

# Foreword

## by Saubhagya Pradhananga

The National Archives of Nepal, established in 1967, is the government body authorised to manage and preserve the country's archival documents. It operates according to the Archives Preservation Act of 1989, and its functions as a repository of government records are to collect and preserve manuscripts and other significant documents and to facilitate public access to them. It collaborates with both national and international organizations in pursuit of its goals, and has thereby created a network of partnerships.

The National Archives of Nepal has enjoyed a number of long-term collaborations with Germany. It successfully partnered with the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project, founded in 1970, and its successor Nepalese-German Manuscript Cataloguing Project. In 2018 the research unit Documents on the History of Religion and Law of Premodern Nepal of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities commenced a publication series entitled "Documenta Nepalica". The first and second volumes of the series, *Studies in Historical Documents from Nepal and India*, and *The Mulukī Ain of 1854: Nepal's First Legal Code* demonstrated the significance of Nepal's documentary heritage for historical and legal studies on South Asia and beyond and sparked further scholarly interest in our country's rich archival sources.

The present volume "Slavery and Unfree Labour in Nepal: Documents from the 18<sup>th</sup> to Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century", consisting of editions, translations and study of documents and related articles of the *Ain* is an important contribution to the study of the practices of slavery and unfree labour in pre-modern Nepal and its systemisation through legal codification. The National Archives of Nepal has preserved a wide range of administrative and legal documents which deal with various aspect of slavery in Nepal. I am sure that this volume will become an important publication for anyone interested in the complex and at times unique system of slavery practised in a caste-based

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society and under the umbrella of the kingship predominantly influenced by the Brahmanical legal scriptures.

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