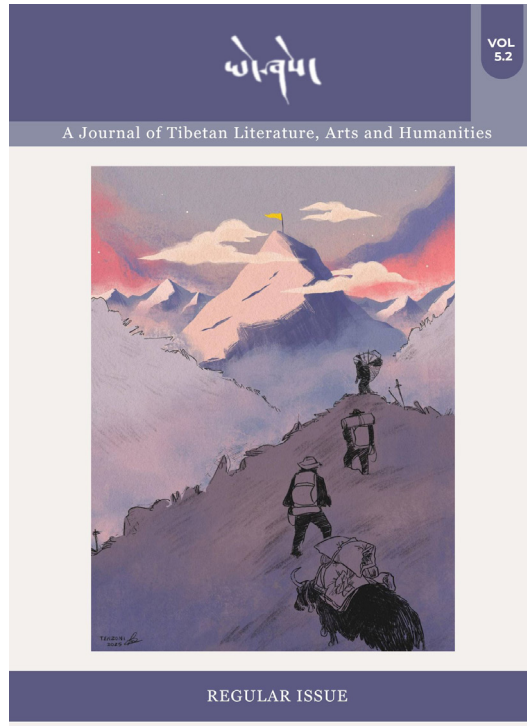


On Transition: Cover Art Statement

Nawang Tsomo Kinkar



TENZONI, *The Journey Up* (2025)

Digital Art

Courtesy of the artist

“The summit is less about conquest and more about transition,”¹ explained the Toronto-based art director and illustrator Tenzin Tsering, who is more endearingly known by the artist moniker Tenzoni.

¹ All quotes in the statement are from written correspondence between Tenzoni (Tenzin Tsering) and Nawang Tsomo Kinkar in August 2025.

In early August, I invited Tenzoni to submit an artwork for the cover of the 2025's annual issue of *Yeshe*. The young artist and I met for the first time, online, as we were both preparing for a period of uncertainty in our respective lives. Prompted by Tibetan and Buddhist worldviews on the inevitability of change and impermanence, the artist produced a digital illustration titled *The Journey Up* (2025). Upon first look, the visual focal point of Tenzoni's blue and purple-filled world of *The Journey Up* is a yellow flag. Marking the central peak of a mountain range, the flag's assumed visual significance wanes as the viewer's eyes move away from the high ranges and downward to the foreground of the scene where several individuals, as well as a yak, carrying loads of varying sizes trek up a mountain trail. When I asked the artist about this work over email, she answered, "I grew up learning about how the Sherpa people migrated from Tibet into the Khumbu region of Nepal, and so our languages, traditions, and spiritual practices are closely tied."

Like many Tibetans part of the global exiled diaspora, Tenzoni's connection to the homeland is strengthened through stories and fragmented memories shared amongst her family members and elders. She continues, "I've always felt a sense of kinship and pride learning about how Sherpas also carry forward Tibetan values of resilience, humility, and community in such a visible way. Through this work, I wanted to acknowledge our shared lineage and pay respect to their role as both mountaineers and cultural keepers of the Himalayas."

These intergenerational exchanges allow for present and future Tibetans to consider what it means to be in relation to our lands when physical access remains controlled. Therefore, *The Journey Up* also explores the notion of impermanence and transition within the context

of a rapidly altering Himalayan ecosystem. As climate disasters and mass tourism continue to shape the trajectory of many local mountain communities, Tenzoni's work reveals the region's foreboding current reality and "speaks to the fragility...of environmental stability." By doing so, the artist gestures toward the possibility of a future in which environmental stewardship of the Himalayas are governed by its Indigenous communities.

The moment of movement that is depicted in *The Journey Up* is not simply reflected by the physical journey taking place within the artwork or its association to histories of displacement. Rather the movement that hinges on transformation is charted by and through the inheritance of a story, enduring and persisting via Tenzoni's use of colour, shape, and form. It seems fitting then when the artist expressed to me: "It feels like arriving at a threshold: I've survived the climb, but the view from the top is what transforms me, offering perspective and a reminder that I'm still moving forward, even through difficulty."