

Religion as an entry-point to communicating climate knowledge in the Kailash Sacred Landscape

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Introduction:

The KSL is increasingly **threatened by climate change** and associated hazards. These risks must be communicated effectively to residents.

The KSL's rich religious diversity offers different narrative explanations for weather disturbances than climate science. These models can be **harnessed** and used to **deliver climate messages** in a framework that is locally understood.

Religious context:

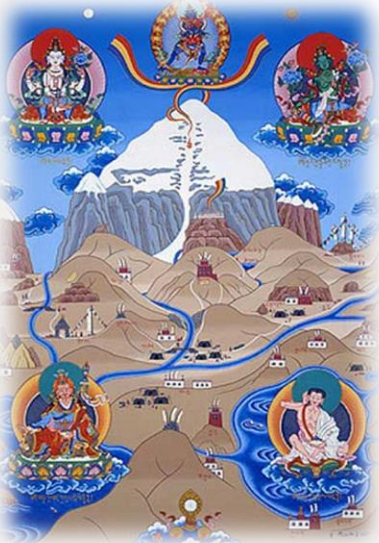
The KSL is home to a broad pantheon of territorial landscape deities. These deities play a significant role in resident's worldviews and decision-making across the landscape.

One such belief is that the moral actions of communities can help determine the weather. If social or ecological rules are violated

punishment will be inflicted on local people by wrathful deities in the form of bad weather.

Local religion understands physical pollution as a cause of spiritual pollution (*grib, sgrib*) that angers deities. In turn, deities respond with bad weather, disasters and GLOFs – in the KSL and beyond.

Such beliefs offer a potential framework in which contemporary climate change can be framed to residents, without needing to draw upon 'scientific' explanations.



Methods, Materials and Evidence:

Proposal draws on secondary research conducted at the landscape scale. Two phases of literature review:

(1) Religious Landscape

Detail on the religious landscape drawn from 32 high-quality geographical and anthropological studies: within the KSL (8) and elsewhere across the Hindu Kush Himalaya (24).

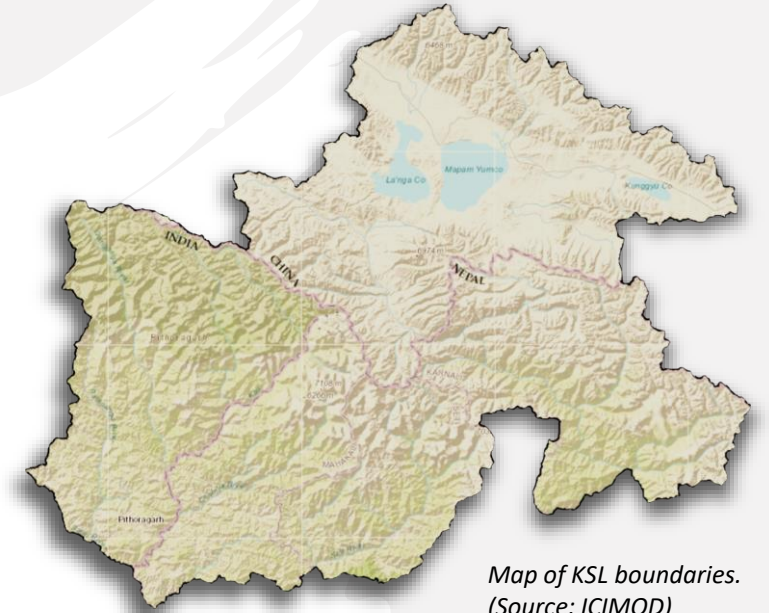
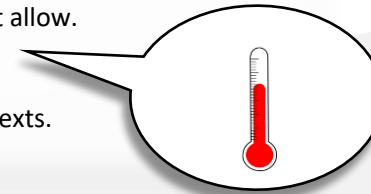
(2) Climate Communication

Review of the literature on the efficacy of climate change and [exogenous] science communication practices by outsiders to remote and indigenous communities, alongside appropriate methods of knowledge exchange. This revealed:

	Exogenous knowledge	Indigenous knowledge
Exogenous communication	Least effective	Effective
Indigenous communication	Highly effective	Slow efficacy

Proposed action:

Because climate science is not widely understood in this region (Byg and Salick, 2009), these religious narratives could be used by outsiders (academics, NGOs, policymakers) to **adapt and retell** climate messages more effectively than science communication might allow. The use of familiar narratives to dissimilate information has proven **highly effective** in indigenous contexts.



Map of KSL boundaries. (Source: ICIMOD)

Discussion and Conclusions:

The review outcome suggests that outsider parties should **deepen their knowledge** of the religious landscape of the KSL as a means to improve their climate change communication. To prompt action and understanding, climate change must be integrated into people's everyday narratives (Legano et al., 2017). I suggest that using KSL religious narratives to deliver climate messages could offer threefold benefits to:

- (1) **Disaster management**
- (2) **Improving cultural and ecological resilience**
- (3) **Mutual knowledge exchange about features of the KSL**