumstances. These *Nesol* may be part of village-wide annual performances, or part of daily rituals in the protector rooms (Tib. *gang gsol lha khang*) in monasteries, undertaken to reaffirm relations with Kanchendzonga and the deities. The ritual acknowledges the problematic activities of humans, and requests the following:

In daily life, we [the performers] might harm, pollute, or agitate the deities.
May all kinds of impurities and pollution be purified!
Please do not send disease to human beings;
To the animals, do not send death or accidents;
To the fields, do not kill the crops and vegetation.
To we who are doing the ritual and the sponsors, do not bring illness such as
cold or cough, or quarreling,
Let the five elements be balanced!
Let them be peaceful and not agitated!⁵⁵

The concern for balancing the elements is a crucial one, as without this balance the *yangkuk* cannot be successful; in a reciprocal manner, the *yangkuk* also contributes to the conditions for elemental balance.

In contemporary Sikkim, these aspirations, conveyed through ritual, take on new poignancy due to the dramatic environmental changes that people are noticing around them. As in other parts of the Himalayas, in Sikkim the glaciers are the “lifeblood” of the land, as they provide the abundant water that fuels biodiversity and health for all the beings of the land.⁵⁶ However, they are changing. In an important and influential study, scientists Paul A. Mayekshi and Peter A. Jeschke drew on a variety of historical records dating from the beginning of the nineteenth century to trace the movement of glaciers. They found that, in general, glaciers in the Himalayan region have been in retreat since 1850.⁵⁷ A study by geographers Guru Prasad Chattopadhyaray, Dilli Ram Dahal and Anasuya Das in 2016 stated that since 1966, Rathong and Onglak-

⁵⁵ Lha btsun nam mkha' 'jigs med, 'Bras ljongs *gnas gsol*, 149–50.

⁵⁶ Gagné, “The Materiality of Ethics: Perspectives on Water and Reciprocity in a Himalayan Anthropocene,” 9.

⁵⁷ Mayewski and Jeschke, “Himalayan and Trans-Himalayan Glacier Fluctuations Since AD 1812,” 279.

tang—two major glaciers in west Sikkim that feed Churang Chhu and Prek Chhu, the headwaters of the Rangit River—had reduced in volume by more than seventy percent.⁵⁸ This ice loss can be witnessed in aesthetic changes on the mountains. Glacier recession has contributed to a variety of events and changes, including more frequent flooding and the tragic GLOF in 2023.

In order to seek balance and mutual healing, Buddhist communities have developed ritual resources to care for the glaciers. In the Sham area of Ladakh, Karin Gagné has studied the ritual of the *skin jug* being offered to the *yullha zhidak* who protects the local glacier, Kangri Soma. She wrote that this ritual is normally part of the local human wedding ceremony, except that in this instance, “[t]he community takes on the role of the bride leaving her natal home and respectfully saluting her father and mother, who are, in the verses, respectively associated with the glacier and the lake. Because they are sources of fresh water, life’s most fundamental resource, the glacier and the lake symbolise a father and a mother, who take care of their children”.⁵⁹

In the context of western Sikkim, this intimacy and respect is enacted through annual offerings of the *Nesol*. Every year during Pang Lhabsol, Pema-yangtse Monastery dispatches ritual practitioners to different sacred sites in Sikkim’s sacred habitat to perform the *Nesol*, and thereby repair relations with the different deities of the land. Perhaps the most important performance takes place at Putshokarpo, a lake adjacent to Rathong Glacier above Dzongri. Here, ritual practitioners, together with community members and patrons, offer the *Nesol* to the glacier as the center point of Sikkim’s sacred habitat. Rathong Glacier is one of Kanchendzonga’s many glaciers, but its position as the glacier that feeds the headwaters of the Rangit, one of Sikkim’s most important rivers, is significant. Rathong Glacier is literally the transmitter of the life force of the protector of Sikkim, Kanchendzonga. Putshokarpo is the most easily accessible glacial lake. To make this offering to Kanchendzonga here also includes his entire retinue and connects the whole sacred landscape. This enactment of the *Nesol* is intended to bring about repair for all of the ways humans infringe on the wellbeing of the interconnected rivers, glaciers, and mountains. Ultimately,

⁵⁸ Chattopadhyay et al., “Rapid Deglaciation on the Southeast-Facing Slopes of Kanchenjunga Under the Present State of Global Climate Change and Its Impact on the Human Health in This Part of the Sikkim Himalaya,” 75.

⁵⁹ Gagné, “The Materiality of Ethics,” 10.

this water source, along with the other glaciers, is responsible for Sikkim's abundance. In a time when they are receding, even when the *Nesol* cannot literally restore them, it functions to acknowledge their significance. Community members who climbed to Putshokarpo in 2020 and 2021 related to me how, after participating in the *Nesol* at this site, they could understand the connections between different parts of the landscape more clearly and felt inspired to be more responsible when it came to caring for the glacier and its connected waterways. Although the *Nesol* is a specifically Buddhist ritual, the veneration for the mountains transcends community division in Sikkim. The continued enactment of traditions such as *Nesol* alongside others promotes local knowledge and encourages awareness of the connections between environmental health and abundance across species and throughout landscapes.

Gathering Abundance (*tshogs*): Conclusion

Undertaking the different ritual actions in the *Nesol*—burning offerings, oblation, and inviting back abundance—cannot alone repair the physical scarring of Sikkim's mountains and the stagnancy of the rivers. But these ritual actions, along with other narratives that emphasize reciprocity and relatedness, have historically allowed people to consider how to repair and rehabilitate those landscapes, and provided visions of hope and pathways forward in the present. At the end of the *Nesol* is the *tsok* (Tib. *tshogs*) offering, in which all of the merit of the ritual is shared with all beings. When this ritual is performed, both the ritual practitioners and community sponsors understand this as reaffirming their relatedness with their mountains and the land in which they live. Such practices can encourage people to prevent further damage through life-affirming activism, collaboration, and interspecies care. My argument here is not that performing *Nesol* is a magical fix for the many environmental issues present in contemporary Sikkim. Instead, my outline of this ritual and discussions of how it is understood demonstrate how some communities in west Sikkim understand it as a framework for invoking abundance and wellbeing during times of change. These visions of abundance complement visions of abundance and wellbeing found within other Indigenous communities and in Indigenous studies scholarship around the world.

In the context of the Himalayas, these acknowledgements of the contin-

ued relevance of rituals related to care for the land highlight how the history of treasure revelation as legendary history also attends to the present and, most importantly, can be a cultural force for the future. Guru Rinpoche is said to have believed that treasure texts such as the *Nesol* needed to be reinterpreted for the times in which people found them. In the case of *sang* and other related rituals related to care, this has become especially salient, as new generations of communities—Buddhist and otherwise—in west Sikkim and other parts of the state rediscover and reinterpret them, and find new ways to live in the environment among its interconnected inhabitants and restore our rivers and remove concrete from our caves. Such viewpoints provide communities with hope and affirm the importance of Indigenous ways of knowing in response to the tragedies that are impacting communities in Sikkim, such as the GLOF in 2023. Instead of reaffirming narrow or extractive worldviews, the *Nesol* allows for periodic renewal, and thereby provides a worldview that works to rehabilitate our relations with our mountains and increase abundance based on reciprocity.

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