Abbas, Amber

The Ex-centricity of the Aligarh Muslim University

The Aligarh Muslim University has been a center of education, organization and uplift for South Asia’s Muslims. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan envisioned the institution to serve this purpose, and this legacy forms the backbone of the narrative about AMU. Still, a close examination of AMU’s role in the twentieth century reveals that AMU can be seen as both a safe-haven and as an island.

The 1920 founding of the Jamia Millia Islamia on the campus of the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College presented an Indian nationalist challenge to the British loyalist tradition of Aligarh- an institution founded to prepare the scions of the North Indian Muslim elite for government service. It can be argued that the Aligarh Muslim University- founded shortly after this nationalist secession- has been at the center of twentieth century Indian Muslim politics since its very inception.

The dominant narrative about AMU upholds its centricity. I argue that an examination of the difference between Aligarh’s vaunted legacy, and its present place in Indian society shows that it functions as both a center and a margin simultaneously. AMU represents both a place where Muslims can safely express themselves educationally and culturally, and a place where they are isolated from Indian society and politics. Its political history has vexed its position as the center of Muslim opinion and left it at the center of debates about Muslim loyalty to the state. This complexity forms an important aspect of AMU’s legacy in South Asia, and provides a lens for examining the position of Indian Muslims.
Accardi, Dean

Narrating Networks of Power: 'Ali Hamadani in early histories of the Kashmiri Sultanate

Apart from the famous Rajatarangini chronicles, the Tarikh-I-Sayyed Ali and the Baharistan-I-Shahi are two of the earliest historical accounts of the pre-Mughal Kashmiri Sultanate. Unlike many other chronicles, though, these two texts do not focus on the heroic or tragic qualities and pursuits of the ruling monarch, but rather narrate the rise and fall of kings primarily through the ongoing activities and rivalries of various religious leaders of the day. More specifically, the authors of these two histories position themselves on opposite sides of two competing Sufi Orders: the decidedly Sunni Kubrawi-Hamadani Order and the Shi’a leaning Nurbakhshi Order. Despite this rivalry, the authors of these two texts both praise, honor, and attempt to claim for themselves the renowned Sufi saint ‘Ali Hamadani on behalf of their respective Sufi Orders. Through examining these two texts, I will explore the different tactics these authors deploy in their narration of the life of ‘Ali Hamadani as well as the narratives of the leaders, followers, champions and patrons of the Sufi Orders in order to own the legacy of ‘Ali Hamadani. In doing so, I hope to illustrate how these histories differently articulate royal, bureaucratic, religious and military power to establish social standing for two separate cross-sections of elites whose direct political power had largely waned, demonstrating how wider social networks and purposes are served in what may appear to be an otherwise simple sectarian rivalry.
Adluri, Vishwa

The Double Beginning of the Adiparvan or How to Read the Epic

Building on recent scholarship by Hiltebeitel, Minkowski, Oberlies, and Austin, this paper focuses on the double beginning of the Adiparvan (Mbh 1.1.1 and 1.4.1). I will show that the Mahabharata’s narrative architecture organizes the text on a philosophical and interpretive plane: the text is intentionally split at its very outset, with a hermeneutic and pedagogical apparatus in the form of the Pausyaparvan inserted between the first and second beginning that provides the reader a set of hermeneutic guidelines to reading the text.

This interpretation provides a solution to the problem of the Mahabharata’s double beginning noted by Mehta (1973) and Sukthankar (1933). In his Prolegomena to the Critical Edition, Sukthankar writes: “It would have been possible to atheitize the first three adhyāyas in order to remove this anomaly [i.e., the double beginning]” (1933, lxxxvii), but ultimately rejects this solution on textual and philological grounds, as “all the four adhyāyas are handed down in exactly the same form ... in all manuscripts of both recensions” (ibid.). Sukthankar’s hermeneutic perspective in On the Meaning of the Mahabharata (1957) which I further develop here provides additional evidence in support of his decision to retain both beginnings. Besides the evidence of the manuscript tradition, we can identify a philosophical architecture to the text that lets us see this doubling as deliberate and meaningful.

I will argue that the complex philosophical architecture of the Adiparvan transforms the meaning of the historical narrative (which some German scholars have identified with an Ur-Arisches or Ur-Indogermanisches Epos) of the Kuru dynasty into a universal hermeneutic ontology. Hence, to reject the Adiparvan as a “late book” is as trivial a statement as it is thoughtless. Indeed, Sukthankar himself noted the Adiparvan’s significance to the epic as a whole—perhaps one reason why the Adiparvan was collated from the largest number of manuscripts (of the 235 known manuscripts, the CE examined 70 either partially or fully, and of these actually utilized about 60 in preparing the text). I therefore propose reading the CE of the Adiparvan in light of Sukthankar’s posthumously published lectures on the epic (1957), which I argue present a post-CE view of the text in which the task of lower criticism defers to hermeneutic interpretation. I simultaneously defend the CE as an archetypal text as opposed to a mere “Arbeitsinstrument.”
Ahmad, Jameel

The Ghazal and its Legacy: From Nineteenth-century India to the Shores of America

This paper examines some of the issues and strategies adopted in translating the Urdu ghazal into English and its growing influence on English poetry. Inspired by Aijaz Ahmad’s translation project of the Urdu ghazals of Mirza Ghalib in the 1960s, the famous American poet Adrienne Rich began composing her own ghazals in English. Since that time, many other American poets have published original English ghazals in various collections. I survey some of those efforts in this paper, and suggest that earlier attempts at ‘English ghazals’ inspired by translation were more imagery and content-oriented, at the expense of some of the ghazal’s formal characteristics. However, after Agha Shahid Ali’s ghazal project in late twentieth-century America, the emphasis changed more to the ghazal’s formal elements (what Ali called ‘real ghazals’). In evaluating and assessing the translation and original composition of ghazals in English, I find useful the late nineteenth-century debates of Ghalib and Hali regarding the ghazal’s form and content, or qafiya paima’i and ma’ni afrini. Whereas in the colonial period Hali lamented the ghazal as outdated and irrelevant to the age, I highlight twentieth and twenty-first century adaptations of this genre to diverse American cultural milieus. I conclude by presenting some of the most recent American experiments with the ghazal, including Patricia Smith’s 2007 “Hip-Hop Ghazal.”
Ahmed, Manan

The Long Thirteenth Century of the Chachnama

Chachnama, the early thirteenth century Persian history concerning the conquest of al-Sindh by Muslim armies, is a widely considered a translation of a long-extinct Arab history. However, a close reading of the Persian text reveals it to be a complex rendering of then-dominant literary genres - tarikh (history), dastan (epic), and adab (advice) - making the easy acceptance of it being a "translation" problematic. This imaginative usage of genres, in Chachnama, not only reveals a discursively slippery text but also provides us a clue towards its survival in the locality of Sindh - in other words, it tells us why this text continued to echo down to the 20th century.

This paper will consist of examining one episode from the Chachnama as emblematic of the problem of literary and historical analysis of medieval Indo-Persian texts. In arguing for the contextual specificity of the Chachnama, I will use as evidence the ways in which this episode utilizes the historical imagination of the "Other", the literary tropes available to the Islamicate authors of the 13th century, and most crucially, the political realities of lower Sindh at the moment.

I will use this analysis to speak more broadly about the role played by the Chachnama in the colonial and nationalist histories, the dismissal of the "fantastic" and the claims to "historical truth" in the early 20th century.
Allendorf, Teri

Gender differences in local residents’ relationships with protected areas in Nepal

In this paper, we consider how gender shapes local residents’ relationships with protected areas. Some studies suggest that there are significant differences in environmental attitudes between women and men, with women having more pro-environmental attitudes. Some hypothesize that such differences are explained by underlying psychological aspects of women’s nature, such as nurturing and caring characteristics. Others hypothesize that, in developing countries especially, such differences are explained by gendered norms in environmental interactions, such as women acting as the primary fuelwood collectors. We examine differences by gender in local residents’ relationships with three different protected areas in Nepal: Bardia National Park; Kaakri Bihaar (a small district-level park); and Lumbini (a small crane sanctuary at the birthplace of Buddha). We examine differences between men and women in interactions with, knowledge of, and attitudes toward these three protected areas. Then we explore the extent to which these gendered differences are explained by other factors, such as differences in socio-economic characteristics, knowledge of protected areas, and extraction patterns.
Allison, Elizabeth

Trashing Shangri-La: The garbage problem in modernizing Bhutan

On the eve of the transition to democracy and coronation of the Fifth King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk, government leaders and policymakers called for action on the growing problem of solid waste management in Bhutan. The capital city's landfill was overflowing, and litter clogged waterways and footpaths, raising concerns that the country's image as a premier tourist destination, "the last Shangri-La," would be tarnished. Further, the solid waste problem contradicted Bhutan’s international reputation as an environmental exemplar, gained through its preservation of forest cover over more than 64% of the country, and its designation of ten national parks and protected areas which encompass one-quarter of Bhutan’s territory. Government documents attribute this successful conservation in part to the spiritual beliefs of the Bhutanese people: Tibetan Buddhism and indigenous deity beliefs are seen to exert a protective influence over the landscape.

In contrast to this holistic, culturally-embedded perception of forest and wildlife conservation, the solid waste management conundrum was viewed as problem of urban management, requiring improved policies and infrastructure. However, these technocratic fixes did not address the contextual nature of waste, which occurs at the nexus of relationships among people, institutions and their environments, shaped by cultural attitudes of purity and pollution. One factor of this nexus is rural-to-urban migration, prompted in part by frustration with wildlife crop predation, and leading to fast-growing and over-stressed urban areas. The interconnection of crop predation by wildlife and urban waste management shows the inseparability of ‘green’ issues of forest protection and biodiversity conservation, from ‘brown’ issues of urbanization and waste management.

Drawing on theoretical perspectives on pollution and waste, and Tibetan cultural perceptions of space, purity and pollution, I show how ritual and material pollution are related in traditional Tibetan concepts of space. Beyond these cultural perspectives on waste, I show how apprehension about the pending governmental transitions, and the necessity to re-assert the authority of the state contributed to state territorialization through paradoxical efforts to both manage and resist the management of the handling of solid waste. I argue that ‘green’ and ‘brown’ environmental issues, and rural and urban issues, are inseparable in Bhutan. Therefore, a holistic examination of urban waste management, rural to urban migration, and agricultural crop predation together, within the context of Bhutanese religious and spiritual perceptions, is essential to addressing the garbage problem in Bhutan.
Al-wazedi, Umme

Women and Islam in South Asia: “Selling their Stories” or “Velvet Jihad?”

The term “Velvet Jihad” was used by Professor Martin Matustik, who considered the peaceful triumph of Czechs and Slovaks over communism in 1989 as “Velvet revolution” (quoted in Faegheh Shirazi 1). To Matustik this “Velvet Revolution” was a “Velvet Jihad” and it was predominantly a nonviolent movement. I see the word velvet having two meanings—the scarf or the hijab which many Muslim women wear and the prayer mat that Muslim women use to pray at home. Muslim women throughout the centuries have participated in what I see as “Velvet Jihad.” Women like Rokeya Sakhwat Hossain who wrote an allegory Sulatana’s Dream or Nawal El Saadawi who wrote essays criticizing the Arab society in her The Hidden Face of Eve. Muslim women, especially women who are writers, have been taking part in jihads which originally means “an internal spiritual struggle, a grappling with one’s demons” and not the twisted meaning which many Islamic fundamentalists use “to convert and forcefully impose a particular brand of Islam by invoking the name of God” (Shirazi 1). I use “Velvet Jihad” to mean that there are women writers who are courageous enough to resist the oppressive rules of Islamic fundamentalism in their homes and in the state through their writing which is always nonviolent. My paper focuses on the analysis of the works of two Muslim women writers, Taslima Nasrin and Themina Durrani, whom I feel have ushered in a “Velvet Jihad” in two countries where Islam is the dominant religion, Bangladesh and Pakistan respectively. However, when they published their works they were accused of “selling their stories” to the Western audience with the purpose of degrading Islam. I will argue that these women writers are actually jihadists in a different sense. They have declared jihad against the patriarchs (or Mullahs) who feign that they are the messengers of Allah. The fundamental questions that I will pursue in my paper are: Why is it when a woman writes about the oppression of Islam (as Mullahs perceive it) she is accused of “selling her story?” Are these writers the harbingers of Islamic (?) feminism in a part of the world where feminism often means going against one’s own religion and culture and betraying one’s own community?
Ananda, Kitana

"Look and Tell": Multiple Mediations of Tamil Protest

At the end of war between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers in the spring of 2009, activists organized spectacular mass demonstrations in cities and sites of Tamil dispersion around the world. Sri Lankan Tamils, displaced and dispersed by nearly threedecades of war and political violence, were mobilized to protest war and demonstrate unity and solidarity with Tamils in Sri Lanka. Tamil activists and protesters organize, disseminate and enact their political action through several interanimating forms of media artifacts and their circulation, including radio, newspapers, photography, television, new media/social networking technologies and text messaging. This paper examines how a Tamil diaspora was mobilized in Canada at the intersection of two publicly circulating forms of mass communication: protest and digital video.

In locally-produced protest videos, aired live on Tamil-language television and edited for repeat viewings during the war, participants beseeched audiences to attend public demonstrations and "give voice" to suffering relatives in Northern Sri Lanka to bring about a permanent ceasefire. Locating these videos in an emergent genre of protest media, this paper explores how activists employed a politics of immediation to cultivate attention and care (kavanam) among Tamils. Neither wholly distanced spectator nor immediate sufferer, protesters and viewers were mobilized to imagine themselves as and in relation to those suffering in Sri Lanka. In doing so, I suggest that protest constitutes a public form that incites empathy and compassion as social technologies of belonging and action, and mediates relations among Tamils living in diaspora and displacement. The second half of this paper turns to attempts to achieve visibility and render protests politically effective in local and national English-language mass media. I demonstrate how this mediation led to intense debates over rights, belonging and citizenship, and profound disappointment among activists and protesters at the end of war.
Grains are usually kept some time in storage before being consumed, so their preservation is a matter of importance almost everywhere. Generally the popular storing methods in India is aboveground, in various kinds of movable bamboo containers, bags, baskets, wooden and tin boxes, storage pots, jars, and clay bins. However, the most intriguing of all is the underground grain storage technique i.e. khanni of the farming community in Coastal Orissa. The present research aims to put forth the ethno-archaeological approach for better understanding of the pits (storage) reported from various archaeological sites in India like; storage pits (Neolithic- Burzahom; Pre-Harappan- Banawali, Kalibangan; Harappan- Banawali; Chalcolithic- Kaothe, Navdatoli, Nevasa, Gilund); pit silos (Pre-Harappan- Banawali, Kalibangan, Harappan- Banawali, Mitathal, Daimabad, Kuntasi, Rojdi; Chalcolithic- Balathal, Inamgaon, Daimabad, Navdatoli, Mahisdhal, Kaothe, Songaon, Walki); dwelling pits (Neolithic- Burzahom, Paiyampalli; Chalcolithic- Inamgaon, Kaothe, Songaon, Nevasa, Kesarapale) and garbage pits (most of the sites). These sites belong from different ecological zones having different crop pattern.

A technique cannot be described by itself, in isolation, as specific means and methods (drying, stacking, threshing, and winnowing) are adopted to attain good quality storage. The adoption of the underground storage technique in modern times suggests continued existence of this traditional knowledge system in the area, passed through generation to generation. The local wisdom and innovative skill indicates the choice of materials, the procedure of manufacture, the quantity to be stored and its preferred location. The knowledge also directs the precautionary measures to be taken to safeguard the grain, grain loss and damage, and the maintenance to increase its life span. The environment plays a key factor in designing the suitable storage technique to be adopted. The grain stored in the khanni is exclusively for paddy and rice. The half-yearly underground storage is popularly referred as Vedi Khanni (rectangular in shape with a raised platform above the ground) and the year-round storage (circular in shape, slight platform above the ground) as Kuan Khanni. The soil type defines which type of khanni to be employed in the area. The most interesting part of the underground storage technique is that after the removal of the grains from khanni, what physical imprints of the storage process is left on the pit. It is also necessary for us to understand which are the types of grains suitable for underground storage before interpreting the function of the pit and the associated finds.
Ansari, Sarah


This paper, drawing on archival records and contemporary newspaper reports, engages with the notion of the everyday state in post-partition Pakistan by exploring the challenges involved in policing the federal capital, Karachi, in the decade that followed independence. In particular, it focuses on the intense rivalry that developed between the Karachi Police and the Special Police Establishment (set up under the Pakistan Special Police Establishment Ordinance of 1948), which eventually resulted in the ousting from his post of the British Inspector General of Police, Sir Gilbert Grace, in 1956 against a backdrop of mutual accusations of police corruption and malpractice. While the vast majority of Karachi’s non-Muslim officers had left for India by the beginning of the 1950s, a new power struggle had already emerged in the city between ‘refugee’ displaced police officers on the one hand and officers from elsewhere in what had become Pakistan on the other. In effect, this competition between the various parallel police establishments located within the city mirrored the wider manoeuvring for power and influence that was taking place as Pakistan’s newly-established services sought to accommodate the different sets of interests that had come together since 1947. Equally importantly, it also reveals a great deal about the role of the police in the everyday lives of the ordinary citizens who had made Karachi their home, demonstrating just how important social connections were for protecting or enhancing people’s interests in the context of Pakistan’s early years.
Aranha, Rima

Understanding Globalization and *Indian* Culture: College Students & Hindu Nationalism in Bangalore

Contemporary Hindu nationalism cannot be fully understood without examining the ways through which it has been able to incorporate the discourse of globalization to further its agenda, and how the Hindu Right uses a more global, international rhetoric to constantly (re)produce and (re)invent Hindutva. In recent decades, it has been the desire for recognition within an increasingly global horizon and the simultaneous anxieties of modern life that have prompted many to respond to the call of nationalist projects. Hindu nationalism taps into this desire, seeking to transform Indian public culture into a sovereign, disciplined national culture rooted in what is claimed to be a superior ancient Hindu past, and at the same time, to impose a corporatist, disciplined, and global socio-political organization upon society.

Drawing on a qualitative study of male and female college-going students in Bangalore, this paper attempts to understand the ways in which nationalism has placed itself into the dailiness of a globalizing Bangalore. It argues that the success of the Hindu Right may be attributed to the multiple ways by which it has made Hindutva “common sense,” and incorporated itself into the longstanding struggles over the meanings of culture, globalization, tradition/modernity, and public/private.
Arondekar, Anjali

Margins of Excess: Sexuality, Archives, South Asia

This paper is an effort to theorize a hermeneutics of marginality from the vantage of sexuality. I turn to feminist recuperations of the Devadasi (a compound noun, coupling “deva” or god with “dasi” or female slave; a pan-Indian term, (falsely) interchangeable as sex-worker, courtesan, prostitute), a historical figure who has become an established staple, or at least a sought after staple, of gender studies in India such that its archival recovery no longer merits much scholarly suspicion or incredulity. One of the more generative - as well as under-articulated – consequences of such efforts has been the mobilization of sexuality as the modality through which Devadasi futures and pasts can be imagined and interrogated. Devadasis, as the lost and (falsely) maligned subjects of sexuality, are recovered/rescued and recast within larger redemptive contexts of artistic and legal empowerment. Such recuperations of the Devadasi archive inevitably draw on invocations of pathos and misrecognition; Devadasis are wrenched from their over-identification (and doomed associations) with sexuality and constituted in the density of other more promising configurations and allegiances such as caste, capital or religiosities. Of critical interest is that such archival (re)turns cohere around a history of sexuality that promises a future only at the expense of its own attenuation. That is, even as the analytical costs and limits of eliding the Devadasi archive are foregrounded, its coupling with sexuality is continually displaced. This paper works within the critical compulsions described above not to seek the lost figures of Devadasis, but to attend to the dynamics of recovery and occlusion that fuel such a project. To do so, this essay shifts regional location and emphases, to focus on a vibrant Devadasi community formation in western India (principally in the states of Goa and Maharasthra): the Gomantak Maratha Samaj. If the restoration of the Devadasi archive has relied on a lost or maligned avatar of sexuality, the massive archives of the Gomantak Maratha Samaj, on the other hand, denaturalize any such presumptive understanding of the Devadasi’s customary archives, particularly under colonialism.
Help from Old Friends: Nilakantha’s Role in Evaluating the Critical Edition of the Mahabharata

Over 40 years ago, the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute completed its publication of the Critical Edition of the Mahabharata. The work of the Bhandarkar scholars revealed the existence of a basic manuscript source from which all other Indian manuscripts of the Sanskrit Mahabharata derived, presenting this basic reading in the edition’s critical text and providing manuscript variants in the accompanying apparatus and appendices. Since 1966, those who have inherited this monument of Indological scholarship have by no means been unanimous in their understanding of what this base or critical reading actually represents, and almost all major ideological and methodological debates within Mahabharata scholarship are at bottom debates over the nature of this base or critical text. The material of the CE’s apparatus and appendices has meanwhile stimulated less controversy, but perhaps for that reason, less interest. Hence while there is little question as to what this “secondary” material represents—i.e. the reception and digestion of the basic written archetype in various regions of India—Mahabharata scholarship has tended to shy away from the kinds of research questions and lines of inquiry one might expect would have proliferated once this material became available with the publication of the CE.

This paper asks whether the CE has been successful, and in my affirmative but qualified response, I identify as an important criterion the extent to which it has improved our understanding of the relationship between the basic archetype and its manifold receptions in later Sanskrit manuscript traditions. This of course is not so much a question of the CE’s success, but of the scholar’s success in recognizing the CE’s value beyond the access it grants us to a manuscript archetype through its base critical reading. Here I suggest that for the most part we have not begun to ask the kinds of questions that would direct us “forward” into the epic’s reception documented in the apparatus and appendices, and make a few observations as to why this might be the case. More importantly I suggest that Nilakantha’s Vulgate text and commentary, far from being rendered obsolete by the CE, form a crucial reference point for appreciating the value of the CE as a witness and testimony to the poem’s reception.
Ayyagari, Shalini

“Padharo Mhare Des” (Welcome to My Land): The Idea of Rajasthan as Portrayed In Filmi Set and Song

“It’s not entirely Rajasthani, but it sounds Rajasthani in terms of orchestration. The tunes, however, are very Indian.” This description of music from the Bollywood film, Paheli, was given in an interview by the film’s music director M.M. Kareem. In recent years, there have been a number of Bollywood films shot and set in Rajasthan, India, and in this paper, three films in particular, Paheli (2005), Dor (2006), and Eklavya (2007) will be analyzed in relation to their constructions of an idea of Rajasthan, as portrayed through their musical numbers. Such song sequences often take place on exterior sets, shot in the hot noonday sun, and using sweeping camera shots of the Thar Desert landscape dotted with camels on the horizon. The costumes tend to be of the traditional Rajasthani fare for both men and women, and the songs often feature distinctly Rajasthani folk tunes, lyrics, and instrumentation. Why in recent years has Rajasthan as a locality, more than other locations in South Asia, been chosen not only as a scenic backdrop as is often the case with Bollywood song landscapes, but as an integral part of the plot development? How are place, time, and atmosphere evoked through the use of instrumentation, choreography, sung dialect, and costume design? Returning to the opening quote, this paper will explore the ways in which the Rajasthan symbolized in such filmi song sequences is set apart from the rest of India, thereby portrayed as foreign to India in both location and time.
Bachrach, Emilia

The Shrinathji ki Prakatya Varta: Reading political change through a Vaishnava hagiography

In light of recent scholarship that challenges standard depictions of religious diversity and difference in Mughal India, this paper attempts to read a Vaishnava account of unique sectarian development as a commentary on Mughal leadership and political change in the 17th century.

The Shrinathji ki Prakatya Varta, or “The Account of the Manifestation of Shrinathji,” is a 17th century Braj Bhasha prose text of the Vallabha Sampradaya. The text gives an account of the miraculous emergence of Lord Krishna in the form of the local deity, Shrinathji, at Govardhan Hill in 1409, the development of sectarian care for the deity in Braj, and finally Shrinathji’s dramatic journey from Braj to Nathdwara, Rajasthan—a journey that spanned the years 1669-1671 during the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1618-1707). Commonly, this escape narrative has been interpreted as a clear response to the aggression of the Mughal Empire—epitomized by Aurangzeb. This paper challenges this interpretation and argues that a closer reading of the text reveals a more complex picture in which the political and economic motivations of the Sampradaya come to the fore.

In the course of Shrinathji’s journey west, the text weaves together descriptions of loving devotion to the miraculous deity with a detailed commentary on the socio-political environment in which Vallabhite leaders are in constant communication and negotiation with Mughal and Rajput ruling elite. Even Shrinathji himself enters the dialogue as he searches for the most suitable location for himself and his devotees to reside during a time of great political change in northern India. Rather than depict Mughal characters as the narrative’s simple villains, the varta presents the Empire as one among many royal entities competing for the prestige of caring for the sect and its powerful deity. As such, this paper will compare the sectarian narrative of Shrinathji’s move to western India against a broader historical account of how the tradition was formed by the political accomplishments of the Sultanate, Mughal and Rajput regimes as well as the willingness of the Sampradaya to adapt to changing political circumstances in an effort to protect its material and spiritual welfare.
Bagchee, Joydeep

Inversion, Krsnafigication, Brahmanization: The Explanatory Force of Extraordinary Figures of Speech

In this paper, I consider the impact of the Pune Critical Edition on some cherished myths of German Indological scholarship. Specifically, I examine the emergence of scientific concepts within wider social and political contexts and the way they articulate specific ideals and goals of research. German scholarship on the Mahabharata is characterized by a series of rhetorical figures of speech, best illustrated in the work of the two “great” forefathers of German Mahabharata research: Oldenberg and Holtzmann. These include terms such as “inversion” (Umgestaltung), “Krsnafigication” (Krsnasierung), and “Brahmanization” (Brahmanisierung). But in spite of their popularity as explanatory schemata in the heyday of German Orientalism, these terms entail several difficulties. To note the most obvious, their explanatory value is a direct function of their popularity in discourse. Further, with the completion of the CE of the Mahabharata in 1966, these constructs became increasingly untenable, both in relation to the internal evidence of the text and in relation to positive, historical evidence. As Sukthankar himself notes of Holtzmann’s inversion hypothesis, “These wild aberrations of Holtzmann, which hardly deserve the name of a theory ... have now little more than an antiquarian interest. They are ... not only at variance with the probable course of the religious and literary history of India, but they also stand in crass contradiction with positive and dated facts.” (1957, 15). But rather than engage in a generic critique of German Orientalist attitudes to the text, I would rather subject these conceptual frameworks to a serious philosophical and historical critique. What are the wider intellectual and historical forces at work in such scholarship? What is their actual purpose beyond their highly doubtful explanatory function? How do pre-CE views respond to the challenges of a critically constituted text and what do we make of recent attempts at reviving these positions? I apply a set of criteria recently formulated by Vishwa Adluri to define and limit the indiscriminate use of “interpolation” as an explanatory trope.
Cultural Mediators and Global Citizens: Work and Identity at an Indian Restaurant

This paper focuses on food as a space of cultural negotiation where connections to cultures are maintained, re-worked and recreated. Based on ethnographic research at a family-owned and operated Indian restaurant and grocery store in North Carolina the paper seeks to comment on how restaurant owners find a sense of self that is meaningful to them as ‘cultural intermediaries’ who help people of South Asian origin to stay connected to their cultures even as they connect the majority white American clientele to the South Asian (Indian) cuisine and culture. While work constitutes an important aspect of identity formation, the research in this restaurant evidences how this family living in a small southern city utilizes work in the food industry to negotiate a meaningful space in which they feel safe. Besides using their special knowledge and connection to Indian spices and recipes for financial gain they have also in the process overcome some of the linguistic, social and cultural barriers they faced as new immigrants. The research points to how in this particular establishment the grocery section is frequented by people of South Asian origin the restaurant is mainly frequented by white Americans while the owners act as mediators. Focusing on specific interactions between the family and its clientele as well as the work organization, the paper analyzes how work in the food industry has influenced new understandings of gender and age norms while providing a forum for them to express new identities as global citizens.
Bailey, Greg

To What Extent Does The Critical Edition Still Hold Validity?

Of course the Critical Edition of the Mahabharata still holds validity! All scholars use it and it has become a virtual monument of Indian Indological scholarship in the twentieth century. Other traditions of Mahabharata transmission tend to be ignored and the editing of early commentaries has been left aside, but critical editions of Puranas are produced on the same model as the Mahabharata.

This paper asks whether the CE is simply an edition with variants or a ‘critical edition,’ whatever that might mean. Does the existence of this edition compel us to assert a sharp break between the constructed Sanskrit version and the much larger number of vernacular versions? In addition, does it help us unravel the problem of the relationship between the didactic and narrative portions of the text received in manuscript form? Finally, where does a text called the Mahabharata stand within all of the manuscript versions of the Sanskrit text and the vernacular versions?
Inhabiting a Deathworld: the Guerrilla’s Body as a Form of the Living Dead.

Theoreticians of guerrilla warfare, like Mao Tse-Tung and Che Guevara, vividly describe the lifeworlds that guerrillas should ideally inhabit. A key point they make is that, for purposes of camouflage, the guerrilla’s body should represent a threshold of indistinction between human and natural/animal life. The lifeworld of the guerrilla is predicated on this indistinction as it endows the fighter the attributes of mobility and stealth—key components for the success of the “hit-and-run” tactics that characterize such forms of warfare. But what happens when the lifeworlds that sustain camouflaged warfare break down? A former guerrilla, Raktim Xarma, represents such a scenario in the Assamese novel "Borangar Ngang" (The Song of the Forest). "Borangar Ngang" vividly recreates the lifeworld of the guerrilla contingent of the separatist organization—the ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam)—in Bhutan, just prior to being flushed out of Bhutanese territory in 2003. Xarma’s novel illustrates how the changing international scenario, internal tumults within Bhutan, a diminution of support from the people, government propaganda, and a growing distance between the leadership and the cadre of the separatist organization gradually destroy the lifeworlds that sustained the guerrillas. A significant portion of the action of the text is set in the “no-man’s zones” lying between the borders of India and Bhutan. The guerrillas are hemmed in these “no-man’s zones”—spaces that lie outside the reach of the law—and are increasingly beset by starvation, thirst, ambushes by the armies of both countries, disease, and the threats posed by wild animals and natural forces. This heavily forested locale, ostensibly an ideal lifeworld for the guerrilla, gradually transforms into what Achille Mbembe calls a “deathworld.” Instead of representing the point of indistinction between the human and the animal/natural life, the body of the guerrilla now begins to represent a threshold of a different type: the form lying between the living and the dead body, or the living dead. By focusing on the representation of the guerrilla’s body as an exemplar of the living dead, this paper studies, to paraphrase Mbembe, the subjugation of life to the power of death and the reconfiguration of the relations between resistance, sacrifice and terror that accrue when subjects inhabit spaces of abandonment that lie outside the reach of the law.
Banerjee, Sandeep

Samuel Bourne and the spatial production of the Indian Himalayas

Samuel Bourne was the most prolific British photographer working in India in the late-nineteenth century. During his stay in India – between 1863 and 1870 – Bourne produced over two thousand images of Indian architecture, hill-stations, cantonments, cities, memorials and parks, but his reputation rests largely on his picturesque Indian landscapes. Significant among Bourne’s Indian landscapes are his images of the Himalayas, including the first known photographs of the source of the Ganges. Bourne also published serialized accounts of his travels in the Himalayas in the London-based British Journal of Photography between 1864 and 1870.

This paper focuses on Bourne’s images of the Indian Himalayas and the hill-stations along with his travel narratives and situates them in the context of the 1857 Rebellion. It argues that these photographs produce the space of the Indian Himalayas and the hill-stations as European, thereby producing an idea of similitude between the spaces of the metropole and the colony. His images re-create the Himalayas in the image of the Alps; his Indian hill-stations appear as spaces of England in India. On the other hand, Bourne’s travel narratives produce the idea of the Himalayas and its local inhabitants as different from its European counterparts. Bourne’s narratives continuously comments on how the Himalayas are not like the Alps; the people of his travelogues are rajahs, lepers and intransigent collies who have to be beaten into submission. Bourne’s visual and textual depictions of the Himalayas are therefore fundamentally contradictory.

Drawing on materialist conceptions of space and landscape, the paper locates this production of contradictory spaces within the operations of colonial capitalist modernity. The paper intervenes in the recent debates on the geography of empire. It attempts a critical reevaluation of the works of Samuel Bourne and his role in the production of the space of Britain’s Indian Empire.
Barrett, Brenda

Disaster Relief and Reconstruction in a Conflict-affected Fractured State: Lesson from Sri Lanka

Natural disasters are not just environmental events but they are also political and economic events. Natural disasters have the ability to disarticulate institutions and change political trajectories. Following a major natural disaster where both people and institutions have been fundamentally affected, both physically and psychologically, a transformation can also occur. The impact of natural disasters, relief and post-disaster reconstruction become even more complicated when such a disaster occurs in a country/region that has been affected by violent conflict. Sri Lanka was in such a situation when the tsunami hit the country in December 2004. At the time of the tsunami a somewhat uneasy ceasefire under international monitoring prevailed in the country. The existence of a cease-fire agreement only added an additional twist to the tsunami response. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) controlled some of the tsunami-affected areas in the north and east. The international donor community already had a presence there due to the conflict but this presence was augmented substantially by new resources and new organizations dedicated to tsunami relief. The capacity of the Sri Lankan state was again tested in the post-tsunami context in LTTE-controlled territories and in partially-controlled territories. This paper examines how the tsunami relief and reconstruction effort fared in the multi-ethnic district of Trincomalee that was fiercely contested by the government and LTTE in the civil war that had lasted twenty years when the tsunami struck. The paper shows how state power was exercised by Colombo and its representatives in Trincomalee after the tsunami and the complex and fluid interaction that state agencies had with a non-state actor LTTE that had a political agenda of its own. The international donor community had to cope with the tensions that this situation of a “fractured state” gave rise to and still deliver assistance to the affected communities. Using village level data from Trincomalee District the paper analyzes how the conflict interacted with the disaster and its aftermath and what lessons we can draw from Sri Lanka’s experience for conflict management and resolution as well as for disaster management and post disaster reconstruction for sustainable development.
Where East Meets West: Cocaine in South Asia in the Inter-War Period

In 1906 India was one of the first nations to enact legislation controlling the sale and use of cocaine. This replicated several of the leading provinces beginning in Bengal in 1900. A key figure in the demonising of 'coca-mania' in pre-1914 India was Bose, Bengal Chemical Examiner and President of the All-India Temperance Movement. Bose's writings on cocaine would form part of the early knowledge transfer on narcotics reaching out from India via Britain to America. Before 1914 the bulk of the illicit cocaine in India was German. In this period, though, India's connection to the narcotics market was the better known opium trade, excoriated by missionaries and temperance campaigners until the Indian authorities promised its limitation. In 1927 the Viceroy announced its final abolition to public acclaim. As always, however, the end of a licit trade was quickly filled by illicit traders spotting the gap in the market.

In this connection the black markets in cocaine and opium would interconnect in inter-war India. Illicit imported cocaine was traded for illicitly exported Indian opium. The domestic opium trail from the North-West Province and Shan States met the imported cocaine coming through Calcutta, Rangoon and Bombay. Illicit cocaine still came from Germany via Rotterdam and Scotland, but the gap in the European market created by the Great War had been filled by Asian produced narcotics and their traffickers fought to retain the trade with India.

Inter-war South Asia provides an excellent microcosm of the inter-war "War on Drugs" fought by the League of Nations and the United States. New task forces were created in Burma and attempted in other provinces, though the question of a national anti-drugs force invariably stalled over the question of finance in an era of economic depression. This paper analyses the nexus between the cocaine and opium trades in inter-war South Asia in which one narcotic became the currency of another. It considers the level of competition between the European and Asian narco-traffickers during the early stages of globalisation of the drug war. It has been argued that Japan controlled the Asian cocaine trade in the 1930s, but this downplays the role of China and the attempts by Europeans to regain their previously lucrative eastern trade. In India, the inter-war Asian narcotics trade can be fully explored.
Bass, Daniel

Middle Class Vibrations: Intertwining Class, Caste and Status in Up-country Tamil Ethnogenesis

My Up-country Tamil research associate, Peter, often emphatically stated, “There should be a middle class to make a vibration in any society.” Only in recent decades has a middle class developed in the up-country of Sri Lanka, and with them, a new identification as Up-country Tamil. Thus, even among these descendents of colonial-era migrants from South India, the vast majority of whom remain plantation workers, it is those with some education, power, status and/or wealth who have constructed and disseminated this new identity. This new identification not only distinguishes Up-country Tamils from being associated with stigmatized Estate Tamils, it also differentiates them from earlier notions of identity made by Colombo-based elites, such as Indian Origin Tamil. Both Up-country Tamils and Indian Origin Tamils simultaneously distance themselves from Estate Tamils in their self-appellation, often in the pursuit of upward social and economic mobility, while at the same time including them under their umbrella. However, they are all still lumped together as Indian Tamils in official records. In this presentation, I examine the power of class in creating ethnic communities in contemporary Sri Lanka. Indian Origin Tamils, Up-country Tamils and Estate Tamils are overlapping, but not equivalent, ethnic identifications, and the major differences among them are based on class, and to a lesser extent, caste. In modern Sri Lanka, though, class tends to trump caste, while the reverse is usually the case in India. Based on ethnographic research in Sri Lanka over the past ten years and on an analysis of primary texts of Tamil self-representation, I examine the contested process of Up-country Tamil ethnogenesis. This is mainly a project of urban, educated middle-class Tamils in up-country towns, although they claim to speak for workers on tea estates, where many of them were raised. This Up-country Tamil middle class has also operated as an interface group, representing Up-country Tamil issues and concerns to the government, to other ethnic groups and to themselves. However, these culture workers’ efforts to vibrate Sri Lankan society as a whole was muted by the civil war, which has set innumerable limits on Up-country Tamils, just as it has facilitated the rise of new senses of solidarity.
Scholars have often depicted the history of Bengal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in terms of the contribution of Hindu Bengali thinkers in constructing a nationalist discourse of Indian identity. Bengali Muslims often appeared in this history as the representative voice of Bengal peasantry who embraced ‘Pakistani separatism’ to articulate their ‘communal’ opposition to ‘inclusive’ Indian nationalism. These interpretations often silence rich and diverse Muslim intellectual traditions of Bengal and privilege Bengali Hindu writers who often constructed early twentieth century Bengal’s identity as culturally Hindu despite its Muslim majority. Central to such late nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengali Hindu nationalist constructions was the notion that Hinduism provided Bengal and India with complex and pluralist secular political culture as opposed to medieval religious theocracies of neighboring Muslim countries. By engaging with Syed Mujtuba Ali’s classic travelogue in Bengali Deshe Videshe written on Afghanistan in 1920s, this essay demonstrates how a sophisticated narration of conflicts among Afghans over the meanings of political modernity, in the context of nation-state building, subtly contested the notion of ‘Muslim theocracy’ and opened a space for a dialogue over rich and pluralist Muslim cultural heritage of South Asia of which Bengal also constituted an integral part. More importantly, it presents such conflicts over modernity among Muslim Afghans as not simply a matter internal to Islam but in terms of the dilemma of postcolonial nation states that sought to ‘modernize’ their identities by emulating Western culture while rejecting Western political domination. Thus Ali problematizes normative understanding of the secular Indian nation building. He challenges also to rethink the constructions of identity of the Bengali and Indian from a secular perspective.
Bate, Bernard

Subramania Bharati and the Tamil Modern

Was it a coincidence that Tamil’s greatest modern poet was among the vanguard of political actors who systematically deployed vernacular oratory as a new political medium? More abstractly, what is the relationship between poetic and political modernity? In this paper, I will focus on Subramania Bharati, one oration, and two songs. The first oration was accompanied by a song, a procession, and a large public meeting on the Marina Beach in Madras on 9 March 1908. It was during this time that Bharati wrote some of his most famous nationalist songs in a simple Tamil set to folk meters and melodies perfect for interpellating a new political agency: the Tamil people. The second song was sung at a crossroads not far from the Marina during a procession of fervent political actors moving towards the first great satyagraha of the Madras Presidency, 6 April 1919. By that time Bharati had been broken of politics through exile and opium addiction; and yet the enigmatic poet was sighted dancing in and out of events associated with the political form that he had helped to establish. This paper will interrogate the relationship between poetic language, oratory, and the emergence of the mass political with a consideration of Bharati and a singularly Tamil modern.
Batra, Lalit

‘Accumulation by Dispossession’: The Politics of Slum Demolition in an Aspiring World-Class City

An estimated one million people have been evicted from jhuggi jhopri (shanty) settlements located in the inner city areas of Delhi in the last one decade. This is the biggest post-emergency eviction drive undertaken in the city. Much of this has happened by way of court orders issued in response to Public Interest Litigations filed by Resident Welfare Associations of affluent colonies and environmental and citizen’s rights groups castigating the presence of slums as a function of the corrupt, vote bank based politics of the welfare state apparatus, much to the detriment of the rights of the legitimate citizens of the city to a good quality of life. The drive to rid the city of lower income settlements is symptomatic of the tension between the ‘actually existing present’ and the ‘desirable present’ of urban India with the highest court of the land and the ruling elite firmly putting their weight behind the new India exotica, the mythical “world class city” thought to be attainable through firm application of the ‘rule of law’ by the coercive apparatus of the State and efficient ‘management’ of cities by a coalition of corporates and middle-class ‘citizens’.

In this paper I argue that the discourse of the ‘world class city’ is firmly rooted in the political economy of neoliberalism. The world class city in the dominant public discourse in India has come to mean a city that is characterised by leisure living, high-end infrastructure, managerial governance, ‘clean’ businesses, faster mobility, a spectacular consumptive landscape and nodal positioning in the global flow of transnational capital and international tourism. This new-found desire to be a ‘world class’ city entails changing the geography of the city on the lines of serially reproduced productive and consumptive landscape, noted in the context of inter-urban competition, in order to lure highly volatile capital flows. The realisation of this vision is seen to depend crucially on correcting the distortions in the efficient functioning of land market by freeing the land occupied by the poor and employing it for purposes seen to be in consonant with the creation of a world-class city. The result is the expansion and deepening of commodity relations in land. The neo-liberalisation of Delhi’s space thus entails furthering privatisation and commodification of land through, among other instruments, an increased reliance on “accumulation by dispossession”.

39th Annual Conference on South Asia, 2010
Baxter, Matthew

Self-Respect in Erode: E.V.Ramasamy and the London Missionary Society

EV Ramasamy Naicker [EVR] published the first issue of his Self-Respect Movement’s flagship journal, 'Kuti Aracu' [Republic], from his hometown of Erode on 2 May 1925. Scholars of Tamil Country have discussed various historical influences upon EVR and his philosophy of 'cuya-mariyaatai' [self-respect], from the more recent period of Ramalinga Swamigal and Subramanya Barathi to the medieval period of the Siddhars and the royal importance of 'mariyaatai' [respect]. Such discussions suggest 'cuya-mariyaatai' to be an innovation upon a markedly Tamil theme. While the Tamil historical milieu is a central component in understanding the philosophy of 'cuya-mariyaatai', the influence of Christian Mission has been under-explored. Such under-exploration is surprising, as not only was world-wide Christian Mission concerned with the idea of “self-respect” during the time of EVR, but Erode was home to a number of missionary organizations, including the London Missionary Society [LMS] which formed a head-station in Erode in the early 1900s.

In my paper, I look at missionary correspondence and articles published in 'Kuti Aracu' in order to argue for the importance of the LMS to considerations of the origins and ends of EVR’s philosophy of 'cuya-mariyaatai'. Such an argument does not suggest that the Tamil historical milieu was insufficient to produce the concerns of the philosophy of 'cuya-mariyaatai'. Instead, the argument is for a complicated relationship of confluence between missionary interests and radical concepts in Tamil. Erode, as the home town of EVR and a head station of the LMS, becomes a place where different ideas are forged into a philosophy of 'cuya-mariyaatai', a philosophy whose political ends become far more important than its historical origins.
Beaster-Jones, Jayson

Thoda Lawsuit Lagta Hai: Music and Intellectual Property in Neoliberal India

In recent years, Indian music labels have become far more proactive in protecting their intellectual property rights in national and international venues. Even as Bappi Lahiri and Saregama sued the American hiphop producer Dr. Dre for sampling the song "Thoda Resham Lagta Hai" [It takes a little silk], other music labels have sued Yahoo! and Youtube for allowing users to post videos of Hindi film songs on their on their networks without permission from the label. In a similar vein, the Indian Music Industry (IMI), a federation of international and domestic music labels that has a role similar to the RIAA in the United States, continues to lobby the Central Government for antipiracy legislation and the increased protection of music copyright. This effort includes attempts to adjust existing copyright laws to prohibit the distribution of certain types remix based upon Hindi film songs. This paper examines these cases in the context of contemporary Indian popular music, arguing that the litigious attitude of individuals and music labels reflects the economic and political consequences of neoliberal policy. These lawsuits signal the ever-expanding regimes of intellectual property that among other things, delimit the legitimate uses of music in order to align with international standards. Thus, copyright protection becomes one way of acknowledging the potential of Indian products in the global marketplace, even as it threatens traditional practices of parody and allusion that have long been a staple of folk and devotional performance.
Berger, Rachel

Imag/ining private life: intimacy, sexuality and the visual in interwar India

Despite a preoccupation with the division of private and public life in colonial India, recent scholarship on women’s popular culture has revealed the extent to which this division was continually subverted. The notion of the private, intimate domestic sphere is best understood as a central component of popular – and political – culture, as a central tenet in debates taking up issues of political economy, competing nationalisms, the public health and the social make-up of the country. While the ‘women’s question’ may have been resolved in political discourse, the regulation of sexuality was a key component of twentieth century debates about the state of the nation.

While these points have been made substantially concerning the content – and context – of the printed word, little has been written about the role of visual imagery in the construction the intimate imaginary. This paper will thus explore several popular images used to represent the ‘intimate’ spheres of Indian private life that circulated in Hindi-language popular culture from the 1920s to the 1940s. Drawing from several genres of image production – advertising, caricature, literary portraiture and film – I will explore the representation of ‘private’ matters in images that attempted to delineate normative sexuality and its limits.

The images deployed will range from those dealing with the sexual possibilities of the body, its diseases, ‘correct’ conjugality, and the deviant sexual figure. Compared and contrasted to each other, they represent a range of possibilities to which occupants of intimacy could conform – or that they could subvert and undo. Taken together, this paper will offer insight into the social and political discussions, debates and preoccupations that allowed, regulated and encouraged this envisioning of the intimate lives of the nation.
Bergman, Kristen

Acts of Translation: A. Madhaviah’s English Novels

Salman Rushdie once described himself as a “translated man,” and post-colonial critics have often returned to the practice or perhaps metaphor of “translation” when thinking about what it means for a South Asian novelist to write in English. In his analysis of Indian novelists, G.J.V. Prasad resists seeing the act of writing in English as merely an attempt to translate a native language into English; rather, drawing on the reflections of the novelist Raja Rao, Prasad frames the act of writing in English as a “struggle for space, between colonial English and the native Indian languages.” As Prasad notes, English as the medium for literary expression ultimately translates and transforms both the English language and the Indian cultural context that it describes. In this paper, I will explore this search for hybrid space in the English language itself in the novels of A. Madhaviah, who chose to write both in English and Tamil throughout his literary career. I argue that in his English novels, such as Clarinda, Madhaviah engages in challenging and playing with the colonial authority of English in its South Asian context while making it his own literary language of expression. Moreover, through an investigation of the publication history of several his novels, particularly Thillai Govindan, which was published in both Madras and London, I consider the ways in which Madhaviah’s English novels amount to a cultural translation as well as a linguistic one for his South Asian and British colonial audiences.
Bhattachan, Krishna

Identity Politics in Nepal

I have divided my paper in three parts: (I) Jim as I know him as my colleague and a mentor, and a good friend of indigenous peoples of Nepal; (II) Revisiting and re-examining the core issues, both theoretical and methodological, relating to communities in transition, that were raised and analyzed by Jim Fisher; and (III) Direct and indirect impacts of Jim's work on my own scholarship.

In Part I, I recall my association with Jim since 1984 to the present. I will focus on describing his contribution in strengthening the Department of Sociology and Anthropology in different ways, and also on inspiring me to enhance my academic pursuit and career.

In Part II, I will focus on two theoretical core issues that he raised in his books Trans-Himalayan Traders: Economy, Society & Culture and Sherpas: Reflections on Change in Himalayan Nepal and a recent article "Identity in Nepal: Ethnic, Individual, Political". These are (a) transactional perspective, i.e. brokers of goods and blockers of ideas, and (b) identity issues and politics. I will relate Jim's worry about possible disappearance of traditions of communities in transition and indigenous peoples with the ongoing debates on the agenda of restructuring the state in Nepal. These debates are polarized in terms of federalism versus centralism, on the one hand, and autonomy and self-rule based on ethnic, linguistic, and regional criteria versus geographical, economic viability and natural resource criteria, on the other. I will show that there is a possibility of both magnification of such disappearance or continuation and enrichment of the tradition. Also, I will focus on two methodological issues. These are: (a) let the people/community speak for themselves, and (b) multivocal format.

In Part III, I will focus on assessing Jim's impact on my academic and advocacy works.
Bhattacharya, Banhi

English Language Policy in West Bengal (1981-2003): Representation via Legislation

This paper analyzes the evolution of English language education policy in West Bengal since the 1980s; its objective is to identify the major factors that influenced the State’s policies regarding the introduction of English as a compulsory second language in its vernacular medium schools. It situates this analysis in the context of critical debates over language policy and planning that are framed, on the one hand, in terms of colonization, and on the other, that of globalization processes.

With the Left-Front Government in West Bengal, the status of English language education (often perceived as a colonial legacy) has been uncertain in state-sponsored vernacular schools. The paper employs a critical analysis of key policy documents to identify the role of various agencies and their interests in shaping the state’s English language policy. In particular, it attempts to address the tension between the importance of English education in globalized societies and the pressure to carve out a national-linguistic identity.
Possession, Processions and Authority: Re-enactments and Reversals in Urban, Tamil South India

In Roman Catholic and Hindu traditions, divinity is often believed to convey healing power and benefits through the exchange of material substances. The broker of this sacred exchange between deity and devotee is often – but not always – a male priest. In Catholic traditions, only a priest can consecrate bread and wine; in Hindu traditions, a Brahmin priest often conveys prasatam between the deity and devotee.

In Tamil Nadu, women and men from each of the above traditions enact challenges to this priest-brokered schema in numerous ways. The means I explore is Marian spirit possession. Women and men who claim to get possessed by Mary, the mother of Jesus, not only reverse the conventional gender of the normative custodians of both Roman Catholicism and Brahmanical Hinduism; they gender-bend divinity in a variety of ways and illustrate a lack of clear boundaries – at least on the ground, between non-elites – between what is considered Catholic, Hindu, or Muslim.

In the first part of this paper, I provide context for understanding south Indian, Marian spirit possession – outlining its rubrics, variations, and relative prevalence in Tamil Nadu – and introduce two women who perform it via clips from a documentary series that aired recently on local Tamil TV. I show the ways in which caste, class and other social markers (age, marital status, education) of these women have influenced the authority of their performance, as well as the content and form of the performance itself. I point to the ways in which one woman’s innovation and improvisation – the introduction of bloody stigmata – enacts a yet-more transgressive, gendered reversal than that of her counterpart, a woman of higher class, age, and class.

In the second part of this paper, I focus on a massive, Marian car procession that this older, higher-class woman choreographed on a recent Marian feast day. The drama that ensued between her community and that of Roman Catholic officials resulted in the Madras-Mylapore Archbishop’s banning the event. The procession went on nonetheless, culminating in a Eucharistic mass. I argue that the crowd-pleasing event both challenged and colluded with male priestly power, introducing a modicum of change into an otherwise deeply conservative, gendered tradition. I argue that the benefits conferred through the combined innovation and tradition of this unusual context for sacred, material exchange complicate ideas about what sort of “feminism” Marian possession practices may offer devotees.
Bokhari, Afshan

Speaking of the Self: Jahan Ara Begum (1614-1681) and her ‘reifications’ in 17th C. Mughal India

The primary objective of this paper is to analyze the physical and ideological ‘translations’ of Jahan Ara Begum’s (1614-1681) Sufi affiliations as functions of the princess’ patronage and piety in seventeenth century Mughal India. The research considers Jahan Ara Begum’s representations through the ‘masculine modes’ of her major commissions, her two biographical Sufi treatises (Munis al-arvah [1638] and Risalah-i-Sahibiyah [1640]) in which she records her passionate Sufi devotion and experience within the Qadriyah order and her self-assigned ascension and rank as a Sufi master or pir. The analysis maintains that these unprecedented female self-representations are sanctioned, influenced and guided by her strong affiliations to Sufism and particular Sufi saints and her supportive relationship with her emperor father, Shah Jahan (r.1628-1658) The study also considers how Jahan Ara’s mystical affinities may have enjoined the unmarried princess to fully participate in the socio-religious public landscape not as a veiled spectator but as an active contributor who was not only the first Mughal woman who commissioned a congregation mosque but also the only Sufi center of learning dedicated to her pīr Mullah Shah Badakhshi in Srinagar, Kashmir.

As Jahan Ara Begum’s commissions and literary contributions are considered alongside her father’s, emperor Shah Jahan, these Mughal ‘enunciations’, emerge as forms of communication through a topos of symbols that ‘gendered’ the Mughal landscape and further, participated in the ‘staging’ for the performance of ‘optical politics’ as a direct function of imperial patronage. The highly politicized and ‘staged’ religiosity of royal women thereby sustained the sovereign and the historical memory of the patrilineal line. Jahan Ara Begum fully participated in these patterns of political patriarchy and her father’s imperial vision by constructing her ‘stage’ through her Sufi affiliations, prodigious patronage, and literary prowess. The princess’ contributions fully conformed to the Mughal dictates imposed on her gender and enabled her to assert her spiritual and imperial authority as an agent of her own representation.
Examining the Socially-Embedded Developmental State through the ‘Kudumbashree’ Project in Kerala

The provincial state in Kerala, India has historically played an important role in its socio-economic development. Socially oriented development initiatives championed by the state and aided by an active civil society is considered to have contributed to improvement in human development indicators in Kerala over the years. However, in the post 1990s phase of economic liberalization in India, the nature of state intervention in Kerala has come under scrutiny. This has resulted into a dissonance between the Indian federal government and the provincial government in Kerala in the sequencing and pacing of the neoliberal reforms in the state. The implementation of the economic reforms in Kerala has led to a crisis of its local economies. Structural changes and the withdrawal of the state from protection measures have seriously impacted local livelihoods particularly small producers and the rural labor force.

The state as a consequence is trapped in a paradoxical situation- it has to comply with the federal government’s structural adjustment policies but in doing so, it is faced with contradictions in its role reversal from a society-oriented welfare state to a market-oriented neoliberal state. Under such circumstances, I argue that the state in Kerala is transforming into a new form—a ‘socially embedded developmental state’- facilitating globalization induced changes on one hand while maintaining state intervention through social initiatives on the other. This paper investigates this transformation through a recent policy response by the Kerala government—“Kudumbashree” – a micro finance project in collaboration with the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) of India, 2005 aimed to alleviate the economic reforms led crisis in the state. The program is helping to organize and commercialize self-help groups, particularly women and small-scale producers, into community based market-oriented industrial clusters through microfinance/microcredit programs by state and civil society organizations. In this paper, I will critically examine-a) how the state in Kerala is accommodating and adjusting to the neoliberal reforms through this new form and b) whether development oriented state-society relationship like the microcredit program contribute to inclusive growth. This paper is based on recent field studies in Kerala in 2009. This research is particularly relevant in the context of larger theoretical debates on the state’s primacy in an era of transnational globalization. Wherein, I argue that the state is not declining or retaining its primacy; but on the contrary is being transformed in specific contexts as a result of interactions between local and global processes.
Bose, Aniruddha

Paying ‘Khorakee’ (A Tip): The police in the lives of longshoremen in nineteenth century Calcutta

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the port of Calcutta was one of the two largest ports in the Indian Ocean Region. Each year, hundreds of ships arrived filled with goods meant for Indian markets, and left with cargoes of Indian exports. Thousands of smaller country boats also arrived from different parts of the Bay of Bengal and the north Indian hinterland. A vast workforce, over ten thousand strong at any given time, was tasked with the loading and unloading of these ships. It was a cosmopolitan workforce made up of laborers that had come to Calcutta from all across the Indian Subcontinent. It was also a non-unionized work force that time and again was able to organize strike action. These were the longshoremen of Calcutta. This paper explores one important aspect of their historical experience from these times. This aspect is the complex relationship that longshoremen had to build with the city police force in order to work at the Port of Calcutta. The police were tasked with ensuring that longshoremen obeyed all rules and regulations of the port, rules and regulations which often directly contradicted the interests of the longshoremen. This paper asks how did the longshoremen then negotiate and develop a working relationship with the police in order to secure their own interests.

There are many primary sources available that can be used to answer this question. The records of the Marine Department of the Government of Bengal, the records of the Port Trust of Calcutta, and various newspapers from that period are all important sources. The richest set of sources lie in a thick file kept at the newly opened Heritage Gallery and Archives of the Kolkata Port Trust. This is a file that contains all surviving correspondence surrounding a brief strike that brought work at the port to a halt in 1878. The strike had been called by longshoremen demanding a wage increase. According to the correspondence, the longshoremen had decided to seek the wage increase because of a sudden rise in the demand for khorakee by the police. The situation had prompted considerable discussions on this problem by all interested parties. Some of these discussions were carried out in the form of correspondence, and kept in this file. These sources form the basis of this paper.
Bose, Neilesh

Bengal's Role in the Cultural Definition of Pakistan, 1940-1947

This paper considers how concepts of Pakistan developed and found expression in Bengal, via Bengali language prose and poetic writings, in the final years of colonial rule from 1940 to 1947. As most historical studies of the movement to establish Pakistan focus on northern India and the Punjab, this essay focuses on understanding the role of concepts of Pakistan within the political history of modern Bengal as well as examine how poetry and prose writings about Pakistan fit into broader historical trends in Bengali Muslim literary history. I examine twentieth century Muslim South Asian political history inside broader debates on decolonization as well as issues of linguistic and literary identity in modern South Asian history with a focus on intellectuals like Abul Mansur Ahmed and Abul Kalam Shamsuddin and emerging poets like Talim Hossein and Benazir Ahmed. Finally, I discuss the East Pakistan Renaissance Society, a 1940s organization of literary critics and writers who articulated a Bengali Pakistan demand from 1944 to 1947.
Bridger Wilson, Emera

Arrested Movement: Exclusion of Sightseeing Rickshaw Drivers from Touristic Spaces

The ways in which touristic spaces are constructed and controlled may impact the ways in which the economic, social, and political benefits from tourism development are felt by those people engaged in tourism work. Not only do these constructions of space integrate exogenous understandings of heritage, but often local understandings of class and caste can lead to a hierarchy among touristic spaces which serve to privilege some people’s movement in and through them and prohibit others’. Based on fifteen months of ethnographic research in north India, this paper will look at some of the ways in which this differential access to touristic spaces—hotels, shops, and roads—situated in and around Keoladeo National Park, impact the extent to which poor, low-caste rickshaw drivers are able to make working in tourism a viable livelihood strategy. While these men make their living through movement—transporting tourists around the National Park—their movements are systematically marginalized and interrupted. I argue that this exclusion from particular spaces is internalized by these men as they move in spaces away from Keoladeo National Park, leading to self-exclusion in other contexts. By examining the local structures of power and understandings of caste and class, we can develop a more nuanced understanding of tourism which takes into account how tourism might create opportunities while at the same time exacerbates existing inequalities.
Brodbeck, Simon

Analytic and Synthetic Approaches in Light of the Pune Critical Edition

This paper will differentiate the analytic and synthetic approaches to the Mahabharata, not as mutually incompatible views of how the text was composed, but as attempts to offer two distinct types of commentary, the one historical, the other literary. It will then discuss how these two types of commentary are affected by the completion of the Pune Critical Edition of the Mahabharata.

Those who are particularly interested in the diachronic development of the text over a long period of Indian history have struck a rich seam with the Pune critical apparatus, which gives differential manuscript data on the basis of which any number of historical discussions (of what was added into the developing Mahabharata tradition where, when, and why) might proceed. But most of the standard historical discussions of the Mahabharata in the analytic mode receive no support from the reconstituted text itself. That text is a single, precisely delineated entity that may be explored as an artistic literary unit in any number of ways. It is presented as if it were a synchronous unit, and differentiating historical layers within it is an exercise in speculation.

The paper will assess and extrapolate the dynamic between the analytic and synthetic approaches in scholarly literature since the completion of the Pune text. It will also consider the Harivamsa, the final, semi-detached portion of the Mahabharata. The Harivamsa Critical Edition was produced as the final stage of the Pune project, but in its case the quantity ratio of appendicised portions to main text is much higher than it is for the Mahabharata, and, perhaps as a result, the reconstituted Harivamsa has been greeted with greater levels of scholarly scepticism. The paper argues, on methodological grounds, that such a response is probably illegitimate.

Bronner, Yigal

Bhamaha or Dandin: Who Was First?

As has been obvious to anyone who has looked at them, there is a special relationship between the two earliest extant works on Sanskrit poetics: Bhamaha’s Kavyalamkara and Dandin’s Kavyadarsa. The two share not only an analytical framework and many aspects of their organization; they often employ the selfsame language and imagery when defining and exemplifying a shared repertoire of literary devices. In addition, the works also betray highly specific disagreements regarding the nature and aesthetic value of a set of literary phenomena. It has thus been always clear to Indologists that the two are in conversation with one another. What was never determined was the type and directionality of the conversation: Was Bhamaha responding to Dandin’s Kavyadarsa? Was Dandin making a rejoinder to Bhamaha’s Kavyalankraka? Were the two authors contemporaries who directly interacted with one another? Or was their interaction indirect and mediated through a third text, which is no longer extant?

Determining the nature of interrelations between the two authors and their texts may teach us a great deal about the origins of Sanskrit poetics, the direction in which it developed during its formative period, and the way some of the disagreements between Dandin and Bhamaha metamorphosed in later time. By reviewing existing scholarship, and by taking a fresh look at some of the passages that have long stood at the center of this debate, this paper sets out to settle once and for all the question of Bhamaha’s and Dandin’s relative chronology.
Brower, Barbara

Grazing, Resilience, and the Case for Yak-Keeping around Mt Everest

Peoples whose livelihoods are based in mobile animal husbandry are usually considered relics of an earlier age. In the eyes of most states, and increasingly in the hearts of even herding peoples themselves, transhumant pastoralism has no place in the modern world. Yet herders may be in better position to meet the 21st century than many others. Pastoralism works by adapting animals and their management to the shifting conditions of even the most harsh environments: deserts, high latitudes, high mountains. Livestock represent a moveable, morph-able agent of resource extraction and cultural meaning with the capacity to respond to changing conditions of nature and society. Thus herders in the area around MT Everest have tapped and manipulated the biology and behavior of their yak-based herds to meet perennially shifting conditions of economy and environment. But though this resilient livelihood could help sustain high mountain communities, yak-keeping lacks the appeal of high-paid mountaineering work, or graduate programs in foreign countries, and confronts geopolitical impediments as well; it may soon disappear.
Burra, Arudra

Colonial Continuities and Constitutional Debate, 1946-51

This paper is a study of arguments from “colonial continuity:” arguments against an institution, an idea, a policy, a person or a law, on the grounds that it is continuous with, associated with, or representative of, colonial rule. Such arguments are common in contemporary political discourse – as in the criticism that Article 377 of the Indian Penal Code (criminalizing same-sex sodomy) is a “colonial law” or that repressive anti-terrorism legislation is colonial in character or represents a colonial inheritance.

My paper is a study of how such arguments were deployed during the founding and early years of the Indian Republic. I focus in particular on three important constitutional debates, having to do with a. preventive detention, b. freedom of speech, and c. the right to property. I study the ways in which these debates were conducted in the Constituent Assembly, in Parliament, and in early constitutional litigation, and show that arguments from colonial continuity were central to the ways in which these debates were carried out.

One question to ask about such arguments is: What we are to make of them, when they were being deployed within institutions that were themselves very much the product of colonial rule? (The Constitution itself resembled the Government of India Act, 1935 in many respects, and the first Supreme Court was composed of members of the Federal Court of India). How did the consciousness of this fact affect the ways in which these arguments were deployed? And how did the consciousness of these arguments affect the ways in which the core legislative and legal institutions of post-Independence India – particularly Parliament and the Supreme Court – imagined themselves?

In additional to these institutional questions, I examine the utility of such arguments in the service of substantive political debate. I argue that the very fact that the relevant institutions and laws were all “colonial” in some respect or another meant that the charge of colonial continuity was a very malleable one, one that could be used for and against the very same institutions and laws. (Nehru, for instance, defended the charge that laws restricting freedom of speech were colonial in character by claiming that his opponents were the true inheritors of colonial rule, for they did not trust Indians to govern themselves). I suggest that this fact limits the utility of such arguments in political debate, then as well as now.
Caron, James

Ballad of Dulla Bhatti, from Mughal Empire to Martial Law: Subaltern Pop Historiography in Pakistan

One song, traditionally sung during the Indian Punjabi harvest festival of Lohri, stands out among the other celebratory lyrics. It mentions a folk hero, Dulla Bhatti, who resists against various agrarian social injustices. These defiant lyrics notwithstanding, in India, Dulla Bhatti’s place in public memory appears to have been reanalyzed and marketed as “folk heritage” by successive generations of musicians.

In Pakistan, in contrast, where Punjab forms an integral heartland, Dulla Bhatti and the “Punjabi folk hero” in general have enjoyed rather more activist lives. Unlike the Lohri song, Najam Husain Sayyid’s 1968 play about Dulla Bhatti (written during the dying days of One-Unit military rule) very much contextualizes a historical Dulla, and fronts the central Mughal state – and resistance to it – in its narrative. Rejecting the political and economic privileges and prestige of incorporation into the Mughal hierarchy, Najam’s Dulla rejects the “civilized” and “elite” culturation of imperial society and instead aligns with clan honor and grassroots solidarities. This image has been periodically reinvigorated up to the present in Pakistani popular culture and amateur vernacular-language historiography, often as a not-very-oblique way of criticizing contemporary politics with fewer repercussions than a direct critique might bring.

This paper describes how and why ballads about anti-Mughal folk heroes enjoyed a massive resurgence in Pakistani Punjab under centralizing regimes. Using the case of the song of Dulla Bhatti as a springboard, I discuss how and why the enterprise of “history from below” in Pakistan has looked very different from Subaltern Studies in India, for example. I argue that Pakistani attempts at critical historiography, privileging social class, gender, and non-nation-state identities, are far more widespread than has generally been appreciated outside of Pakistan. I also argue that due to a range of factors – not least, its general relegation to the realm of the “amateur”– critical “pop historiography” in Pakistan been more subversive and more immediately accessible to subalterns themselves than social history has been in many other societies.
New Perspectives on Interaction between South Asia and Southeast Asia: Evidence from Stone Beads

The Iron Age period (500 BC- AD 500) of mainland Southeast Asia saw the beginning of regular and sometimes intense interaction with South Asia. Agate and carnelian beads are amongst the first archaeological indicators of this contact, and beads are ubiquitous at sites across Southeast Asia. Recent archaeological research indicates that Southeast Asians were active participants in the exchange process, although very little is known about the nature of this interaction. In this paper I will first review previous theories and hypotheses regarding the nature of trade and interaction between South and Southeast Asia. I will then present new data from the compositional analysis of stone beads from Iron Age sites in Cambodia and Thailand and geological sources from South Asia. Preliminary results indicate that stone beads were being imported from a variety of locations in South Asia. This data will be explored to determine if the geological source locations for beads changed over time, and how these changes reflected shifting interregional trade networks, and socio-political development in Southeast Asia. This data also has implications for understanding the nature of bead production in South Asia. The exciting potential for continued compositional analysis of artifacts using laser ablation-inductively coupled plasma-mass spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) will also be discussed.
Chakrabarti, Santanu

The Cultural Project of Hindu Nationalism and the Ideology of Satellite Television

For the ideologues of Hindutva, the cultural project (the creation of Hindu Rashtra) has been seen as precursor to and necessary for the realization of the political project of creating the Hindu rajya. I argue in this paper that even if the latter project might have suffered certain electoral setbacks in the last few years, the former has never been stronger, and nowhere as successfully naturalized as on transnational mass media. I further suggest that transnational satellite television, particularly the genre of saas-bahu shows or K-serials of Ekta Kapoor, have strong claims to be considered the representative cultural form of Hindu right in its twenty first century manifestations.

I locate the emergence and rise to success of these serials in a specific conjuncture marked by three intersecting forces: 1) The adoption of certain tactical manoeuvres by multinational capital in coming to terms with the realization that the size of India’s supposed middle-class was much smaller than they had believed. 2) The deployment of a distorted sense of the concept of “swadesi” (in both an economic and a cultural sense) by Hindu nationalists that necessitated a response from transnational satellite television in general and Rupert Murdoch’s STAR network in particular and 3) The forceful rearticulation of the urban, Hindu upper caste joint family as a repository of “traditional” Indian values and bulwark against both globalization and the otherized, unpatriotic, burgeoning Muslim family. I suggest that the K-serials thereby became a site for actualizing the Hindu right’s vision of the normative Indian family, especially as conceived within a neoliberal economic discourse of the global consumerist Indian. Further, I suggest that even if earlier serials on Doordarshan and satellite television had also operated within the context of the urban, upper caste Hindu family, it was the K-serials that made the characters’ Hindu identity central to their very being; and in introducing plot machinations driven by overtly Hindu rituals, idols, icons and themes, showed a way for mass media to profit from Hindu identity within an ostensibly secular entertainment framework. This, I argue, paved the way for the virtual inundation of mass mediated popular culture with products deriving from the syndicated version of Hinduism that the right peddles. Therefore, I conclude, we need to engage deeper with the political implications of the very form of these shows rather than dismissing them as merely “regressive” or patriarchal or kitsch.
Chakrabarti, Ishan

The Composition of Sectarian Belonging through Competition

Against the backdrop of contemporary debate on the politics of religious difference, this paper attempts a partial reassessment of such themes in early modern South Asia. Though popular political discourse suggests that the major axis of difference in this time period split apart Muslims and Hindus, I propose that the operative difference lay elsewhere: along the boundaries of sects which – today – are thought of as belonging to the same religion. Instead, I foreground and underline sectarian difference, insisting on its practical implications as the competitive force drawing apart religions and in turn constituting real communities. I examine sectarian/regional difference in early modern Vaishnava communities: the interaction between the Gaudiya and Vallabha communities. Reading Vallabhite hagiographies (Shrinathaji ki Prakatya Varta, Chaurasi Vaishnavan ki Varta), I examine episodes in which conflict and competition between the two sects is recorded (the banishment of Madhavendra Puri in the first text; assorted conflicts in the latter). Reading the Gaudiya Vaishnava theology (Rupa Gosvamin’s Bhaktirasamrtasindu) I suggest that the denigration of transcendence in favor of immanence in that text may relate to this religio-political conflict. To create a composite framework of religious difference in this period is to sketch a multivariable system including more than just the opposition between Hindu/Muslim. Furthermore, I reject the idea that difference between Vaishnava communities constitutes an ‘internal’ difference: these fractures are just as exterior, and just as constitutive of religious identity, as the difference between Vaishnava and Muslim. Sectarian affiliation must be accorded a full status, both in our theorization of difference as well as in our explication of the practical realities in early modern South Asia.
Chakraborty, Sarbani

No Incentive, No Teaching? Charting the Debate on Performance-Pay for Teachers

In India, a randomized comparative experiment on teacher performance-pay, conducted in rural government schools, showed statistically significant improvement in student outcomes (Muralidharan & Sundararaman, 2009). The experiment finds such incentive schemes cost-effective and suggests a resulting alignment of teacher-student effort.

This paper examines the rationale and the implications of the experiment in terms of its generalizability, in the context of the politics of the “crisis” of government schooling in India. Drawing on observations conducted in four government schools in New Delhi, the paper argues that a school cannot be conceived as a complete-in-itself, insular organization – an assumption often implicit in such monetary incentive schemes.

Without rejecting the experiment’s findings or making totalizing criticisms of such cost-benefit-oriented analyses, the paper calls for viewing teachers’ work as inherently situated within the politics of rural/urban divide, gender dynamics, and other interactive dimensions of teaching and learning processes. The paper, thus, looks into both the possibilities and limitations of the findings in the context of current debates about the teaching profession in India.
Chapagain, Neel Kamal

The road to Lomanthang: Can it contribute towards conservation of the historic walled township?

The 15th century walled township of Lomanthang was the capital of then kingdom of Lo. Even after it came under the political boundaries of present day Nepal, Lomanthang retained its capital-like status for the area that used to the kingdom of Lo (However, this is significantly changing). Despite rapid changes that are occurring these days, Lomanthang still largely remains the cultural capital and a popular tourist destination in the Upper Mustang region (roughly corresponding to the earlier kingdom of Lo) in Nepal. After the introduction of tourism, conservation, and development programs in the Upper Mustang region since the early 1990s, Lomanthang has experienced various efforts of conservation and development, accompanied by debates on the both conservation and development prospects. Among all, much controversial has been a road coming from Nepal-Tibet border to Lomanthang, and further down to other villages, ultimately aiming to connect to the district headquarters in Jomsom at Lower Mustang. Another end of the road has already been completed from the southern border of the district up to the district headquarters and moving further north and east. In case of Lomanthang, often a criticism and resistance for the road project has been for its perceived threats towards the cultural and historic heritage. Consequently, some pro-conservation, some pro-development, and some destructive activities have been noticed in the last decade. This paper will look at some of key events that were observed in recent history to identify what I would call misunderstanding between the development arguments and conservation arguments. In order to broaden the scope of conservation in such a thriving place, this paper will examine the issue of the road to explore whether the same road project could have been a tool for heritage conservation.
Chase, Brad

Livestock and Livelihood: Pastoral Land Use Across the Rann

With the emergence of the Indus cities, networks of trade and communication linked Gujarat and Sindh. The nature of these networks has long been the subject of considerable debate. A more complete understanding of the relationship between these two regions requires investigation of all aspects of economy and domestic practice on both sides of the Rann. Reconstruction of the ways in which both small settlements and larger cities in each area were supplied with the pastoral products that were essential to the practice of everyday life is integral to this project. In this presentation, I will present the recent findings of my ongoing research into these issues in Gujarat. This work suggests productive avenues for new research in Sindh and provides an analytical baseline that allow for the meaningful comparison of data from these two important regions of the Indus Civilization.
Chatterjee, Kumkum

The King's Scandal: The Politics of History and Social Status in 16th Century Bengal

This paper explores a Sanskrit text composed in 16th century Bengal by Anandabhatta and entitled the Ballalacharitam. The paper situates this particular text vis-à-vis a wider social and cultural context in which social norms and social hierarchies were being both reaffirmed and challenged as a result of a particular conjunction of historical circumstances in late medieval/early modern Bengal.

The Ballalacharitam challenged the low social status (jati status) accorded to the caste of goldsmiths (suvarnavanikas) in the configuration of jatis in Bengal and it did so by invoking the historical past. The author, Anandabhatta, cast his critique of the contemporary social hierarchy of Bengal through a sharp indictment of the Sena monarch Ballala Sena, who had ruled several centuries ago, in the 12th century and highlighted an alleged sexual and moral indiscretion allegedly committed by the Sena king. Ballala Sena is traditionally regarded as one of the principal architects of the social and normative foundations of Brahmanical society in Bengal and the creator of the social hierarchy of specific jatis in this region. The argument advanced by Anandabhatta, several centuries later was that Ballalal Sena’s own lapses from approved Brahmanical behavior cast doubts on the legitimacy of the social hierarchies he had created.

The paper will also explore the significance of the form (i.e. a Sanskrit narrative) in which this social challenge was being articulated via the Ballalacharitam as well as the connections of this text to broader social movements of the time.
Chatterjee, Indrani

Marginal to Memory

Marginality itself is a historically produced effect. The history of a region east of the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta called Tripura bears this out. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, households inhabiting the region married members of households in regions presently identified as Burma/Myanmar and Manipur. This circulation of connubium was critical to the imbrication of all these households in a mid-nineteenth century politics of anti-colonialism. Yet such circulation as well as anti-colonial politics has secured a permanent marginality for such groups from postcolonial historiography. I argue that postcolonial historiography of South Asia embrace the cosmopolitanism of such older social norms based on the circulation and sharing of female bodies.
The tawa’if has enjoyed a prolific, if somewhat problematic, cultural presence in the national imaginations of the subcontinent. Opposing the figure of pure and moral femininity around which early 20th century nationalist movements articulated their opposition to British rule, the tawa’if came to embody the conflicted feelings of nostalgia and disapproval that Indian subjects felt towards the “aish-o-ishrat” that Munshi Premchand evokes in his 1924 short story Shatranj ke khilari (The Chessplayers) to describe the pre-colonial lifestyle of Lucknow. Recent scholarship on the tawa’if as a cultural performer in the city enables a critical investigation of her image as an aestheticized object of masculine pleasure. But how does the tawa’if’s presence in 19th century media such as novels, memoirs photographs, and letters enable us to question the conventional demarcations of purdah and kotha in the pre-colonial Indian city? Investigating the tawa’if as a celebrity performer before her public, the paper will engage with the question of space, gender, and mobility in Lucknow’s cityscape.
Chekuri, Christopher

Feeling the Past, Territorializing the Present: Bhavakavitvamu and the Medieval Imagination

In the Kasiyatracharitra (1838), Enugula Veeraswamy tells of his visits to many small towns in the Telugu speaking regions but rarely does he visit a historical or monumental site. By the late 19th century, however, the ruins of Hampi, Warangal, and other medieval empires become the central intellectual concern as well as an aesthetic palette for an emerging Telugu middle class intellectual. By 1933, texts such as Hampiksetramu enacted the nation’s dilemmas upon the ruins of Hampi, the Vijayanagara Empire’s imperial capital. The medieval past—from the archaeological ruins, forts, and palaces to the lives of kings, queens and heroes—became an important resource for the reimagining of the modern nation. Between 1900 and 1940, poets and writers writing in a variety of genres in Telugu expressed narratives of discovery, loss, and recovery about the past. In this, two literary genres stand out-- Bhavakavitvamu (Poetry of Feeling) and charitraka natakalu (historical dramas)-- and contributed to the popularization of the past even as they produced a modern national self.

This paper examines the role of the medieval in the making of a modern Telugu identity. It specifically looks at how the medieval was appropriated and reproduced in the poetry and plays of major writers such as Rayaprol Subba Rao, Krishna Sastri and Nayani Subba Rao but also lesser known poets and authors of the many popular plays drawing on the medieval “Telugu” worlds of Vijayanagara and Kakatiya empires. This paper specifically asks what role did the literary productions play in the ‘historiographical operation’ between the medieval and modern? What consequences did the aestheticization of the past in bhavakavitvamu and the natakams have on the emerging Telugu identity? How were the articulations between identity and national community and territory produced? In response, this paper traces Telugu literary productions from the early twentieth century and explores how they both monumentalized the past and territorialized the modern nation.
Chew, Dolores

Rags to Riches’ the Slumdog Way

Using the hype around the film Slumdog Millionaire as a point of departure, this paper challenges the accepted wisdom that a globalizing India creates opportunities for all. It interrogates the motives for presenting a fairy tale caricature of reality and explores how the film’s release at this moment in history and its positioning of India is not innocent, but opportunistic and highly problematic. The economics of globalization as experienced in India, replicate colonial mindsets and have entirely to do with profit margins, irrespective of whether living standards rise for all. They are in fact predicated on falling living standards for some. The paper discusses how because of the lingering shadows of the ‘burdened white man’, it is necessary to build up a feel good factor, with a myth of equal opportunity for all, where the kid from the sprawling Mumbai slum of Dharavi can escape to a Malabar Hill bungalow, when heightened and rising inequality make this possibility highly improbable. The paper looks at the slumdog millionaire phenomenon in historical perspective, informed by political economy and anti-racist feminist analysis.
Chhabria, Sheetal

Pop Star as Critic or Citizen-Hero? Rabbi Shergill’s “Jinhe Naaz Hain..?”

When Rabbi Shergill asked the question, “Jinhe naaz hai hind par woh kahaan hai?” (“Where are those who have pride in Hind?”) in his pop number widely aired on MTV, B4U, and Zee Music throughout India in 2008, he evoked the famous song from Guru Dutt’s film Pyaasa (1957). Even in his music video, Rabbi recalled the figure of the Urdu poet, Vijay, played by Guru Dutt, strolling through prototypical alleys and by-ways dishearteningly observing the quintessential figures of national - cultural pride, everyday men and women, dishonored and shamed in spite of their elevated position in the national imagination. In Guru Dutt’s version of the song the question was a rhetorical one; no heroes emerged as saviors, there was only the figure of the dying poet left to observe. The audience was to feel a sense of loss of the figure of the Urdu poet himself, the poet who could have been, or would have been a critic. It was as if the Nation had been deemed a failed project in Guru Dutt’s version, a farce, a self-sovereign state without citizen subjects.

In Rabbi’s version from 2008, however, each verse recites four accounts of newsworthy citizen-heroes, those who through their own controversies occupied the news media’s attention in the early years of the new millennium. People like Satyendra Dubey, Anna Manjunath, Navleen Kumar, resisted both privatization and greed, and were each ultimately silenced, sometimes by murder. Rabbi’s song amplified their voices, and as he himself said, made a space beyond Bollywood for meaningful cultural engagement. Musically, he deployed a guitar “riff” from the Indian national anthem, and in the video, wore a bracelet with the image of the Indian nation. Thus Rabbi’s song was thoroughly nationalized. Bloggers applauding the song spoke of themselves as “proud Indians”, grateful that a fellow citizen, Rabbi, had sung these heroes’ stories.

When examined outside of the song, and then compared to Rabbi’s retelling of them, the four stories don’t fit Rabbi’s nor his audiences’ (the bloggers’ for example) nationalist sentiments. This paper pursues the question of what kind of public space the pop star in post-colonial India is meant to occupy? How does Rabbi’s selective retelling of these four stories nationalize their resistive acts. Ultimately, is popular culture in South Asia a space of conformity and discipline of national subjects, or the site of resistance to elite and national priorities?
There have been concerted attempts to bring about change in gender relations and practices in Nepal—through policy and legal instruments as well as by way of encouraging enhanced participation of women in public spaces from the village to the national level. Transition is surely being felt by most of the participants in the perceptions as well as practices with regard to gender relations in Nepali society. The need for inclusion or participation of women in various kinds of groups emerging in the village communities is an agenda on which policy makers, gender advocates, researchers, development practitioners, as well as lay people unconditionally agree with each other. The difference begins to surface when it comes to specifying what is meant by empowerment and participation or in putting these ideas into practice.

While it is true that the voice and agency of one of the key players—the women—in the social, cultural and political transition in the local and national level is being accorded official recognition by means of policies and legislations, how the progressive sounding provisions in the policies related to gender justice become translated into actual practice is little understood in a systematic way. I will argue that in real life world the domestic and community domain remain the primary sites for shaping as well as enacting most of the social relations including those of gender.

This paper investigates women as social actors within the structure of social relations of gender, which in turn shape the nature of women’s agency in the governance of public resources and services. The community site selected for examining the arguments is the Farmer Managed Irrigation System that includes the men and women farmers in the hills of Nepal. The research covered ten communities with farmer managed irrigation systems in six districts across the country with a view to capturing the social and cultural diversities and associated practices on gender justice. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be used to examine the relevant questions and issues raised in the study.
Childs, Geoff

High Fertility in Highland Nepal? Regional and Global Contexts of Reproductive Change

During the 1990s marital fertility and total fertility rates in the ethnically Tibetan enclave of Nubri (Gorkha District, Nepal) were considerably higher than national averages. Whereas many parts of Nepal were already undergoing fertility declines, Nubri remained in a pre-transitional stage of demographic change for various reasons, including the lack of reproductive health services and access to contraception. Meanwhile, the rapid growth of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Nepal and India, subsidized in great part by foreign donations, created a demand for monks which was partially filled by recruiting children from high fertility borderland communities like Nubri. While fertility was falling elsewhere in Nepal, subsidized monastic education provided an incentive to continue having many children in the remote highlands. However, recent evidence suggests that Nubri is now undergoing a fertility decline. Rather than relying on state-sponsored services, women are crossing the border into China’s Tibet Autonomous Region where they can purchase modern contraceptives. This paper uses ethnographic evidence to examine the transnational context of reproductive decision-making, as well as the changing nature of parental views on childbearing by considering how outside influences are altering the cost-benefit equation of fertility. The analysis is influenced by Jim Fischer’s seminal work on the “convoluted and changing integration” of borderland villages in Nepal with South and Central Asia (Trans-Himalayan Traders, 1986).
Choi, Vivian

Anticipatory States: Life Under Persistent Threat in Sri Lanka

Reconstruction and nation-building have been a major part of the vocabulary in the recent history of the Sri Lankan state. In 2004, the devastation wrought by the Indian Ocean Tsunami ushered in new techniques of governance and disaster risk management as part of the national reconstruction process, while the dramatic ending of its decades-long civil war illustrated a concerted approach to combat and eliminate “terrorism” in the name of national security. Attempting to rebuild a new post-war identity as a unified, “terror-free” nation, it seems that the past cannot be so easily dispelled from this new image. In particular, these techniques of governance in the name of national security work to produce the constant threat of catastrophe – either in the form of a natural disaster or a terrorist attack, and thus, legitimize the government’s militarized presence in war- and tsunami-affected regions. These techniques of management are given purchase not only through the production of imagined threat or fear, but additionally through what Sri Lankans refer to as the unimaginable having already happened. The ruptures in the social fabric caused by the tsunami and the violence of war – to say nothing of the perceived failures of the Sri Lanka government to take care of some of its long-neglected populations in regions formerly controlled by the LTTE – have elicited what I would like to call “anticipatory states.” Through ethnographic detail, I will show how people have managed to live and continue to live utilizing anticipatory states of affective and sensory awareness. Anticipation, I will show, illustrates how the past and the persistent threat of danger and insecurity intertwine in post-tsunami and post-war Sri Lanka.
“Death Was Not the End”: Resentment and Narrative Structure in Salman Rushdie’s Shalimar the Clown

One productive way of looking at Salman Rushdie’s "Shalimar the Clown" is as a vigilante narrative, in which the leitmotif of revenge—fueled by dissatisfaction with state-sanctioned redressal—breaks down the dividing line between the personal and the political. The trajectory of this narrative is cyclical: Shalimar’s personal resentment launches his quest of Max Ophuls, a quest that is magnified into his involvement with the larger political project of Lashkar-e-Pak, the group of insurgents demanding independent Kashmir. Again, Shalimar’s successful “hunting” of Ophuls posits him as a quarry for India/Kashmira, who seeks to avenge her father’s death. In both cases, vigilante action is an externalization of a long-held resentment, and seeks closure through addressing the cause of this resentment. The narrative structure of the novel, however, problematizes this desired trajectory. Jean Amery defines resentment as a “logically inconsistent condition.” Amery claims that the “the time-sense of the person trapped in resentment is twisted around, dis-ordered, if you wish, for it desires two impossible things: regression into the past and nullification of what happened.” This paper argues that the narrative structure of "Shalimar the Clown" encodes this “dis-ordered” temporality, driven as it is by personal and political resentment. Vigilante justice would, for Shalimar and Kashmira, not only undo the wrongs that their resentments stem from, but recreate a pristine past. To this end, the cyclical form of the narrative endlessly reenacts the past—a temporal reference point that is present not only as a palimpsest but as a point to which narrative must always return. This movement is an ironic negation of narrative/emotional closure that revenge promises to give words.
Kasu Mia’s Citizenship: The state as a joke in contemporary Bangladesh

The joke, Sigmund Freud once wrote, points to a problem and makes use of the uncertainty of one our commonest concepts (Freud in Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, 1960). In this paper, I consider an example of a national identification card in Bangladesh that is circulating on the internet as a joke. Taking Freud’s dictum on jokes seriously, this analysis will be an attempt to understand the humorous effects of a document that is otherwise an object aimed at facilitating everyday practices of the state. It is perhaps no coincidence that the first ever attempt to issue digital voter identification cards, also to serve as national ID cards to enumerate and identify citizens, was made during a nation-wide state of Emergency. During 2007-2008, a military-backed regime legitimized itself on account of the notoriously corrupt and violent culture of politics in the country. While the citizens’ democratic rights were withheld in the name of bringing ‘democracy back’, the logistics of taking their photos and entering biographical information into the database were outsourced to the military. Reading this particular ID card as a material form of ideological practices, I show how the humor around a state-issued document makes evident the ‘failure’ of a familiar Althusserian drama of ‘hailing’ that is disturbed by such issues as kinship and culture. The identity of the citizen ‘interpellated’ in this card, ultimately, remains elusive to the evidentiary practices of state identification. Shedding light on the public culture of democracy in Bangladesh, this ‘joke’ also brings attention to the affective dimensions of documents, and the power of humor in revealing state-rationality as appearing nonsensical to many of its so-called citizens.
Claman, David

Carnatic Music and Christianity?

While Hindustani music is generally acknowledged as drawing on elements of Hinduism and Islam in its history, practitioners, instrumentation and style, Carnatic music is seen as exclusively Hindu in its origin, history, style, and lyrics. Christian musicians and composers, however, have played a small yet unacknowledged part in the classical music of South India since at least the eighteenth century. This paper will review this history and then turn to the current efforts Father Paul Poovathingal CMI, a Keralan Catholic Priest and professional Carnatic musician, examining his scholarly work and his attempts to re-indigenize the liturgical music of Keralan Catholicism.

Christianity has had a long history in Southern India, particularly in Kerala. The liturgies and music of Keralan Christianity, often contested, have been influenced by Syriac Christianity as well as by the Portuguese. And yet elements of Carnatic music have had a presence as well, for example, in the eighteenth-century compositions of Mosa Valsala Saasthrikal and Vidwan Kutty Achan, both Protestant, who used carnatic ragas and compositional forms in their music for worship.

After the Second Vatican Council, Carnatic ragas began to be introduced into the Syro-Malabar liturgy. Father Paul Poovathingal, popularly known as “The Singing Priest” in Kerala, is part of this effort. Raised in Trissur, Kerala, Father Paul only took up the study of music after completing his B.A. at Christ College in Bangalore, where his superiors did not approve his intention to study Carnatic music. He completed bachelors and masters degrees in music at Delhi University and later received his Ph.D. from the Department of Indian Music at Madras University. Since then Father Paul has been active on many fronts, concertizing throughout India and in Europe and North America, composing and producing CDs of Carnatic and devotional Christian music, and founding the Chetana Music Academy in Trissur.

Father Paul’s project has not been without controversy. For the most part, his efforts have been ignored by the Carnatic music establishment in Chennai. While his music is popular among lay Catholics in Kerala, some members of the clergy, accustomed to forms of worship and liturgical music modeled on Western forms, view Father Paul’s approach with consternation. Given the strong connections music often has with issues of cultural and religious identity and the many-layered history of Christianity in India, these controversies are not surprising. This paper explores and clarifies many of the issues involving Christianity and Carnatic music.
Cody, Francis

Echos from the Teashop in a Tamil Newspaper

The well-known cartoon and gossip column called “Teashop Bench,” found in the Dinamalar newspaper, presumes a different style of reading than that found in the very teashops it provides a textual representation of. In purporting to represent one type of public, this column is involved in the performative conjuring of a different type: one that is premised on an emergent sense of private domesticity, where the newspaper is something to be read silently at home. This is an emergent Tamil-speaking middle class public, built on a specific and recent textual habitus, that knows that there are other organizations of the public out there. I argue that the mediatized representations of textual consumption habits found in the Dinamalar newspaper take on specifically temporal and spatial dimensions insofar as the genre of sociability being represented in the text can be conceived of something of another time and place. This argument about the chronotopic production of a class sensibility is developed through a study that combines historical sociological investigation of changing media markets, ethnography of reading practices and teashop life, and textual analysis of the newspaper itself.
Coleman, Leo

Planning and Practice in New Delhi: Public Space, Citizenship, and Social Classifications

As the new imperial city of New Delhi was built, patterns of social and spatial relation were established that have decisively influenced the later development of the city. Several recent studies have examined the continuities of form and practice between the Improvement Trust of the Imperial period and the Delhi Development Authority, between the imperial ambition of a beaux-arts city, and the 1961 Master Plan developed by Ford Foundation experts and implemented (to this day) by Delhi bureaucrats and the judges of the High Court. Meanwhile, alternative approaches have stressed the "vernacular modernities" emergent from everyday life within this planned and bureaucratically organized city-space, opening room for an analysis of practices of dwelling and habitation as forms of "insurgent citizenship," or at least of negotiation and compromise. This paper compares the creation of bounded, ranked, and graded bureaucratic spaces in the imperial and post-Independence governmental city (focusing on New Delhi, and based on archival research in the papers of Albert Mayer, originator of the initial Delhi Master Plan), with the present proliferation of gates, walls and class homogenous residential spaces in present-day Delhi (based on ethnographic research). What kinds of social discriminations ground these different approaches to organizing city space? How has the modernist dream of a differentiated, but unified, city space been transformed into the contemporary reality of exurban sprawl and social exclusion? What role is played in these processes by government, by the market, and by daily practices? By analyzing the various descriptions of practice and culture in planning, and in theorizations of planning, this approach will move beyond the dichotomy between, on the one hand, colonial classifications as discipline, and on the other everyday practice as a space of improvisation, invention, and freedom. This paper will instead examine the shaping of public spaces for politics and action, and their foreclosure, through both planning and practice at once.
Coleman, Emelie

Persian as “Source” Literature: Interrogating the Story of Translation

In this paper I will focus on Hasan Shah's The Dancing Girl and compare it to the French book A Thousand and One Days. Both texts purport to be translations from Persian, but the existence of an original Persian text is questionable in both cases. If the authors have disguised themselves as translators of Persian, why have they each done so?

Given the lack of evidence to fully support or reject the translators’ claims, I will focus on how issues in the texts themselves are supported by the purported existence of a Persian original. As a language brought to the sub-continent through Mughal colonization, Persian has a very different status for The Dancing Girl’s audience than it does for the French readers of A Thousand and One Days. As a novel purporting to be a translation of a text written in 1790, and one which includes English colonizers as lead characters, The Dancing Girl explores issues of English colonialism before the official replacement of Persian with English in 1836. However, the Urdu translation did not appear until 1893. Many readers and translators continue to believe the story of the text’s translation, therefore dating the book to 1790 and hailing it as the first novel of the subcontinent. How would our reading of the novel change if the translator Kasmandavi were revealed to be the author, hiding behind a pseudoepigraphic mask and recreating in Urdu a Persian-language world of a century earlier?

How does the treatment of the "source" language and culture in Shah's book differ from the way that Persian as a language of the "Orient" is employed by the French "translator" of A Thousand and One Days? Can this examination shed any light on the shifting attitudes towards Persian as a lingua franca of India in the face of new colonizers’ languages?
Cox, Whitney

Map and Territory in Southern Alamkarasstra, ca. 1100-1350 CE

This paper will consist of an exercise in intellectual historical reconstruction, and its aims are at once substantive and critical. From around the beginning of the twelfth century, I argue, a large number of texts composed in the far south of the subcontinent can be seen to participate in a common, deeply intertextual conversation on the means and ends of literary art. Many of these works were written under the influence of or in response to the revolutionary works on alamkara composed in Kashmir over the preceding two centuries. This is a well-established, if under-researched, feature of southern poetic treatises in Sanskrit; less well documented but also evident is its effect upon the state of the art in Tamil literary theory at the time. In arguing for a coherent field of southern literary theory, I will begin by introducing the spectrum of texts in Sanskrit and Tamil that serve as its surviving evidence, including what references to lost works that we can gather from citations (works in Kannada will be treated in passing, as I cannot directly access them). Within this bibliographical picture, I will then attempt to identify certain themes and problematics that appear to subtend the field as a whole, including questions of the nature of performance, of the embeddedness of literary theory within metaphysical frameworks, and of the history of alamkara itself (commentarial work on Dandin, for instance, balloons in this period). I also will concentrate on the discussion of certain particular figures of speech across a number of texts, in order to chart the valence of the debates within this proposed field. Finally, I plan to use this discussion as an opportunity for critical reflection on the practice of intellectual history in premodern India, by putting a few difficult questions to these materials: can we even speak of a ‘field’ in this way? Can we presume the priority of (historical, geographical and periodistic) ‘context’ as a way to begin such a reconstruction? And, perhaps most difficult of all, why does it matter?
Bharat in the 1970s: Popular Hindi Cinema, Periodization, and Manoj Kumar

The 1970s in popular Hindi cinema are now remembered almost exclusively for the mid-decade arrival of Amitabh Bachchan as the “angry young man” in the context of Indira Gandhi’s “Emergency” (1975-77). But another perspective on Hindi cinema of the period might emphasize the contemporary popularity and success of actor and director Manoj Kumar, whose patriotic films earned him the nickname “Mr. Bharat,” in marked contrast to Bachchan’s frequently resistant “Vijay” throughout the same decade. Manoj Kumar began the period with Purab Aur Paschim (1970), which defined the popular representation of East-West moral oppositions until they began to be overturned by Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995) almost two decades later. At the center of the decade, simultaneous with Bachchan’s ascent to superstardom, Manoj Kumar appeared in three blockbusters, Roti Kapda Aur Makaan (1974), Sanyasi (1975), and Dus Numbri (1976). This essay will draw upon Manoj Kumar’s highly successful 1970s career (which included Filmfare Awards for acting and directing) in order to raise historiographical questions about the retrospective periodization of the decade around Bachchan’s dominance. How might emphasizing Manoj Kumar’s career rather than Bachchan’s redefine current views by film scholars of the 1970s in India? Might the contrast of their careers and characters — as patriotic and resistant heroes — in the 1970s (including their appearance together in explicitly contrasting roles Roti Kapda Aur Makann) provide a more complex picture of the decade than the retrospective emphasis on Bachchan’s impact allows? While this essay will attempt to explain the cultural politics that allowed for the simultaneous popularity of both Amitabh Bachchan and Manoj Kumar in the 1970s, it will address the more recent tendency in film studies (which only began to seriously consider popular Hindi cinema after the 1970s) to concentrate on Bachchan’s success and to largely ignore the career of Manoj Kumar (perhaps because of the rapid decline in the latter’s popularity in the 1980s, as well as his embracing of conservative political views scholars might find distasteful). The overall aim of this essay is to provide a more complex and complete picture of a key decade in Hindi cinema that is now often simplified, in retrospect, around the career of a single dominant figure.
Curtiss, Cary

Periyar and Atheism in the Self-Respect Movement

The development of rationalist, social, and political responses to caste oppression and the quest for self-determination in South India by the Self-Respect Movement and its leader, E.V. Ramasami Naicker (Periyar) has had many long-term effects on the cultural and political consciousness of South India. At the base of the Self-Respect Movement’s social reform lies a focus on rationalism that rests on a deep critique of religion. Though regularly described as an ‘atheist’ in biographies, hagiographies, and academic discourse, Periyar’s own words present a much more ambiguous religious self-conception. On one hand lie statements such as his famous creed: “There is no god; There is no god at all; He who invented god is a fool; He who propagates god is a scoundrel; He who worships god is a barbarian,” which consists of a definite and complete rejection of the idea of god. On the other hand, Periyar says, “I wish to state plainly that it is on account of ignorance that the theists call me an atheist.” How can these be reconciled?

This paper aims to look beyond the ascription of an atheist identity by others to Periyar. To what extent is the term ‘atheism’ imported into the context of the Self-Respect Movement? Given his overt emphasis on rationalism rather than on atheism in his essays and speeches, does this term really capture what Periyar was expressing? After addressing debates around the term ‘atheism,’ I examine examples of Periyar’s rhetoric from ‘Kudi Arasu’ and from speeches he gave in the early years of the Self-Respect Movement in order to understand Periyar’s own intentions and focus. I suggest that viewing Periyar as a rationalist, rather than an atheist, provides us with a clearer view of how he utilized a critique of religion towards his goal of social reform. Ultimately, Periyar was more concerned with the social effects of religion than with the verity of its claims.
Daurio, Maya

The Fairy Language: Language Maintenance and Resilience Among the Kaire-Speaking Tarali in Dolpa, Nepal

Sahar Tara is a community in Dolpa, Nepal, one of three villages in the world where the Kaire language is spoken. Kaire speakers are called Tarali. The perpetuation of the Kaire language is attributable to the resilience of Tarali livelihood systems and their continued attachment to place. Using informal interviews, participatory mapping, and participant observation, this research engaged Kaire speakers in an exploration of the relationships among their language, environment, and knowledge systems.

Taralis negotiate their social and spiritual lives through highly developed adaptive knowledge about the environment, mitigated by natural forces, deities, and intimate historical ties to the land. As explicitly revealed in the story about the origins of the Kaire language, Tarali define themselves and their collective history in the Tichurong Valley concurrent with their conceptualization and cognition of the landscape. This is also expressed in the abundance of Kaire names with which they categorize and compartmentalize their spatial understandings of where they live and work. Tarali situate themselves on their land and in their environment through site-specific traditions of remembering in the form of oral histories and social narratives, highlighting the important role of language in perpetuating these traditions.

In this place-based community where one’s livelihood depends on successful interaction with and adaptation to the specific ecological conditions of Tichurong, language acts as a mediator in articulating socio-ecological relationships. This adaptive knowledge is transmitted across generations through Kaire and the continued reenactment of ceremonies, worship, and a particular physical and geographical occupation of space. The maintenance of the Kaire language is dependent upon the resilience afforded by this sustained engagement with a place-based livelihood system.
Without a doubt the education and training of a would-be Sanskrit poet or kavi covered a wide variety of subjects ranging from philosophy to metrics to kāmaśāstra, and of course alaṃkāraśāstra “poetics.” All of these subject areas would help the poet to compose well-ornamented poetry on a broad range of topics with clever allusions to, and playful suggestions of, the well-known śāstras with which his audience would also have been familiar. Yet, before composition could take place, before any alaṃkāra could adorn a sentence, or a poetic suggestion be made, the building blocks of poetry, the very words themselves, had to be created. This fundamental process of verbal creation, so innate to most speakers, was the subject of the Sanskrit system of linguistic analysis, vyākaraṇa. In this paper I will explore how two relatively early writers implemented vyākaraṇa in their systems of poetics and a poet’s education.

Bhāmaha’s Kāvyālaṃkāra, a likely candidate for our first extent work on Sanskrit poetics, and Vāmana’s Kāvyālaṃkārasūtra, a somewhat later work of the 8th century, both include a final section on what they consider to be pure (śuddha) language with specific reference to the grammatical system described by Pāṇini’s Aṣṭādhyāyī and explicated in Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya; yet these two authors have differing views of what constitutes pure poetic language. Bhāmaha attempts to carve out a domain of correct language within the entire range of derivable forms, while Vāmana provides a helpful survey of grammatical dos and don’ts in addition to demonstrating how one can creatively derive forms which, at first blush, may appear impure. By surveying a few representative examples from these texts I will demonstrate what kind of grammatical aptitude these two authors believed was necessary to produce a good poet and also provide further insight into how they conceptualized poetic language in terms of vyākaraṇa. The differences between the two works will serve as a window into the varying role an alaṃkāraśāstrin could prescribe to Pāṇini’s grammar.
Davis, Mary

Examining Factions in Ancient Urbanism through the Distribution of Material Culture at Harappa

The archaeological site of Harappa, Pakistan (3500-1700 BC) was one of the first major urban centers of ancient South Asia and is one of the largest and best-studied sites of the Indus Civilization. Many different occupations, economic classes, ethnic and other groups are believed to have existed at the site, particularly during the phases when it was a major urban center. The city of Harappa was segmented into walled and un-walled divisions that are believed to have been indicative of competing factions. This paper will explore the composition and nature of these factions through the examination of the spatial patterning of several different artifact classes, particularly stone tools and pottery. These artifacts inform us about the types of activities and stylistic choices made by residents and craft workers in each of these segments of the city. The commonalities and variations seen both within and between different areas of the city in these artifact classes provides complementary lines of evidence for directly discussing critical issues related to the existence, distribution of different factions at Harappa both over time and space. The changes seen in these markers of identity and materiality can be used to develop fresh insights into what was certainly a dynamic, complex and shifting urban landscape at Harappa and provide a model of the origins of urbanism in South Asia.
Davis, Christina

Configuring Difference: Class and Cosmopolitanism among Tamil-medium Students in Kandy, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka’s post-independence language and educational policies have been highly successful in making educational available to all children, regardless of social background and region of residence. But despite these advances, language-medium policies, by segregating students on the basis of language, ethnicity and religion, have promoted inter-ethnic enmity and strife. Kandy Girls’ College, a Buddhist national school in the center of Kandy town, is one of the few schools on the island which, with bi-media (Sinhala and Tamil) streams, combine students from all major ethnic and religious backgrounds. Though the school makes some effort to bolster a pluralistic school environment (mainly through cultural and religious programming), ethnic differences are continually being instantiated at various scales. Focusing on the grade 10 Tamil-medium class (comprised of Tamils and Muslims from a variety of class, caste, socioeconomic, and regional backgrounds), I show how students draw on widely circulating categories of difference (caste, class, ethnicity, and religion) to discursively configure themselves, in their interactions with me, and with each other. I demonstrate how, through language ideological processes, students map linguistic forms onto social differences. I argue that though they are largely isolated from Sinhalese teachers and students in their school-based practices, these students, through their talk, are seeking to define themselves in a way that is not restricted by ethnicity, sub-ethnicity (Jaffna Tamil vs. “upcountry” Tamil), or religion, but rather belonging to an emergent idea of Kandy as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious urban center. As part of this process, though “upcountry” Tamil, Jaffna Tamil, and Muslim Tamil have long been recognized as salient Tamil varieties, adolescents are imagining an emergent “standard” Tamil that is not linked to ethnicity, caste, or religion, but to educational level, and their ties to cosmopolitan centers. This paper thus demonstrates that though their ethnic differences are being emphasized in most of their school and non-school based social practices, students are rejecting ethnicity in favor of class and educational capital as primary narratives of identity.
Dé, Rohit

‘A Republic Without a Pub is a Relic’: Litigating Prohibition in Nehru’s India

On May 29, 1951, Behramji Pesikaka, a Bombay Parsee knocked down a Sindhi couple while driving his jeep towards the Colaba bus-stand. At the end of the investigation, the police acquitted him of the charges of both reckless driving and drunk driving. However, since the medical report confirmed that he had consumed alcohol, he was prosecuted under the Bombay Prohibition Act. Pesikaka was one of thousands of Indians who were convicted of prohibition offences in the early years of independence, but he was one of a handful who decided to counter his conviction by mounting a constitutional challenge to prohibition laws. These periodic constitutional challenges frustrated the government’s prohibition policy and forced it to make several ideological and programmatic changes.

This paper attempts to locate both the prohibition laws and the constitutional challenges to them at the moment when the Indian republic came into being. The Congress Party finally had electoral legitimacy and access to the state machinery to implement its social and economic vision. It was a moment, as Khilnani describes it, that “the state was enlarged, its ambitions inflated, and it was transformed from a distant alien object into one that aspired to infiltrate the everyday lives of Indians….” To enforce prohibition the police was empowered to enter homes, search persons and seize property without a warrant. Criminal laws were changed to place prohibition offences in the same category as dacoity and treason.

The new Constitution opened up the government and its various agencies to legal challenges by greatly expanding the powers of the courts to issue writs against them. Due to their efficacy and low cost, writ petitions grew in popularity. They allowed people affected by the expanding powers of the state to force the state to engage with them.

This paper engages the literature on state formation and citizenship through a social history of constitutional and administrative law. Litigation maps conflict between the state and individuals, and reveals the ways in which the state intervened in the lives of its citizens. The adversarial nature of litigation system forces each side to put forward its claims explicitly through an emerging conceptual vocabulary. The courtroom becomes an “archive of citizenship”, as a space where the individual and the state can converse with one another. This paper excavates the body of case law on prohibition to look at how state and citizen encountered one another in Nehru’s India.
De Votta, Neil

Russia in South Asia: Sri Lanka's New Soft Authoritarian Dispensation

The implosion of the Soviet Union led to talk about how the end of the Cold War had also brought an end to human kind's ideological evolution and led to western liberal democracy being the final form of government. But others soon pointed out that many of the countries that supposedly embraced democracy were actually autocracies that merely used elections to mask their illiberal practices. Venezuela, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia stood out in this regard. Sri Lanka too has joined this league since Mahinda Rajapaksa became president in November 2005. Indeed, the island's political trajectory is similar to what transpired in Russia after Vladimir Putin took over. A comparison of the two states provides a troubling analysis of what the future may hold for the country.
Dhavan, Purnima

In Love and Service: Re-calibrating the Value of Naukari in Pre-colonial Punjab

As the Khalsa Sikhs attempted to create formal states in the territories conquered in mid-eighteenth century Punjab, they had to re-negotiate relationships with agrarian communities, hereditary service groups, and professional bureaucrats. For much of the preceding decades the relationship between Khalsa Sikhs and such groups were fraught with tensions. The bitter power struggle between the Sikhs, Mughal State officials, and the Afghans and their allies had fundamentally altered the loyalties and alliances among these key rural and urban strategic groups whose cooperation was essential to the smooth running of state functions in Punjab. Khalsa Sikhs, in their opposition to the previous regimes of power had developed a negative view of paid service or naukari, which they contrasted with their own idealized bonds of devotion, prem, among brother Sikhs and also fidelity to the teachings of their own Gurus (sikhi). In reconstituting their states, then, Sikh rulers and their allies created new alliances based on practices of rule that could negotiate the contested terrain of how emerging forms of service could be naturalized into the Sikh ethos of the new misal kingdoms.

My paper focuses on the courtly literature of the new Sikh courts and reads this literature in relation to events and practices at these courts in order to reveal how expressions of devotion, loyalty, and professional obligation mediated the opposing expectations of these social groups. The reformulation of local memory about the recent past was frequently repositioned in many popular texts in ways that eased the relationships among diverse service groups that became prominent in Sikh courts. These types of texts also sought to alter the negative perceptions of paid service, even as they encountered resistance to their discourse. Such texts, I argue, expose the tensions inherent in the new relationships forged in Punjab during the eighteenth century, but also helps elucidate the processes by which successful collaborations among diverse groups were rebuilt at the close of this century.
Dickey, Sara

Authenticity Discourses in Contemporary Tamil Filmmaking

The ways that Tamil films are categorized by filmmakers and film critics (and by censors, the press, viewers, and others) reveal a great deal about how these film personnel perceive audiences. In my interviews with Tamil film directors, producers, actors, and critics, and in my review of local film criticism in 2009, a strikingly recurring theme was the emphasis on the “new authenticity” in current Tamil cinema. In this paper I examine how films, and the discourses surrounding their production, mediate notions of cultural authenticity in contemporary Tamil Nadu.

The great majority of the films categorized as “authentic” depicted carefully drawn microcosms of rural or urban life (examples included Parutti Viran, Subramaniyapuram, and Chennai-65.) Although all were considered off-beat at the time of their production, and thus perhaps unlikely to achieve financial success, each of these films turned out to be popular with audiences and, to some extent, with critics (though some were also quite controversial). In each case the language, clothing, and settings were carefully detailed to accord with specific regions, city neighborhoods, castes and/or classes, rather than representing the more generic “Tamilian” of the films with which respondents contrasted them, usually films of the 1960s through 1990s. This authenticity was lauded as a form of realism. “Realism” is a shorthand for an aesthetic called for by elite critics since the origins of Tamil talkies; in this case, it is a realism that focusses on how everyday people “really” act. Of all the critiques made of cinema, the concept of “realism” is arguably the most multivalent and yet is used with the least precision. Here I briefly locate and contrast the current concern with authenticity in and with past discussions of both realism and cultural authenticity in Tamil cinema, and consider the implications of the recent focus. While imputed authenticity provides, among other things, a counter to the common dismissal of cinema as fantastic and even culturally alien, it is also closely related to many filmmakers’ and critics’ perception that the middle class is an increasingly key component of Tamil cinema consumers today.
Pandit Ghostwriters in Mughal Translations? The Case of the Samudrasangama

In this paper, I seek to highlight the role of native pandits and the relevance of their contribution to the Mughal translation movement. The Indo-Muslim scholars who engaged in the translation of Sanskrit works into Persian were largely dependent upon local pandits for providing access to, and interpretation of, Sanskrit textual materials. Even the choice of the works to be translated rested to some extent upon the pandits’ evaluation of the cultural import of a particular text. Yet, while the involvement of native pandits in the translation process has always been acknowledged, scholars have generally overlooked the importance of their contribution.

Although we have only scant information, if any, on the individuals involved in the translation endeavor, their theological and philosophical orientation may nevertheless be read into the translations they silently co-authored. Through examples drawn from Dara Shikoh’s treatise The Meeting-Place of the Two Oceans, in both the Persian and Sanskrit renderings (the Majma‘ al-bahrayn and the Samudrasangama, respectively), I emphasize the possibility of inferring the scholastic affiliation of Dara Shikoh’s otherwise unnamed informants.

The conclusions to be drawn from this analysis are twofold. On one hand, I argue the importance of restoring agency to native pandits in order to better understand the contexts and contents of Mughal translations. On the other, I seek to treat these texts as the result of a complex process of negotiation between all the agents involved.
Drewes, David

The Bodhisattva Ideal of Early Mahayana Sutras

One of the most important characteristics of Mahayana Buddhism is its advocacy of the bodhisattva path, which in pre- and non-Mahayana Buddhism was and is believed to require a vast number of lifetimes of strenuous effort. Theories of the Mahayana’s origin have tended to seek primarily to account for the development of this new orientation. Scholars long linked it to lay people reacting against the putatively selfish arhat ideal. More recently scholars have argued oppositely that only “die-hard,” primarily monastic, Buddhists would have been willing to undertake such a difficult path. This paper examines overlooked material from a range of apparently early Mahayana sutras that makes it clear that Mahayana authors typically believed that Buddhahood could be obtained easily. It suggests a thorough reconsideration of what it meant to be a bodhisattva in early Mahayana.
Dube, Pankhuree


Gonds are one of the six hundred some Scheduled Tribes recognized in the Indian Constitution and the second most populous scheduled tribe in Madhya Pradesh. Although Gond history and language languish in obscurity, knowledge of Gond art’s motifs, marketability and price are apparently of interest to consumers in India and abroad. In this project, I trace the realization of the Gond political modern forged through the confluence of and productive conflict between distinct phases of the museum discourse and the emergence of the Gond artist-intellectual. Through the story of one indigenous artist, Jangarh Singh Shyam (1964-2001), I situate the artist of the tribal modern in the context of the political struggles of marginalized Gonds in central India. An analysis of Shyam’s life and death open up a few questions for historians. If, as historian Prathama Banerjee suggests, the tribal is confined to the domain of the poetic, what can knowledges of the tribal modern achieve? Is there any dialogue between the vilified, violent adivasi Naxalite and the celebrated but silenced adivasi artist? In other words, what impact will the Gond modern artist have on the Gond political modern?
Dubrow, Jennifer

Debating Urdu's First "Novel": The Critical Reception of Fasana-e Azad in Late 19th-century Lucknow

This paper examines the critical reception of Fasana-e Azad, the first Urdu text advertised and discussed as a “novel,” in late nineteenth-century Lucknow. Published between 1878 and around 1883, Fasana-e Azad was an almost immediate success, garnering numerous readers’ letters and establishing the career of author and newspaper editor, Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar. In mid-1879, Sarshar began referring to his work as a “novel” within the pages of Avadh Akhbar, the prominent daily newspaper in which Fasana-e Azad appeared as a serialized supplement. This pioneering move, as well as Fasana-e Azad’s overall success, intensified an already fierce rivalry between Avadh Akhbar and Avadh Panch, the satirical literary journal where Sarshar previously worked. Avadh Panch responded by publishing a series of scathing critiques and parodies of Fasana-e Azad between 1880 and 1882.

In this paper, I consider these critiques and parodies as evidence of changing literary tastes. On the one hand, I argue the Avadh Panch critiques followed established literary norms, in focusing on Fasana-e Azad's correct use of language and idiom as the key to its prestige and pleasure. But on the other hand, the critiques also reflected developing literary tastes of the day, especially their concerns with “realism” and social respectability for men and women. In a fascinating case of revision, I then show how Sarshar responded to the Avadh Panch attacks, and some readers’ comments, by making substantive changes to Fasana-e Azad's language and social positions. These changes point to the contentious nature of debate surrounding Fasana-e Azad, and the interactive relationship of author, readers and critics in shaping this first Urdu “novel.”
Dussubieux, Laure

Trade patterns between South and Southeast as revealed by the study of glass bead compositions

Data from different sites excavated many years ago or more recently revealed interesting exchange patterns through the study of ancient glass composition. The results obtained from the early site of Khao Sam Kaeo (4th – 3rd c. B.C.) and the site of Phu Khao Thong (possibly 3rd c. B.C. – 4th c. A.D.) in Thailand illustrates the evolution of glass trade in this region. Comparison with major sites like Arikamedu in India and other sites in South India and in Southeast Asia shows that changes occurred from 500 B.C. to 500 A.D. reflecting the socio-political transformations that modify this vast region during the same period.
Eimen, Alisa

Reading Place through Patronage: Begum Samru’s Building Campaign in Early 19th – Century India

Peripheral in modern scholarship yet noteworthy to her contemporaries, Begum Samru (c. 1750-1836) of Sardhana is both remarkable and enigmatic. Few primary documents remain from a lifetime of engagement in regional politics that intersected with transnational interests on the eve of South Asia’s colonization. What documents do remain, however, are as varied and commanding as sources suggest the begum was herself. From military battles to papal correspondence to large-scale architecture projects, Begum Samru was an active participant who carefully navigated what was a particularly uncertain historical moment. Despite the death of her foreign husband in 1778, she maintained his land and wealth for more than five decades, overseeing military troops as well as her own public presence. Considering contemporary socio-political upheaval, her ability to negotiate the changing political tides and shifting loyalties is certainly noteworthy. Examination of her artistic and architectural patronage alongside this history supports her political significance—and her interest in representing it.

The expense and visibility of her patronage unequivocally suggests the begum’s interest in articulating her own authority. While there has been some scholarly analysis of her painting commissions, there has been very little attention paid to her architectural patronage. By examining this body of material and the fragments of contemporary textual evidence, this paper asserts that Begum Samru was participating in a long-standing tradition of expressing authority and identity through art and architecture. Moreover, the utilization of a variety of artistic tropes and architectural elements portrays a figure of regional significance, who was keenly aware of her multiple audiences, including Mughals and Marathas, Muslims and Christians, as well as British Company men and their wives. In summary, this paper argues that Begum Samru’s narrative of authority, as articulated in art and architecture, suggests a fluidity of artistic tropes, the malleability of identity, and a sovereign space elite women were still able to claim in the decades preceding the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857.
Bibliobomb: Anticolonialism and the Dangerous Circulation of Prison Notebooks

This paper interrogates the genre of the anti-colonial “jail notebook,” with particular reference to V. D. Savarkar’s Hindutva: Who is a Hindu? Written while Savarkar was imprisoned in the Andaman Islands, Hindutva took form scratched onto the rock walls of the revolutionary’s jail cell. Every day before the guards entered, Savarkar committed the most recent passages of his work to memory. Upon his release in 1919, he transcribed, published, and distributed the tract anonymously. Since Hindutva’s publication, both the text and Savarkar himself have remained tethered to this biographical note. This paper asks how and why narratives of Hindutva’s composition enhanced the text’s cachet after it had entered the cultural domain of print. Drawing on the work of Ulrike Stark (2009), Swapa Chakravorty and Abhijit Gupta (2004), Robert Darnton (2001) and others, the paper places Hindutva within the history of the book in South Asia. It calls particular attention to how, in the early years of the twentieth century, print media entered into an intensified field of cultural regulation due to the increasing instability of British colonialism. In these years, the colonial state established and extended prohibitions on the publication and circulation of print objects, identifying books as a dangerously subversive political medium. A 1907 Delhi court case, for example, ruled that a “disaffected press has been so many years at work, that libels against the government… have become a political danger.” Indeed, it was, at least in part, precisely these prohibitions that allowed heroic narratives of oral composition to emerge as a potent vehicle for political mobilization. Part of a larger project that considers jail notebooks by Jawaharlal Nehru, Bhagat Singh and others, this paper seeks to modify Robert Darnton’s claim that “books were different, because they were explosive” with the following suggestion: the book as political medium was most potent when censorial prohibitions rendered it “implosive,” signaling its imbrications with other modalities of cultural and political production.
Embuldeniya, Gayathri

Negotiating place and space: The production of the Tamil nation on the streets of Toronto

Over the course of seven months, Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants in Toronto gathered to protest the humanitarian crisis and accompanying political events in their homeland, as the 26-year old war in Sri Lanka drew to a close with the military defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009. The protests changed in tone during this time. At first they focused on calling attention to the suffering of internally displaced people, drawing on discourses of freedoms and rights. Eventually, alongside this brand of activism emerged an overt nationalist brand of protest that fearlessly wielded Tamil Eelam flags and pictures of the LTTE leader, while spilling onto the streets of downtown Toronto. Protests were organized outside embassies, human chains brought traffic to a standstill in the downtown core, and traffic on the Gardiner Expressway was stalled for a few hours as these spaces were temporarily appropriated by Tamils in their hundreds, and sometimes tens of thousands. These were months of great emotion, as many knew of someone who was missing or who had lost their lives during these final months of war, so that the events that were materializing in their homeland structured the everyday lives of Toronto Tamils.

Drawing from informants’ narratives, personal observation of the protests, media reports, and social networking sites, I will discuss how the Tamil nation and desired nation-state were produced on the streets of Toronto, and how this production transformed over time. I will track how this production drew on discourses of modernity while simultaneously, and increasingly, positing a resistant Tamil nationalist identity as seen by the wielding of LTTE-supportive symbols of protest by demonstrators, despite the LTTE being a proscribed organization in Canada. These discourses encoded a certain contestation in how the Tamil nation should be presented to a Canadian public. The production of an imagined homeland on the streets of Toronto also resulted in a contestation of urban space, as some Torontonians felt that their city was being usurped by Tamils supporting a proscribed organization. While other Canadians struggled to remain true to ideals of “modernity” with its respect for human rights and diverse voices while simultaneously attempting to discipline a minority whose symbols of protest had been associated with a terrorist organization, Tamils were trying to carve out a place for themselves – a separate homeland in Sri Lanka, but also, a place for themselves in Canada.
Etter, Connie

"Mental" Residents, "Modern" Citizens: Knowing and Belonging in a Tamil Women's Rehabilitation Shelter

At a women’s rehabilitation shelter in Tamil Nadu, residents come for temporary shelter, food, medical care and counseling after being separated from or abandoned by their families. They are unwed mothers, prisoners’ wives, former prostitutes, orphans, widows, and those running from abusive parents, lovers, or husbands. A Christian missionary opened the shelter and it continues to receive most of its financial and programmatic support from Christian communities and individuals. They frame rehabilitation work, however, within the ideals and language of secular democracy and religious pluralism. It is a project of inclusion and acceptance of difference. They aim to help women become citizens of society, members of families. Yet, staff members implicitly and explicitly categorize residents as mentally confused and incapable of thinking, reflecting, and participating in the very ideas that frame their rehabilitation: secularism and pluralism. This paper examines how poverty, elitism, and knowledge intersect in projects of women’s rehabilitation. By focusing on rehabilitation, I demonstrate how denying residents’ knowledge influences how staff, volunteers, and board members of the shelter imagine and pursue women’s inclusion in society. I also consider how women’s distance from normative family relationships influences how others perceive of their knowledge about abstract ideals of community and belonging.
Fiol, Stefan

Mobility, Migrancy, and (Out)Marriage in the Popular Music of the Uttarakhand Himalayas

In the central Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, North India, music albums in the vernacular Kumaoni, Garhwali, and Jaunsari languages are produced in the recording studios of Delhi before being distributed to mountain-dwelling consumers. This research explores the relationship between the musical commodity and the consumer as it is informed by mobility at a number of levels: 1) the movement of amateur singers from mountain villages to recording studios in the plains; 2) the reverse movement of musical commodities distributed from sites of production in the plains to sites of consumption in the mountains; 3) the consumption of music while in motion, for example, on roads and pathways, or during rituals that presage movement, such as weddings and processions; and 4) the themes of dislocation expressed in the content of vernacular albums, which articulate sentiments of longing from the perspective of the male migrant living in the plains or the married woman living in her husband’s residence.

This paper will follow the “social life” of musical commodities as they travel from plains-based recording studios to sites of consumption in the mountains. Music albums articulate meaning via their circulation along this pathway, and via the relational networks between artists, music companies, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers situated in the plains and the mountains. This ethnographic research on musical consumption elucidates a range of behaviors that challenge proto-capitalist assumptions about commodity exchange; for example, many music companies subvert entertainment licenses and censor approval, many amateur singers distribute albums for little or no financial return, and many consumers utilize dubbing stations in lieu of purchasing original cassette or video albums. These activities are not removed from capitalist forms of exchange, but they qualify the cultural values in which these exchanges take place, and they foreground the importance of a regional, socially-embedded logic of capital informed by networks of prestige and kinship.
Flatt, Emma

Spices, Smells and Spells: The Use of Olfactory Substances in the Conjuring of Spirits

This paper examines a series of incantations for the conjuring up of spirits in the 16th Century manuscript Nujum al-‘Ulum. An encyclopedic manual written in 1570 by the reigning sultan of Bijapur, ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah, for a close circle of courtly intimates, the Nujum al-‘Ulum is a fascinating source for the history of magical practices in the Indo-Islamic courts of the medieval Deccan. Much of this manual is dedicated to the description of Indic and Islamicate practices of catachic astrology and astral magic, including chapters on the making of talismans, the summoning of spirits and the drawing of chakr, or astrological charts. In this paper, I will examine the role of olfactory substances in the incantations for the summoning of five female spirits, the so-called “daughters of the sad houri,” on specific days of the week. Drawing on contemporary medical, philosophical and theological understandings of the transformative potential of smells, this paper will consider the work performed by spices and perfumes and the various methods of processing these substances in order to maximize their efficiency within the spell. In this paper I will suggest that the sense of smell has been undeservedly neglected in scholarly examinations of the socio-cultural life of Islamicate India and that an analysis of the use of olfactory substances in magic, serves to underline the powerfully transformative nature of perfumes, spices and other kinds of smell in premodern India.
Fournelle, John - (co-authors R. Law and H. Konishi)

A Nephrite Jade Amulet from Harappa: Implications for Long-Distance Contacts in the Harappan Period

A semi-translucent, spinach-green colored truncated conical amulet with a high polish was recovered in a cemetery burial pit dated to Period 3B (ca. 2450-2100 BC) at the Indus Civilization city of Harappa. On-site specific gravity testing of this artifact indicated that it has a density of 3.0, which is too heavy for green agate and too light for vesuvianite-grossular garnet but precisely the density for nephrite – a rock in the actinolite-tremolite series that is one of the two recognized forms of jade. The amulet was brought to the University of Wisconsin-Madison for further non-destructive characterization using the X-ray diffraction (XRD) and variable-pressure scanning electron microscopy (VP-SEM) facilities at the Department of Geoscience. The results confirmed that the object was indeed composed of nephrite jade. Some scholars have suggested that the purported existence of “jade” at sites like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro is indicative of long-distance contacts between Harappan peoples and those dwelling in jade source areas such as China or Burma. It is quite possible, however, that the nephrite amulet in question was made from raw material obtained within the Greater Indus region.
Franke, Heike

The Persian translations of the Laghu-Yogavasishtha

Although the translating of Sanskrit literature into Persian has been an integral part of the Indo-Persian cultural encounter ever since the Pancatantra was rendered into Middle Persian in the sixth century CE, we can recognize an apogee of these activities during the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar and, to a lesser degree, of his successors Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Quite a number of well-known Sanskrit texts, like the big epics Mahabharata and Ramayana, the tales of the Kathasaritsagara or the chronicle Rajatarangini, were translated into Persian, but only one religio-philosophical work attracted the attention of the Indo-Islamic rulers: the Laghu-Yogavasishtha. This epitome of the Kashmiri Mokshopaya, which dates back to the 10th century, mainly deals with the illusory nature of the empirical world and the way to mental deliverance. Its main protagonists are the wise and holy Vasishtha and his royal disciple Rama who, regardless of his future occupation as temporal ruler, gains perfect knowledge and becomes a jiwan-mukt, a person freed during lifetime.

The numerous copies listed up in the various manuscript catalogues prove the interest of the Mughal emperors in this text. The number of translations, however, is still uncertain. According to the relevant literature, the Laghu-Yogavasishtha was rendered five (F. Mujtabai), four (D.N. Marshall), three (Sh. Sharma) or two times (Jalali Na’ini) into Persian. This paper will be concerned again with the question, how many Persian translations were made and for whom and which peculiarities characterize the different versions.
Frey, James

Miracle, Magic, and the Maritime Margins of South Asia

Discussions of South Asian Islam often overlook maritime subcultures crucial to the spread of Islam throughout the Indian Ocean region. This paper examines how miracle stories and magical practices developed in coastal contexts, and how these stories and practices relate to the larger historical process of building an Indo-Islamic World across multiple cultural boundaries. Just as the coastal margin is a frontier between South Asia and the outside world, miracle stories and magic are a conceptual frontier in which Islamic and non-Muslim worlds meet, and where popular Islam negotiates ambiguities of belief and practice with orthodoxy. The first part of the paper focuses on dargahs in Karachi, Mumbai, and Mangalore where stories of pious saints, representing various social backgrounds, are connected with memories of miraculous occurrences. The second part of the paper concerns miracle stories associated with dargahs and tombs patronized by the Wallajahi rulers of the Carnatic (Tamil Nadu) in the 18th and 19th centuries. The third part of the paper shifts the focus from miracle to magic, examining practices such as fanditha, jinn beliefs, and spiritual healing in the maritime Islamic sub-cultures of the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Tamil Nadu. In conclusion, I will argue that dargah and “healing miracles,” jinn beliefs, and fanditha anchor Islam across maritime South Asia, despite their association by many orthodox people with shirk (polytheism). Places and people associated with miracles and magic also integrated the Islamic cultures of maritime India, uniting ethnicities and social classes, while in the case of the Wallajahi dynasty they even incorporated an immigrant ruling elite into an existing, deeply-entrenched local Islamic subculture.
Gairola Khanduri, Ritu

Cheap Taste and Street Humor?

For the past few years I have explored the intersection of gender, class and humor in the public discussion of newspaper cartoons in India. This paper builds upon a debate around representation of women in cartoons, which points to how the politics of gender and class harness humor in a democratic context. Arguing for a critical analysis of both feminist and liberal perspectives on interpreting cartoons and appreciating humor, in this paper I explore the problematic of citizenship and belonging posed by the interpretive dilemmas of an everyday visual form – the newspaper cartoon in India. In particular, I interrogate the evocation of “cheap” taste and “street” humor as the intuitive framework for critiquing what is acceptable in the public sphere.
Gamburd, Michele

Narrating Class, Caste, & Citizenship: Stigma, Prestige, & Corruption in the Tsunami’s Aftermath

In Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the relief and recovery windfall raised questions of accountability and transparency. People struggled with the morality of aid distribution in a situation where the scale of the undertaking put intense pressure on existing administrative structures. While the deserving received what they needed, some undeserving people also benefited. This paper examines local discourses of entitlement, equity, and social status as they surfaced in narrative performances about the distribution of tsunami aid. Based on ethnographic data gathered in 2005 and 2006 along Sri Lanka's southwest coast, the research explores how residents in a tsunami-affected area reflected on corruption, sponging, and other perceived inequities in the distribution of aid. Discourse analysis reveals complex interpersonal politics. By narrating stories about themselves and others, research subjects crafted social prestige using class- and caste-based logics. They honored those who gave aid or refused to accept aid (the middle class or the authoritative patrons) and pitied or scorned those who received it (the lower class or those from marginal client castes). Government officials used this same cultural logic to counter accusations about their dishonesty and to question the moral integrity and entitlement of citizens who demanded or received aid that they did not deserve. Through critical discussions of post-tsunami policies, individuals refined and re-imagined class, caste, and citizenship. The paper argues that the aftermath of disaster provides a prime social context for the refiguring of social hierarchies.
Gandhi, Supriya

The dialogue genre in Mughal translations of Indic texts

In 1653 the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh reportedly had a series of meetings with the ascetic Baba La’l Das; their dialogues were subsequently rendered into Persian prose. Modern scholarship has tended to treat these compiled dialogues as a documentary record of the encounters between the prince and Baba La’l, glossing over the literary qualities and multiple, widely-diverging, recensions of the text. This paper examines various versions of the Baba La’l dialogues, arguing that they are discursively interconnected with a body of early-modern Indo-Persian works that are similarly structured around a dialogue between a seeker, often a ruler, and a spiritual preceptor. These include Persian translations of Yogavasistha abridgments, as well as the Astavakra Gita and Bhagavad Gita, among other works that present Vedantic ideas and often posit a monotheistic core common to Islamic and Indic mystical traditions. Furthermore, the Khulasat al Khulasa, a Persian compendium of Indic knowledge compiled in 1673, groups the Dara-Baba La’l dialogues with an assemblage of Vedantic and Nath yogic writings conveying instruction on liberation through the dialogue format. Through the Persian text of their dialogues, Dara Shikoh and Baba La’l are thus emplotted within the generic conventions of an evolving Indo-Persian literary genre that draws on Indic asketic and soteriological traditions. Delineating the dialogue genre as a distinct type within the larger corpus of Persian indological writings serves as a step towards analyzing broader trends in early-modern engagements between Persian and Indic intellectual traditions.
The mid-1920s in the Madras presidency witnessed the emergence of a powerful anti-caste movement called the Self-Respect movement spearheaded by E.V. Ramasami Naicker. The Movement’s challenge to Brahminic Hinduism has been much analyzed in historiography and much eulogized in the hagiographical literature produced on the Movement. However, its critique of Brahminic patriarchy has at best received sporadic attention. This paper argues that a critique of patriarchy was central to the Movement’s discourse and action – one that necessitates a more sustained historiographical engagement with it. It analyzes how the Movement used marriage as a powerful tool with which to attack both patriarchy and Brahminism. The sacramental nature of Hindu marriages required the performance of Brahminic rituals and the officiating presence of the ritually pure Brahmans. The indissolubility of Hindu marriages had a gendered effect, with women required to adhere to its indissolubility even upon the death of their husbands. Thus, the sacramental and indissoluble nature of Hindu marriages made it an apt and powerful arena upon which to mount the Movement’s challenge to Brahminic patriarchy. The Movement achieved this in three distinct ways. First, by declaring marriage to be a contract, it got rid of Brahminic rituals, made divorce and remarriage possible, and made women (and men) conscious agents in this key life-cycle event. It also eliminated the highly patriarchal ritual of ‘kanyadaan’ (literally ‘gift of the virgin’) and attacked the ‘thali’ (the thick yellow thread with a usually gold pendant tied around the bride’s neck by the bridegroom during the wedding ceremony that signifies a woman’s married status) as a symbol of wives’ slavery to the husband. All these were intended to radically enhance women’s autonomy. Second, it used these marriages as political spectacles with Movement leaders officiating, conducting, and making speeches at the events. Third, it celebrated some marriages, especially those involving prominent Movement activists, as examples of ‘walking the talk’. Using periodicals such as ‘Kudi Arasu’ and ‘Dravidan’ in Tamil and ‘Revolt’ in English, this paper focuses on four such prominent marriages to demonstrate how Self-Respect women used the space that the Movement opened up for challenging Brahminic Hindu patriarchy through exercising conscious choice in marriage.
Ganguly, Keya

Catastrophe and the Image

This paper explores the cinematic afterlife of two major catastrophes: the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in 1905 and the artificially induced famine of 1943 (in which approximately three million people perished). Specifically, it looks at the ways that those events inaugurate a sense of place, self, and history in extremis in Ritwik Ghatak's Meghe Dhaka Tara (The Cloud-Capped Star, 1960) and Satyajit Ray's Ashani Sanket (Distant Thunder, 1973). As perhaps India's two most important filmmakers, their statements reveal the extent to which the events of partition and famine have produced a crisis of consciousness and consciousness of crisis that together provide the terms for thinking about a simultaneously cinematic and catastrophic utopianism. My objective in the paper is to advance a case about intensity and duration as key concepts for making contact with the largely inexpressible experiences of deprivation and suffering that the partition of Bengal and the famine of 1943 each represent. That these experiences are conjured up through expressionist strategies of dislocation in Ghatak’s case and pastoral depictions of a lyrical nature in Ray’s, is central to an overall argument about the doubling of critique and crisis (first formulated in the interwar years by the intellectual historian Reinhart Koselleck).
Gittinger, Juli

Secular Religion? Cultural Nationalism vs Hindutva in the fight for "Who is a Hindu?"

Defining 'Hindu' as an inclusive category of designation has been the project of the Hindu nationalist movements since the early 20th century. Undergirded by Hindutva ideology, through which V. D. Savarkar outlined "Who is a Hindu?", 'Hindu' has been submitted not as a religious construction, but as a cultural one. In doing so, the idea is put forth that Hindu is synonymous with Indian and therefore something Muslim, Sikh, Christian etc should identify as to be part of the Maharashtra.

This is the very notion that Lal Krishna Advani, the former president of the BJP and Leader of the Opposition, has presented. 'Cultural nationalism' is an attempt to reclaim Hindu as Indian, and celebrate India's traditional diversity, tolerance, and rich history. Where Hindutva has failed, is in its continued emphasis of race, motherland, and civilisation, which forever ties Hinduism to India and prevents it from becoming a global religion. For the Hindu Nationalists, the problems largely come down to differing Hindutva ideologies, questions of conversion, and where Muslims fall in the landscape of Hindu identity.

These discourses intersect with the current debate of Indian secularism, which relies on the claim that Hinduism is, in a sense, a 'secular religion' because it allows religious freedom. If the claim is made that only Hinduism is truly secular because it is tolerant, then the project of secularism relies on definitions of Hindu religious identity. Indeed 'Who Is a Hindu?' is at the very heart of religio-political discourse in India.

This paper will focus on the concept of 'cultural nationalism', which is considered a departure from the traditional hard line Hindutva position. I question as to whether this is simply a redressing of Hindutva elitism, or a legitimate approach to utilise current discourses of secularism in an attempt to reclaim Hindutva ideology from right wing nationalism. Additionally, I employ Charles Taylor's definitions of 'secular' (that is, tolerance and diversity as delineated in "Rethinking Secularism") to support nationalist arguments that 'Hindu' is inherently 'secular'. By doing so, I discuss whether there is such a thing as a 'secular religion', such as the 'religion of nationalism' suggested by Talal Asad in "Formations of the Secular," or if such terms are merely a redressing of Hindutva propaganda.
Megalithism in Southern India

Megalithism in Southern India – ‘is it a manifestation of internal socio-economic and political transformation’ or ‘the result of external cultural influences’.

Megalithism as a practice in the South-Asian context is widespread in terms of a cognitive or a symbolic cultural idiom, covering an extensive time frame, with presently available dates from 1000 B.C., to the medieval period and still practiced by many tribes even today. Consequently, it covers an extensive chronological sequence which traverses a vast geographical region, it manifests itself in a variety of shapes and forms all over the Indian sub-continent. Assigning all these types and variations comprehensively under a single umbrella is in itself a major point of debate; yet for want of any other specific nomenclature and exclusive typological assignments, it provides an initial point for commencing a study or analysis.

Though many aspects of the megalithic practices have been studied, they have not been dealt with in a lucid manner, for instance the emergence of megalithism as a cognitive cultural trait associated with a particular culture in the Indian sub-continent or the point of its origin as a burial practice, is still a point of conjecture. Its pan-Indian occurrence along with other traits associated with it has to be analyzed and clearly demarcated and understood in terms of intra-regional and inter-regional dynamics and influences, further a rationalized chronological framework needs to be developed and adopted. At this conference an attempt is being made to work out and create methodologies to address them, using a combination of literary, archaeological and anthropological sources.
Gopal, Sangita

New Kids on the Block: FTII and Commercial Hindi cinema

In the history of Hindi cinema, the 1970s have been identified as a landmark decade that witnessed the rise of what has been variously called the Indian New Wave, Parallel cinema and/or Art cinema, partly or wholly subsidized by the state. The decade also marked the emergence of multistarrer masala movies - like Sholay, Amar Akbar Anthony, Deewar etc. Simultaneous with these trends (and some would argue in response to it), the popular product emanating from the Mumbai-based film industry also underwent certain shifts as small to medium budget films with lesser known actors and new directors began to attract a primarily middle class audience. Some of the most lucrative propositions at the box office during this decade were these smaller films like Guddi, Piya Ka Ghar, Rajanigandha, Chitchor etc. In this paper, I will explore to what extent the rise of a middle-class cinema, preoccupied with the trials and tribulations of the bourgeois private sphere, was shaped by creative agents trained at the newly founded Film and Television Institute of India. I will focus primarily on how actors, directors and technicians negotiated and gradually “reformed” at a molecular level Mumbai cinema’s industrial and textual mores. Scrutinizing fanzines, trade publications, news media, memoirs and biographies from this era; I hope to show how the putative divide between an (statist) art cinema, meant for the edification of audience, and a more popular product, geared towards mass entertainment, was indeed being bridged by these new agents. By embracing a “meaningful” cinema that is also profitable, it might be said that middle cinema allocated to itself a socially-committed entertainment form that was once the hallmark of popular Hindi cinema while siphoning off some of the aesthetic inventiveness of parallel cinema. As a result, by the end of the decade the parallel cinema all but died while the “masala” film began to lose its middle-class audiences. While this phenomena has largely been studied from the vantage of exhibition (the decline of the single screen) and competing technologies (television), little attention has been paid as to how the industry itself witnessed a shift in its body-politic. I suggest that by looking at the changing composition of the industry we might be able to shed light on these shifts at the macro level.
Gottschalk, Peter

Shared Fears, Divergent Expressions: Islamophobia in British India and the United States

Those promoting common Islamophobic tropes of Muslim men as fanatics, Muslim woman as oppressed, and Islamic religion as intolerant, often substantiate their arguments by declaring the prevalence of these claims in different countries as reflective of their truth. After all, they argue, all stereotypes have some seed of truth. In other words, they defend their views with a tautology asserting that past repetition of an allegation is justification for its reiteration. An historical evaluation of these claims demonstrates that their persistence in Britain and the United States demonstrate how received truisms have established – and continue to establish – basic expectations about how Muslim behave. These expectations shape how information about Muslims is collected, interpreted, and communicated.

An historical exploration of nineteenth century materials demonstrates the roots and qualities of Islamophobia that Britons and Americans have shared. Meanwhile significant differences between the perspectives found in the two countries demonstrate how these were fashioned by differing international interests and domestic concerns. In order to emphasize this difference, the paper chooses to compare American views of Muslims with those found among Britons who had lived in India. In the latter context, predominantly white Christian Britons found themselves a minority in a land once ruled by successive Muslim rulers who left impressive vestiges of their once mighty empires. As a ruling elite, Britons had to adapt their Islamophobic inheritance to the exigencies of governing tens of millions of Muslims. In contrast, since most Americans did not recognize that many enslaved Africans were Muslim, their engagements with Muslims appeared to be a matter of international affairs alone in which “Mohammedans” represented an out-group far more alien than the Jews, Catholics, and other religious minorities who lived among the Protestant majority.

Analysis of period sources illustrate how Americans and Britons shared a common Islamophobic heritage, relied on many of the same tropes of representation, yet shaped their imagined views of Muslims in ways that both served their economic and political ambitions and helped define their own societies through negative comparison with Muslims. The paper relies on the theoretical reflections of historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith to analyze the common dynamics of cultural and religious comparison at work in the divergent details of contrast.
Gould, William

‘Deserting His Post’: The Muslim Officer, Corruption and the 'State' in Uttar Pradesh, 1947 – 1950

This paper looks at how discourses of ‘corruption’ in early post independence UP reconstituted popular views of the state, by raising public suspicions about the integrity of Muslim government servants and policemen. In the late 1940s, the very ‘anti corruption’ mechanisms set up to investigate misappropriation of government goods and the marketing of controlled products and raw materials from the early 1940s, also served the purpose of controlling Muslim populations. In the first few years after independence, the central government maintained half yearly lists (which were to become annual lists by mid 1950), of ‘persons debarred by the Central Government or a State, from government service’. In the half year ending 31 December 1948, of 225 officers debarred from a range of central and state level departments, 100 were Muslims accused of ‘deserting his post’. In a more general sense, powerful voices in the Congress party called for a wholesale reconsideration of officers whose loyalties were simply under suspicion by virtue of being Muslim, between 1949 and 1950.

These developments had a number of outcomes and implications: Muslim officers often became scapegoats for the systematic use of violence and the on-going misappropriation of goods. Such activities were presented in public discourses around anti-corruption, as an outcome of the movement of ‘disloyal’ Muslim government servants across the border. In these discussions, government servant ‘corruption’ was also indirectly linked to notions of loyalty to the state – an idea which was reinforced by reference back to Congress campaigns to expose the corruption of the colonial police. Secondly, government servant integrity (which included the apparent involvement of policemen and other officers in episodes of systematic violence directed against refugees), was related to Pakistan. Between late 1947 and the early 1950s then, there were repeated enquiries, particularly directed towards the Special Police Establishment, about the activities not only of officers who had (either temporarily or permanently) migrated to Pakistan, but also Muslims in general. Finally the idea of the potentially corrupt Muslim government servant was wrapped up with the issue of refugee rehabilitation, evacuee property and the abduction of women. These developments were to have a lasting impact on popular perceptions of the Indian state, and were to affect everyday approaches to government officers and policemen well into the 1960s.
Goulding, Greg

Thoughts On Realism: Muktibodh's Writings from the 1940s to the 1960s

This paper examines the role and conception of realism in the work of Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh (1917-1964). Realism assumes tremendous importance in twentieth-century Hindi literature: it operates as an ideological viewpoint vis-a-vis the cold-war-tinged debates between “progressive” and “experimental” literary institutions; as a set of proscriptions strongly informed by the Soviet-endorsed theories of “Social Realism”; and as a formal problematic of the depiction of time and space. I will focus on this last definition through an examination of the poetry and prose of Muktibodh, who perhaps more than any Hindi writer is seen both to have been defined by these debates and to have transcended them in his fantastic, allegorical poetry.

Through an examination of a series of Muktibodh's writings and poems, I will show how he articulated a theory of realism and aesthetics which engaged with the major debates of his time and reconfigured them to suit his own artistic priorities. Muktibodh did this by creating literature which ignored generic, political, and ultimately experiential boundaries, and an assessment of this work requires us to reconsider our own conception of such literary and ideological categories as the experimental, the progressive, and realism itself.
Govind, Nikhil

Two founding instances of the modernist subject: Agyeya's Sekhar and Sarat's Pather Dabi

This paper focuses on the conflicted construction of the modernist autobiographical figure of in two key Indian literary texts- one from the nineteen twenties Pather Dabi (1926), the other from the forties, Sekhar (1941, 1944). The widely read Bengali novelist Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya (1876-1938) serialized and then published an immensely popular novel Pather Dabi in 1926, one that was immediately proscribed by the British government “on the grounds that the said book contains words which brings or attempt to bring into contempt and excite disaffection towards the government established by law in British India.” This is odd because a strong critique of the central figure and his politics and values, especially regarding violence, exists within the book itself in the form of a female “friend” whose argumentation is effectively twinned to that of the male figure. Likewise, in the Hindi novelist Agyeya’s (1911-1987) novel Sekhar: A Life, the affective and ideological rhetorics of the protagonist Sekhar is often countered and mediated by a twinned protagonist, Sashi. The novel remains however named Sekhar though much of the latter half of the novel, and to many its most powerful sections, centre on the interrelationship of Sekhar with his distant cousin/friend/lover Sashi. It is the unnameable nature of this unboundaried space between friendship, romance and filial love that make it difficult to demarcate the subjectivity of Sekhar from Sashi for a large part of the novel. After Sashi’s death at the end of the novel, it is as if the novel cannot go on, and indeed Agyeya never published the promised third volume in the remaining four decades of his life. The paper will argue that the inaugural moment of modernist subjectivity in South Asian literatures as evidenced by these two novels is often marked by this inability to disentangle an isolable self from an inter-subjective, gendered otherness, an otherness that is both self confirming in certain forms of intimacy (an intimacy consisting of all the contradictory tones of romance, filiality, friendship), but also self injurious in its irredeemable alterity, the inability to form stable socially sanctioned relationships. While the singular protagonist often seeks autonomy, and often even grandeur, the intersubjective element provides the counterpoints of skepticism, greater affective range, and a different sense of community, conscience and courage from, for example, violence-conscientized nationalisms that the protagonists of Pather Dabi and Sekhar articulate.
Does Traditional Agriculture Have a Future in Sri Lanka?

The traditional one-village-one-tank model of agriculture has served as a cultural model for Sri Lanka’s past and for some, a scenario for the future. With the accelerated Mahaweli development of the 1980s and the 1990s emphasis on farming as business enterprise, traditional approaches were marginalized within national strategies. Recent efforts to promote entrepreneurial values, along with global trends to invest private equity in small farmers (and then reap a return) reflect a general assumption that traditional agriculture is doomed. Countervailing messages from the experience of “multifunctional agriculture” in Europe and Japan/Korea, along with climate-induced interest in the ecosystem services of agriculture, portend a battle of conflicting agricultural paradigms. The competing cultural logic (values and goals) of these divergent paradigms for Sri Lanka’s agricultural future are analyzed through policy documents, secondary research, and personal communication with proponents (using the author’s professional contacts stemming from earlier research in the country). Case study experience from the Philippines, Bali and other countries of the region (all members of the Japan-based International Network for Water and Environment in Paddy Fields, INWEPF, where the author is a consultant) offer some guidance for Sri Lanka. Based on these comparisons, plus the rich European experience in implementing multifunctional approaches, a “soft path” of multifunctionally-inspired agricultural development is proposed. This model would seek to build on Sri Lanka’s well established agro-ecological traditions as well as the emerging agri-business sector, to fashion a hybrid model of sustainable agriculture that respects the environment, socio-cultural values, and economic aspirations.
Guha, Sumit

The Transformation of Caste, Locality, and State in the Early Modern Era: Was Gujarat the Exception or the Rule?

An important essay by Fredrik Barth showed how social stratification with many socio-economic features of caste could be generated in an Islamic agrarian society on the periphery of South Asia. Barth also went on to make the important suggestion that rather than seeking uniform cultural essences pervading all the units of a complex society, we would better understand its working if we focused on the boundary processes that generated segmentation rather than the “cultural stuff” within the segments. This paper will explore the implications of this insight for our understanding of the 18th and 19th centuries in South Asia. We need to approach the sub-continent as a poly-ethnic society with all that that implies for the innumerable transactions that reproduce and structure a social system in such a setting.
Gummer, Natalie

Kings, Sutras, and the King of Kings of Sutras

The Suvarna(pra)bhasottamasutra (the Sutra of Utmost Golden Radiance), the self-anointed “king of kings of sutras” (sutrendraraja), addresses itself explicitly to a kingly audience, and advocates a particular vision of kingship to that audience. It also figures itself as a potent repository of kingly qualities that are conveyed to the king of humankind through the ritual of preaching the sutra. The trope of kingship in the sutra assures the human king of the power of the sutra to consecrate him—both as king and as a future Buddha—and simultaneously provides a pretext for the king who undergoes the ritual of hearing the sutra to claim the status of a bodhisattva. Indeed, the predominance of royal themes and rituals in the sutra, as well as its self-proclaimed consecratory qualities, might be seen as provocative precursors to what Ronald Davidson terms the “imperial metaphor” in esoteric Buddhism. This paper investigates how broader South Asian representations of kingship in the early centuries of the Common Era might illuminate the rhetorical function of kingship in the the Sutra of Utmost Golden Radiance—and conversely, how the sutra might shed light upon kingship and its metaphorical applications, especially in relation to the production of literature.
Guneratne, Arjun

The Invisible Himalaya: On the Reification of National Boundaries in South Asian Area Studies

The ethnography of Nepal has much to contribute to discussions concerning the relationship of caste systems to the state and to kingship, but this material is almost entirely absent from that discussion as it has taken place in Indian ethnography. Yet the Nepal material — in particular the legal code known as the Muluki Ain of 1854 — not only throws light on dominant caste conceptions of the relations among castes and their relations to the state or to kingship, but also on the distinction between caste and tribe, which appears to have had as little utility in 19th century Nepal as it did elsewhere on the sub-continent. While area studies in recent years has increasingly been questioned by those whose thinking has been shaped by the concept of globalization, in part because the notion of area “draw the wrong boundaries, ignore important interactions and are driven by obsolete assumptions about national interest, cultural coherence and global processes,” this paper develops this critique from a different angle, to argue that although the study of that geo-political area once known as the British Empire in India has been replaced by the area concept of South Asia, in the intellectual practice of scholars working in India, the modern Indian state is treated as being synonymous with the concept of South Asia. The explanation for this has to do with the implicit reification of national boundaries as demarcating the proper field of inquiry. This makes it both possible and logical for a scholar working in a particular region of India to draw on the scholarship of those working in other regions of that vast nation-state to illuminate the problems with which they are concerned, while failing to consider relevant work in adjacent South Asian countries -- because the implicit unit of study is not the area but the national state. This approach is encouraged by the architecture of South Asian area studies, which is organized on the basis of national political boundaries. The development of a Himalayan area of study first articulated in Jim Fisher’s edited volume The Indo-Tibetan Interface, further complicates this picture.
Gururani, Shubhra

Mapping the Politics of ‘Flexible (Urban) Planning’: The Case of India’s Millennial City – Gurgaon

With glitzy towers, corporate head-offices, gigantic malls, luxury apartment enclaves, IT complexes, and countless construction sites, Gurgaon, the Millennial City of India, in the outskirts of New Delhi, stands as an urban spectacle. In the last two decades, with the advent of housing and IT boom and heavy influx of foreign investments, present day Gurgaon is considered widely as India’s poster child of neoliberal success. While it harbors the dreams and destination of expanding middle and elite classes, it also represents a deeply ‘splintered urbanism’ in which countless number of migrant workers live in urban villages turned dormitories and make-do with bare or no infrastructure amenities like water, sewage, electricity, transport, and hospitals. In an attempt to understand how a place like Gurgaon came to be, the paper tracks the history of urban planning and unplanning over the last several decades and locates it in a comparative context to show how Gurgaon’s story starts much before India’s economic liberalization and embodies what a planner described as the case of ‘flexible planning.’ Drawing on interviews with town planners, private developers, and property agents, the paper argues that Gurgaon presents a case of sovereign exemptions which were crafted at particular political and economic conjunctures and paved the way for highly privatized infrastructure and a fragmented urban landscape.
Hanlon, Julie

Interregional Interaction in Early Historic Kerala and Tamil Nadu

During the Early Historic Period (500 BC – AD 500) South India witnessed the rise of urban centers and an increase in long-distance maritime trade. Much research has been dedicated to describing the various artifacts of ‘Indo-Roman’ trade and documenting their distribution at sites across South India. However, the mechanisms of this trade network are still not well understood. While earlier notions concerning the presence of Roman trading colonies have been contested, new models for understanding the exchange relationships between the indigenous populations and foreign traders remain absent. The historical, rather than anthropological, perspectives used to study exchange networks in South India overlook the important social relationships inherent in exchange. Moreover, a focus on foreign trade and trade routes has bypassed the study of local interaction and exchange. This paper examines archaeological, epigraphic, and literary evidence in an attempt to develop a model of interregional interaction and exchange in South India. I suggest that an anthropological interpretation of indigenous exchange networks is an important first step in contextualizing and conceptualizing the role of long-distance maritime trade.
Hare, James

Poets and Power in the Bhaktamal Tradition

Nabhadas' Bhaktamal (c. 1600 CE) praises the qualities of hundreds of saints and thereby imagines a community, united by bhakti (loving devotion), which spans boundaries of caste, class, region, language, gender, era, and even divine status. Among these devotees are poets, praised for singing of the glories of God and for spreading bhakti. This paper considers Nabhadas' treatment of three poet-saints--Raidas, Mirabai, and Surdas--as well as their representation in the commentarial literature, especially Priyadas' Bhaktirasabodhini (1712 CE). In so doing, it will highlight notions of authorship and authority during the 17th and 18th centuries.

For Nabhadas, bhakti flows from guru to disciple within four canonical Vaishnava sampradays (orders or sects). Poets, however, are an exception to this structured transmission. For poets, authority follows from their status as authors. For Nabhadas, Raidas is primarily a teacher. His profession as a cobbler is alluded to but not explicitly mentioned. The source of his authority lies in the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of his teachings as well as his considerable powers of discernment. Nabhadas's portrait of Mira asserts the supremacy of bhakti over political authority and familial restraints. Mira's absolute devotion to Krishna is the source of her considerable authority. Bhakti relativizes all other commitments and social arrangements. Mira's challenges to earthly power provoke a violent response, but bhakti gives her the strength to defeat her enemies. Nabhadas praises Surdas specifically for his literary skills. For Nabhadas, Surdas is a master of poetic technique, and other poets acknowledge his greatness.

In his treatment of poets, however, Priyadas differs sharply from Nabhadas, as he does in many other matters. Caste becomes a prerequisite for certain kinds of authority and the sampraday becomes more central. Here Raidas is identified--in spirit if not in body--as a Brahman and as a disciple of Ramanand. Priyadas also places Mirabai in a Caitanyite lineage, making her a follower of Jivagoswami. In an omission that may be significant, Priyadas declines to comment at all on Surdas.

Later commentaries continue to engage with what it means to be a poet in this tradition. This paper concludes with an overview of 18th, 19th, and early 20th century commentarial interventions in this debate. Over the centuries, the category of poet has remained unstable and contested.
Haskett, Chris

Confession and motivation in the Suvarnaprabhasottamasutra

Since its earliest forms, Buddhism has included some form of confession, and the Mahayana sutras are no exception. The desanaparivarta, or Confession Chapter, of the Suvarnaprabhasottamasutra forms the core of one of the oldest and most popular books of Mahayana Buddhism, and served as a model for later confessions. Through confession, the sutra promoted itself by showing its audience the absolute necessity for the sutra’s supramundane potency. In this paper, I examine how the Suvarna mobilized a rhetoric of fear to connect Buddhist moral discourses and cosmologies through confession. The confession explained the problems of the audience’s present life, connected these problems to their ethical choices, and thus encouraged them to access a new source of liberating power that would allow them to move beyond their own failings. As with other Mahayana confessions, the Suvarna also relied on Buddhist depictions of the terror and pain of life in worlds to come, and thus beckoned its audiences toward the sutra as a bulwark against catastrophic rebirth. This paper will consider contemporary accounts of awareness of sin in South Asian religious cultures, and will demonstrate how an answer to the problems of evil and fault would have appealed to audiences in ancient South Asia.
Herring, Ronald J.

Class? Politics? Euphemization, Voting, and Power

Class is a pervasive force in all societies. Like race, its effects may be subtle or overt, unmentioned in polite society or explosive and impossible to deny. The methodological problem is similar: euphemizations of race and class are common; there are strong interests in disguising or denying effects. What we observe empirically is frequently difficult to code, and may well be the tip of a much larger iceberg. Class politics specifically is often measured by overtly contentious politics – strikes, lock-outs, demonstrations – or by electoral politics – the rise or fall of parties espousing a class agenda. These behaviors are observable, widely reported and often consequential. More fundamentally important are the effects of class on politics that are not overt, nor directly observable, but are enabling and limiting conditions for other forms of political behavior.

Class was once prominent in understandings of Indian society – and Indian intellectuals were prominent in global discourse around class – but is currently under multiple clouds, for divergent but ephemeral reasons.
Hertel, Bradley

Hindu Panchang Calendars -- East Meets West

Hindu Panchang Calendars (HPCs) are wall calendars that combine Western and Hindu time, often more than one regional variant of the Hindu calendar, and still other calendars such as the Muslim Hijira and the Parsi Shahenshai. Major population shifts to urban areas in recent decades disrupted ties between former villagers and their Brahmin priests on whom they had long depended for knowing when to hold religious observances. That separation created need for wider dissemination of knowledge of at least the rudiments of Hindu time. In the early 1970s, culturally savvy publishers, notably Thakur Prasad in Varanasi and Kalnirnay in Bombay, began publishing Hindu panchang calendars marketed primarily to housewives. Numerous other publishers quickly took up the chase. HPCs are important for facilitating modern Indians in navigating between Indian and Western time.

After summarizing the history of HPCs beginning with British-period antecedents, this paper illustrates the range of differences in HPCs and their cultural implications. These fall into two broad categories – calendrical, i.e., details on time for the systems included, and non-calendrical. Calendrical content includes: a) choice of calendar system for framing the year and months, b) dates for at least two calendar systems, c) sunrise/sunset, d) phases of the moon, e) tithis (lunar days) and nakshatras (stars), f) eclipses, g) festival and fast days; h) auspicious and inauspicious times for travel and other activities, and i) predictions (e.g., crops, weather, financial). HPCs vary on number of such items and in ways information on each is conveyed, for example, through text vs. charts vs. graphics. Non-calendrical content includes, among other things: recipes, health and beauty tips, film stars, postal rates, history of the publication, advertisements, and interpretations of dreams. Being non-essential to the primary purpose of keeping track of time, non-calendrical material varies tremendously from one HPC to the next. Secular temporal matters constitute a middle ground between the two broad categories. Relevant topics include: charts for daily notes, and for keeping track of newspaper and milk purchases, dhobi deliveries; and train and airplane schedules.

This paper draws on analysis of my collection of well over 100 HPCs, representing more than 50 publishers from various cities including Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Delhi, Allahabad, Varanasi, and Kolkata, etc. gathered between 2002 and 2010, and on interviews with numerous publishers and sellers.
Hewamanne, Sandya

Threading Meaningful Lives: Arranged Marriages, Businesses and Careers

This paper focuses on how newly immigrant South Asian women use threading, a South Asian hair removal method, as a home business to negotiate new challenges they face as women who have migrated to the U.S. as new brides of Asian professionals. Based on in-depth interviews this paper investigates how these young women, whose adjustment to marital homes became doubly difficult due to their moving to the U.S., combined their expected roles as good wives and mothers with their own aspirations of becoming women whom their spouses, in-laws and children could be proud of. The paper evidences how women use several linguistic strategies in transforming threading from a ‘women’s home beauty remedy’ to a business that is differently meaningful for the service providers and their mostly South Asian American clientele.

These women use capitalist terms/vocabulary when describing their ‘business’ and career while adding values they claimed are exclusively South Asian, thereby re-imagining threading as a unique cultural experience for mostly second generation Asian Americans and the few other clients they serve. By stressing their higher educational qualifications and passion for natural and ayurvedic beauty routines they create distance from licensed beauticians who they branded as “uneducated women trying to make ends meet.’ The paper focuses on how threading has become a tool in these women’s struggles to define their place within marital homes, Asian American communities and the wider American society which they feel type-cast them as ‘obedient’ Indian wives.

While achieving empowerment and identity through work is not a new phenomenon these women’s narratives also highlight how they confront and negotiate new forms of differences--race, social class and sexuality--even as they challenge specific notions of gender and social class within Asian American communities. Although they, to a certain extent, disrupted extant notions of ‘good wives and mothers’ they articulated this disruption within the existing models and more often than not desired to be the ‘bahu’ that their mothers-in law admired and envied. The paper, therefore, investigates the ‘threading’ business as a “cool place” from which women enunciate fully-pledged membership within their families, communities and nation.
Hiltebeitel, Alf

Sukthankar’s “S,” the Sakuntala-Upakhyana, and Some Criticisms of the Pune Critical Edition

As Visnu S. Sukthankar put it in his Prolegomena to the Pune Critical Edition of the Mahabharata, “The Southern recension impresses us thus by its precision, schematization, and thoroughly practical outlook. Compared with it, the Northern recension is distinctly vague, unsystematic, sometimes even inconsequent, more like a story rather naively narrated, as we find in actual experience.” (1933, xxcì; author’s italics). The Sakuntala story provided much of Sukthankar’s best evidence for this vivid and thoroughly apt assessment. He brought out how the Southern recension reverses the order of the Sakuntala and Yayati stories, and also its penchant for “sententious maxims” and for adding new characters. Sukthankar differentiates his Southern recension text “S” from P. P. S. Shastri’s attempt at a critical edition of the Southern recension (1931), which he strongly criticizes. In the first part of this paper I will review Sukthankar’s work on the Sakuntala story as part of the Adiparvan, and argue that Sukthankar’s probatory work and provisional results on an archetype of the Southern recension have more to tell us about the critical edition archetype than Sukthankar realized or, perhaps, was willing to say himself. In this, building on the work of TP Mahadevan (2008) and my own study of the Narayaniya (2006), I argue that, thanks to what Sukthankar shows us about “S,” we are able to say that the Pune CE—where it sticks to its editorial principles and has both sufficient Northern and Southern manuscripts to go by—is successful in reconstituting what can be called a “baseline” Mahabharata text. The second part of this paper will be a critical review of the positions against the CE taken by Georges Dumézil, Madeleine Biardeau, David Shulman, and most recently Wendy Doniger.
Hindman, Heather

Making Entrepreneurial Citizens in Kathmandu

The protracted democracy project that has marked the history of Nepal for the last 20 years has seen the construction and destruction of various identity spaces for the Nepali people. As understandings of the future of the Nepalese state are put forward and contested, different groups and individuals feel hailed by such visions. These local political processes have intersected with Euro-American discourses of “democracy promotion” and “civil society,” which have been prominent in both governmental and NGO programs implemented in Nepal and elsewhere. These attempts to “develop” a distinct form of democratic self have resonance with the simultaneous rise of transnational programs seeking to promote entrepreneurialism, small business skills and microcredit. The conjuncture of business and government has diverse effects; as Aihwa Ong notes, “neoliberal values of self-management and self-enterprise have different implications for citizenship, depending on interactions with particular political environments” (Ong 2006, 502). This paper examines the conjuncture of Nepal’s near constant transformation as a political entity and dominant ideologies of entrepreneurialism being forwarded by transnational institutions. Through a study of diverse settings including in Kathmandu University School of Management’s entrepreneurship curriculum, the Carter Center’s on-going projects to promote civil society in Nepal and the activities of the U.S. Embassy and the American Chamber of Commerce to promote business skills in Nepal, I sketch out a linkage between supranational programs targeted to support democracy in Nepal and their association with the development of business knowledge. These and other similar projects to conjoin democratic and business skills find their target in an elite population of globally-aware Kathmandu residents, who weave their way into and out of the missions of transnational organizations as they seek not only to build a new form of governance in Nepal but also a different future for themselves. Based on initial fieldwork and archival material, I suggest that the production of a new class of Nepali citizens is being shaped by transnational understandings of “best practices” for both business and governance in ways that implicitly change the type of political subjectivity available in a future Nepalese state.
Ho, Meilu

The Origin of Hindustani Classical Vocal Music in Krishna Temples.

Hindustani classical music is commonly thought to derive from the music and texts of Indo-Muslim courts. This paper traces its origins to a different location: the 16th-century, Vaishnava, Pushti Marg song tradition that began in the temples of Braj, considered to be Krishna’s birthplace. Pushti Marg has the largest known liturgical repertoire and format of any temple tradition in India today. Its poetry, pada-s, is in Braj Bhasha, the poetic language par excellence of pre-modern Hindi poetry. Its melodic and rhythmic sources are raga and tala. The recorded kirtan-s (devotional songs) fill four volumes totaling several thousand songs, and are sung in daily and festival liturgies. Over twenty-two songs are performed each day. The emblematic style is dhrupad — that of the temple. Its primary rhythmic instrument is the pakhavaj, the precursor of the tabla. The highly aestheticized liturgy changes daily, varying by time of day, season, and the state of Krishna’s cosmic play, lila. The color of Krishna’s clothing, vestment style, headdress, food offerings, and backdrop hanging (picchvai) are fine-tuned to suit Krishna’s reigning sentiment (bhav) of each day. The picchvai tradition of backdrop hangings inspired the development of Rajasthani schools of painting. Pushti Marg leaders had close relations with Mughal emperors and Rajasthani rulers, and the tradition is known as “the path of the Maharajas”. Gujarati bania merchants have also been supporters from the 16th century, and are the primary benefactors of the tradition today.

A body of compositions from this liturgical tradition is claimed by proponents of the classical khyal gharana-s (singing schools) to belong to their lineage. Numerous amongst them are known, key compositions in their gharana-s.

My argument for the Braj, Pushti Marg origin of Hindustani classical music is based on evidence from archaic temple ragas, the way text is set to music, and compositional repertoire.
Hodge, Tiffany

The Construction of Religious Authority in Rural Bangladesh

Research on religion in Bangladesh has, over the last ten years, focused primarily on the political role of religious ideology and rhetoric. The work of several scholars has helped us to understand the often violent relationship between secular and Islamist movements in Bangladesh. In my dissertation research, I have turned the focus from Islam in politics to local religious practice and belief in order to understand how lay Muslims interact with various religious authorities and to examine the ways in which religious authority is produced and maintained. In their everyday lives, Bangladeshi Muslims encounter several legal systems, including the state-sanctioned civil and criminal law courts, the Family Courts, and the informal, community-sanctioned salish courts. But other legal authorities may also be called upon to adjudicate cases or to provide advice, even if they do not hold authority through the Bangladeshi state. These legal authorities include kazis, muftis, huzurs mullahs, and prominent community leaders, as well as pirs and Sufis who manage and work in mazars (dargahs or shrines). Using data drawn from my ethnographic research in a rural area in southern Bangladesh, I will analyze various forms of religious authority, emphasizing the lack of exclusive boundaries between the charismatic (e.g. Sufi pirs) and the legal (muftis, etc), particularly from the perspective of those who seek out their authority. I will also examine women’s access to religious authority/authorities, as well as their access to religious knowledge.
Hoffman, Brett

Copper Metallurgy at Harappa

Excavations at the Indus Civilization site of Harappa, Pakistan have recovered a large and diverse assemblage of copper and bronze metal artifacts. The assemblage includes tools and weapons, items of personal ornamentation as well as administrative and economic objects. Copper and bronze artifacts have been recovered from all time periods and occupation areas at the site. The overall assemblage is representative of a broad range of activities and a variety of segments of life at Harappa during the third millennium BC. The analysis of these artifacts and their archaeological contexts provides fresh insight into the distribution and use of copper and bronze metal at the site, shifts in metallurgical technology, the development and expansions of metal trade networks, and stylistic changes over time.

Research on the copper and copper alloy objects from Harappa is currently being pursued along several lines. The identification of trade networks is being undertaken through lead isotope analysis of ancient and modern ores, ancient manufacturing waste and a selective study of finished goods. The analysis of artifact composition is being conducted to investigate alloying patterns and manufacturing techniques. Additionally, materials related to copper metallurgical production have recently been analyzed. These materials provide new data for the nature of copper production at a major Indus city. This paper will present the results of a variety of analyses on a potential copper production slag uncovered at Harappa.
Holmberg, David

Two Rituals/Two Headmen/Two Times

Ritual and political power have always been closely entwined in Himalayan societies. Following Jim Fisher’s exemplary practice of multi-temporal research focusing on transitions, this paper compares the role of headmen in the production of polity in two distinct periods in Tamang history: the old royal regime and the new democratic era and the radical transitions occurring in social organization in Tamang villages. In particular, this paper examines the demise of Chhechu (Tshe-chu) - a festival common in Tamang villages decades ago – and contrasts it to the rise of Lhochaar - Tamang New Years in the last decade. In particular I examine the production of political power through ritual as a continuing theme in Tamang practice. It simultaneously examines the changing place of headmen in local society and the role of ritual in instantiating their positions.
Holtzman, Maya

Between Realities and Reforms: The Education of Muslim Girls

In 2006, the Sachar Commission reported that despite 60 years of Constitutional promise, educational access and achievement among Muslims of India remained “dismal.” The Commission found that the “dismal” educational status of Muslims was further exacerbated by their gender, rural/urban and socio-economic positions. The Commission emphasized that the expectations of Muslim girls were typically thwarted by existing educational structures and practices. India’s flagship educational reform movement, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) however, contends that schooling is essential for all students from all “sections of society” in order to achieve national progress and individual development. It seeks to address educational inequalities through “an education system that is not alienating” and that draws on “community solidarity.”

In light of the concerns expressed by the Sachar Commission, this paper explores how the findings and recommendations are translated in the new educational reform policies. Do the changes that aim to improve the education of all Indian children address the educational hopes and expectations of Muslim girls? What relevance do the new reforms have for the experiences and concerns of Muslim girls from socio-economically disadvantaged and rural communities?
Hopkins, Ben

Governing by "tradition": The Frontier Crimes Regulation and Imperial Governance in the NWFP

From the invention of British imperial authority along the North-West Frontier, subjects were divided between the ‘civilized’ inhabitants populating the cultivated plains and the ‘wild tribesmen’ living in the hills. The problem of governing this latter group, ‘independent tribes’ who were nevertheless considered imperial subjects, proved a vexed one for both the British Raj and independent Pakistan. The mechanism developed by imperial administrators to govern the frontiersmen was the Frontier Crimes Regulation, first passed in 1872 and still in effect along the Frontier today. The FCR was designed to exclude the Frontier’s inhabitants from the colonial judiciary, and more broadly the colonial sphere, and instead encapsulate them in their own colonially-sanctioned ‘tradition’. This paper explores the use of the FCR as an instrument of governance from its first incarnation in 1872 into the twentieth century, arguing it was key to shaping the nature of frontier rule.
Huberman, Jennifer

Possibilities and Perils: Children, Space, and Tourism in the City of Banaras

The anthropologist Nita Kumar has argued that within the city of Banaras, gender plays the most "crucial" role in influencing the way that space is structured, accessed, and experienced by children (Kumar 2007: 239). In this paper I use Kumar's observations as a departure point for discussing the children who work along the riverfront of Banaras. While the riverfront has long been a "must see attraction" for foreign travelers and tourists (Cohn 1996), over the last few decades, it has become a popular place for local children to do business. Girls and boys frequently come to the ghats to peddle postcards, souvenirs, diyas, or offer their services as guides. As Kumar's work would suggest, the ways that girls and boys participate in this touristic space and economy, and their respective abilities to profit in it, are intimately shaped by gender. For instance, while girls are restricted to selling low priced items on the ghats where their behavior and activities can be monitored by kinsmen, boys are often free to wander about the city and engage in the more lucrative enterprise of guiding and commission work. However, the children's experiences are also informed by other aspects of their identity, such as class, caste, and neighborhood affiliation. Drawing upon twenty months of fieldwork, in this paper I will examine how these multiple dimensions of identity influence the ways that girls and boys navigate the riverfront, and variously construct it as a space of possibility and peril. I will conclude by suggesting that although Kumar is correct to foreground the centrality of gender, we can arrive at a more nuanced understanding of children's experiences and relations to space by exploring how gender "articulates"(McClintock 1995) with these other categories.
Huffer, Amanda

A “Feminine” and Feminist Form of Hindu Religiosity: The Goddess in Amritanandamayi Ma’s Movement

In scholarship that juxtaposes gender and Hindu religiosity, there has been much ado about the question of the Hindu goddess’ relationship to feminism. In this paper, I bring to the conversation an analysis of Amritanandamayi Ma (Amma), a contemporary transnational guru and female ascetic. I argue that Amma uses the goddess as a feminist symbol in her discourses and practices not only to justify her innovative reassignment of women to positions of ritual leadership in her organization and her humanitarian programs aimed at “empowering” women, but also to justify her own claims to religious authority as a Hindu female ascetic.

In the first half of this paper, I focus on Amma’s discourses, arguing that Amma’s valorization of “feminine” virtues is intricately intertwined with the manner in which she uses the goddess as feminist symbol to uplift the social status of women. I demonstrate the manner in which Amma venerates the “feminine” virtues of universal motherhood (love, compassion, sacrifice, service). I argue, following DeNapoli (2009) and Khandelwal (2004) that Amma’s veneration of “feminine” virtues signifies her continuities with the prescriptive gendered identities of householder women that creates an alternative form of Hindu female asceticism, rather than exhibiting a liminal relationship to the traditional norms of brahmanical (male) asceticism.

I also show that Amma’s feminist project is intimately linked to her claims to religious authority. Amma presents herself as the Divine Mother to her devotees and routinely performs devi bhavas in which she reveals herself to be an incarnation of the goddess. This practice reinforces her religious authority by encouraging her devotees to embody the ideal qualities of universal motherhood that she, herself, epitomizes as the Divine Mother.

The second half of this paper analyzes her practices, particularly the fact that her movement exhibits an inversion of gender hierarchies by upsetting traditional understandings of who is qualified to be a ritual actor. Amma’s brahmacari/nis are mostly women and she provides them with unprecedented levels of religious authority by establishing them as pujaris in her temples. Further, Amma herself performs the consecration ceremonies in her temples. Through these bold acts, which have drawn much criticism from more orthodox Hindu onlookers, Amma challenges the gender conventions of Hindu religious traditions.

In conclusion, I argue that Amma encourages and represents an innovative form of “feminine” and feminist Hindu religiosity, by positioning herself as a goddess incarnation while simultaneously employing the goddess as a feminist symbol.
Hughes, Stephen

What is Tamil about Tamil Cinema?

This paper argues that the ‘Tamil-ness’ of Tamil cinema was not based on any fixed linguistic identity, but was constructed as a matter of production practice and critical discourse after the introduction of sound film during the 1930s. Using contemporary sources the paper looks at how the Tamil part of Tamil cinema was constructed through changes in film form, production and music at a time when producers and directors were confronted new and as yet untested linguistic and geographic parameters for imagining their audiences. The Tamil-ness of Tamil film must also be read in relation to an increasing differentiation within the ongoing linguistic division of Indian cinema, the critical discourses of Tamil revival and the cultural politics of caste and class during the 1930s and 1940s. This paper problematizes the Tamil identity of Tamil cinema as a stable, self-contained, linguistically bounded tradition during the 1930s.
Imam, Fatima A

Timeless Indian Traditions in the Indian Commercial Cinemas: Perpetuation of East and West Dichotomi

This paper investigates the persistence of nationalist’s dichotomy of presenting the differences between the East and West, in the Indian cinema, as clash of civilizations. Karan Johan movies, more specifically, creates unrealistic stereotyping of India as more spiritual by contrasting it with the materialistic west. The big budgeted movies, like Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham, Kabhi Alvida Na Kahna, and Dostana have generated more revenues from its overseas sales for Karan Johan productions than India. I argue that Indian media exploits the psyche of Indians both nationally and internationally, by recreating movies around the themes of incompatibility of Indian traditions with the western societies. Some classical examples are rejection of traditions, marital infidelity, homosexuality, and blind adherence to the western norms. As a historian, I see the continuities of Indian nationalists’ critique of western civilizations by consistent projection of Indian way of life as ‘unchanging’ and ‘timeless’ in his films. Most importantly, the changes if shown in the movies represent an irrational compromise that is tantamount to annihilation of one’s identity. I will provide evidence to show how Karan Johar tries hard to present ‘Indians’ and ‘India’ differently (by concentrating on wealth, opulence, and decadence) yet his projections are derivative (Orientalist in nature) by emphasizing the unchanging notions of Indian traditions, values, and norms.
Ingram, Brannon

Fashioning Publics in Three Muslim Primers from South Asia

A current debate in Islamic studies revolves around conceptualizing Muslim “publics.” Armando Salvatore, Dale Eickelman and others have examined how mass education, media and da’wah organizations fashion large-scale public awareness about Islamic normativities. The work of Muslim preachers, such as Zakir Naik and Amr Khaled, has received due attention for its role in this process. However, the roles of traditional ‘ulama in constructing Muslim publics have been largely overlooked. Their effect on Muslim publics can be gauged not through their media presence but through multiple editions of immensely popular primers on the basics of Islamic belief and practice. In this paper I consider three such primers, composed in Urdu by South Asian ‘ulama: Mufti Kifayatullah’s Ta’lim ul-Islam, Manzur Nu’mani’s Islam kya hai, and Muhammad Akhtar’s Ek Minit Madrasa. Each is associated with the influential Deobandi school of thought. I argue, among other things, that these authors embed a Deobandi approach to their subjects beneath the rhetoric of presenting ‘Islam’ tout court in its most essentialized form. It is partly through these works that Deoband has become globally influential. I begin by locating the origins of these primers, firstly, in the efforts of Deobandi scholars, such as Ashraf Ali Thanawi, to create a modified madrasa curriculum amenable to educating a wider Muslim public. Thanawi, in fact, submitted that acquiring a basic education in Muslim orthopraxy had become a fard ayn, a binding duty upon each Muslim. A second context I address is the efflorescence of South Asian Muslim print cultures that enabled the very existence of these primers. I then proceed to examine the three primers individually. Several salient features emerge from their comparison. For one, the emphasis on traditional adab, which comprises the bulk of Thanawi’s Behishti Zewar, has all but disappeared. In its place, the trajectory from Thanawi to Akhtar exhibits a gradual minimization and essentialization of Islamic ritual duties upon which it is incumbent for the reader to master. I examine how this reductive, essentialized approach to ‘Islam’ construes normativity in terms of basic ritual practice. At the same time, the texts retain an emphasis on ritual elements that are traditionally emphasized among Deobandis, thereby casting parochially Deobandi (and more broadly, South Asian Hanafi) concerns as essential to ‘Islam’ as such. For instance, Akhtar’s Ek Minit Madrasa is for all intents and purposes a primer on namaz, traditionally a paramount concern of Deobandi writings on Islamic ritual practice.
Jaffer, Sadaf

Ismat Chughtai’s Autobiographical Struggle for Self-Definition

Ismat Chughtai (1911-1991) has been described as an obscene writer, an anti-imperialist, an irreverent woman, a lesbian activist and a literary giant. Though her career as a writer spanned six decades, her story “Lihaaf,” which alludes to a sexual relationship between two women, receives the most attention due to the needs of emerging discussions on gender and sexuality. Once noted primary for her innovations to Urdu literary style, she is now touted as an activist writer. This paper will focus on Ismat Chughtai’s development and expression of self as expressed in her autobiography, Kaghzi Hai Pairahan.

Through Chughtai lived through the great upheavals of Independence and Partition, her focus is squarely on the challenges faced by her as a woman intellectual. Much of the text focuses on her struggle as a child and young woman to even obtain an education. The reform of women’s education was a central concern during the late colonial period, and indeed has continued to be a dominant theme in nationalist discourse. Yet historians often focus on “the women’s question” through the lens of male intellectuals. It is here that Kaghzi Hai Pairahan is most useful, as a source on the intellectual history of South Asia. Muslim male intellectuals often supported women’s education as a way to reinforce the revered roles set for women in dominant discourse. However, Chughtai’s story is characterized not only by a thirst for knowledge but also irreverence towards gender roles assigned to her.

Through reading the text, we learn that even though women’s education was initially supported in the guise of reinforcing gender roles, it opened the door for their reformation. Chughtai constantly questions what it means to be a woman, and why she must fight for certain things due to her gender identity. Through this paper I hope to bring greater exposure to Chughtai’s work as well as provide insights into the gender identification and formation of women in mid 20th century India.
Jamali, Hafeez Ahmed

Producing Tribal Balochistan: Sovereignty and Rule in a Colonial Frontier State

A key question in recent historiography of South Asia has been the production of people and production of space-time through the apparatuses of colonial rule and their persistence in the post-colonial period of nationalist rule (Chatterjee 2006; Goswami 2004). However, most of these studies have focused on ‘regulation’ or ‘settled’ districts of India where British control was relatively uniform and the administrative machinery sufficiently well-oiled to introduce projects of ‘improvement’. On the other hand, in the frontier territories of Balochistan (then Kalat State) and the Tribal Areas of North West Frontier Province, colonial authorities had to operate in an environment over which they had less than full control. Thus, colonial authorities were faced with the problem of securing the attachment to their cause of reluctant tribesmen who had historically showed only nominal allegiance to any central authority and defied it openly when the opportunity was offered.

In this essay I argue that in the case of colonial Balochistan (Kalat State), a frontier state, the exercise of rule was based on a peculiar mix of relations of force (sovereignty) and methods of rule (consent) popularly known as the Sandeman System after its architect Sir Robert Sandeman. It brought together or fused disparate Baloch territories and tribes to engender or produce a territory “Balochistan” and a particular subject of colonial rule, the ‘Baloch tribal’ with specific characteristics which required particular administrative methods of dealing i.e. through ‘tribal jirgas’ or councils of elders. Ostensibly, the ‘tribal jirgas’ were native institutions through which the colonial state gave Baloch people a certain degree of autonomy in resolving their differences and sought to maintain their ancient ‘traditions’. However, in actual practice, the Jirgas were supervised by British officers or their native assistants and served to integrate the Baloch tribesmen, especially the tribal elite, into the structures of empire and learn to submit to colonial rule. Moreover, the representative trope of the frontier as a limitrophe place viz a viz ‘settled’ cities of Karachi and Lahore continues to inform the policy approaches of the postcolonial Pakistani nation state towards ‘unsettled’ Province of Balochistan. I conclude that the colonial division between settled vs. unsettled areas survives into the metropolitan Pakistani subjects’ understanding of ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’ regions and it informs the thinking of Baloch nationalists who seek to contest the Pakistani state’s development agenda.
Harappan Seals in Gujarat: A Comparative Analysis

Inscribed steatite seals are among the most important components of Indus or Harappan material assemblages and are often used to identify the Harappan character of a site. Unlike many other Harappan artifacts, current research suggests that seals would have been made and used primarily by and for ruling elites as symbols of wealth and power, legitimizing and reinforcing the social order within Indus settlements (Kenoyer 2000). In this context they can be viewed as symbols of elite control, and by studying them we can learn more about Indus social and political organization. This study represents a preliminary analysis of inscribed steatite seals from sites in modern Gujarat that is part of a larger, ongoing project focusing on the organization of Harappan seal production. Early results suggest that the corpus of published seals from sites in Gujarat were made using various artistic styles and production technologies. While some seals may have been made in workshops at the sites of Mohenjo-daro or Harappa, other seals appear to have been produced in Kutch or Saurashtra. Although some of the locally produced seals are comparable to those found in other regions of the greater Indus valley, especially Sindh, many of the seals found in Gujarat represent distinct, regional styles of carving. These findings support other studies highlighting regional variation in various aspects of Harappan material culture in Gujarat, such as pottery, architecture and subsistence. Together, these studies indicate that Gujarat is an important area for defining regional social and political organization of the Harappan culture and the Indus civilization in general.
Jenkins, Laura Dudley

Conversion as Seduction: Islamophobia in the Law and Media

Two recent, high profile conversions of Hindu men to Islam prior to marrying second wives under Muslim law have sparked widespread public criticism and a 2009 Law Commission of India report, Bigamy via Conversion. Drawing on this report, colonial and contemporary court decisions, and print and electronic media coverage, I assess contemporary depictions of converts to Islam in light of historical representations of converts as either “victims” or “renegades,” archetypes inspired by Claire Norten’s (2009) analysis of early modern accounts of English converts in North Africa. Such archetypes continue to reinforce Orientalist stereotypes of conversion to Islam via seduction.

Renegade husbands and female victims are the focus of contemporary Supreme Court cases about bigamist converts, Sarla Mudgal (1995) and Lily Thomas (2000); but, interestingly, the historical case law the judges had to draw on primarily involved wives converting to Islam and marrying Muslim husbands. Judges tended to frown on these female renegades, finding several guilty of bigamy and denying others’ arguments that their first marriages were dissolved upon their conversion. Hindu wives converted to Islam, married and were convicted of bigamy in Re Ram Kumari (Calcutta 1891) and Nandi alias Zainab vs. The Crown (Lahore 1920). A Christian wife converted, married a Muslim and was convicted of bigamy in Mt. Ruri (Lahore 1919). In Robasa Khanum vs. Khodadad Bomanji Irani (Bombay 1946) a Zoroastrian wife converted to Islam and claimed that her conversion dissolved her marriage. Again the renegade wife was denied.

The Law Commission and media accounts emphasize the victimization of Sabera Ahmadzi, the young Afghan wife of an Indian Army physician with an undisclosed Hindu wife at home. Anuradha Bali (aka Fiza), former assistant advocate general of Haryana, is portrayed as a renegade. Both she and her husband, the already married former Deputy Chief Minister of Haryana, Chander Mohan (aka Chand Mohammad), converted to Islam and then wed, leading to a media frenzy over her descriptions of her Islamic practices, drug overdose and eventual a star turn in a Malaysian reality TV show.

Judges’ and journalist’s elision of conversion and seduction in discussions of Islam undercuts the rights of women and converts by reducing them to victims or renegades. The legal and media focus on salacious bigamy cases can damage the religious freedoms of Muslim minorities and of women from all communities by perpetuating Orientalist stereotypes even within Asia.
Jindal, Manjula

Gender, Orientalism, and Legal Narrative in Shekhar Kapur's "Bandit Queen"

The subtext of Shekhar Kapur's "Bandit Queen" reinforces Orientalist perspectives under the guise of creating alternative narrative, and affirms patriarchal stereotypes of women's sexuality. At the outset, "Bandit Queen" implies that Phoolan Devi created this narrative, that this was her narrative, and that everything in the film was based on her words. The film casts itself as sympathetic to Phoolan's plight as a silenced woman and thereby implies that "it" is stepping in to tell her true story. In reality, Phoolan Devi sued Kapur for slander, claiming that many incidents in the film (particularly relating to her lover Vikram) were not true or accurate.

The film works like a court of law by repositioning Phoolan Devi from a narrating subject who can tell her own story to a narrated object whose story is told by a male voice with its own perspective and agenda. "Bandit Queen" focuses obsessively on Phoolan Devi's sexuality and psychological state with regards to Vikram, thereby shifting the debate from oppressive institutions that force her to seek extra-judicial justice to "what led her to be so out of control." Phoolan Devi is only shown committing her Robin Hood-style looting twice. Yet in real life, her looting is primarily what made her infamous.

In focusing on how Phoolan can be brought back into the fold of heterosexuality, rather than on the violence she has suffered and the genuine threats of violence she still faces, the film unifies Western and Indian perceptions of rape and patriarchal concerns over normalizing female heterosexuality. Ultimately, "Bandit Queen" reinforces the existing legal system by creating another arena in which to judge Phoolan Devi, rather than by offering the possibility of an equally valid alternative legal system.
Joffee, Jennifer

The Amba Mata Temple in Udaipur: A Mandir for the Masses

In this paper I will examine the artistic program of the Amba Mata Temple in Udaipur, built by the Sisodia ruler Raj Singh (r. 1653-80) in 1664. Though architecturally the temple is rather plain and unspectacular, typical of the 17th century, the interior is notable for its rich and varied interior decoration, a result of continued imperial patronage from its inception to the present. Simple yet elegant black and red fresco paintings of both religious and secular subjects are painted around the lower perimeter of the interior; mirror- and multi-colored glass mosaics and paintings adorn the wall surrounding the entrance to the garbhagriha; and portraits of Sisodia rulers throughout time flank the doorway itself.

Though much of my previous work has focused on Sisodia patronage of large architectural projects which, I have argued, were intended to make grand, political statements aimed at the Mughal dynasty and other Rajput houses, in my recent research I have been interested in exploring the less “monumental” buildings Sisodia rulers patronized, particularly those that seem to have been intended for the local population. Initially, I thought that the Amba Mata Temple was just such an endeavor; however, the locally popular Amba Mata is also equated with Rashtrasena Devi, a goddess closely tied to the founding of the Sisodia dynasty as the protectress of Mewar, suggesting that the temple served dual purposes as both a temple for the people and a vehicle of imperial propaganda directed toward the populace. In this paper I will explore the ways in which the interior imagery simultaneously celebrates both the goddess and the temple’s imperial patrons.
Jones, Robin

Intellectual bricolage in the domestic interior of Geoffrey Bawa in Sri Lanka, c. 1950 to 1990

This paper discusses the domestic interior of the architect Geoffrey Bawa in Colombo, Sri Lanka created between c. 1950 and 1990. This interior will be discussed in relation to Bawa’s use of the intellectual technique of bricolage, a term applied to conceptualize the domestic interior as something that structures space, making it meaningful. Much has been written about Bawa’s output as an architect. However, prior scholarship has tended to pass over his development of a distinctive style of interior design. No attempt has been made to assess his interior spaces as ‘artifacts’ which offered a local alternative to prevailing western models and created locations to ‘think’ a new way of living appropriate to the newly independent Ceylon/Sri Lanka.

This paper discusses the interiors of Geoffrey Bawa by appropriating the term bricolage used in cultural analysis. Lévi-Strauss uses this term to describe thinking that creates myths and expresses itself with a heterogeneous but limited repertoire of oddments. Middle class domestic furnishing schemes created during the last decades of colonialism in Ceylon presented conservative arrangements of hybrid furnishings – locally-made but of western, historical revival-style. These types of comfortable but backward-looking domestic interiors objectified the colonial relationship between Britain and Ceylon.

This paper suggests that Bawa used bricolage to ‘think’ his world in a material logic of his own by means of improvisation and appropriating different commodities inappropriately. His later domestic interiors, such as his own home, combine ‘antique’ furniture produced in Ceylon during the Dutch period of colonization together with examples of International Style furniture, such as Eero Saarinen’s plastic ‘tulip chair’. The meanings invested in these objects are subsets of wider cultures and already have their own meanings but these are rearranged in new combinations to generate new ways to think. How rooms are furnished determines what kind of thoughts are possible there. Bawa evolved a new form of interior design to create new ‘myths’ or stories appropriate to a modern Ceylon/Sri Lanka through a process of intellectual bricolage. This process negotiated between the troubling colonial legacy of Ceylon/Sri Lanka, Bawa’s own middle-class Burgher heritage and the International Style and became an invitation to ‘think’ the modern home in South Asia.
Joshi, Priya

Cinematic Violence, Political Culture: Bollywood as Family Romance

The end of the Indian Emergency (1975-1977) saw a burst of films denouncing the violence of the postcolonial state against The People. Among many others, Mukti Chai (Bengali; d. Utpalendu Chakraborty), Ram Ram Gangaram (Marathi, d. Dada Kondke) and of course that most elusive of films, Kissa Kursi Ka (Hindi; d. Amrit Nahata) all appeared in 1977 to regional audiences and often for very short runs. Bollywood, it would seem, had largely ignored the Emergency, or, if lore is correct, had been effectively silenced by it.

This paper investigates attitudes toward the Emergency as played out in the cinema of the People. If Bollywood refrained from portraying comic effigies of Mrs. Gandhi and what Salman Rushdie has called her labia-lipped son, Sanjay, it certainly did not refrain from reflecting, in transparent and sometimes contorted ways, upon the form of villainy made explicit during the Emergency: the politician who defrauded The People in elaborate Twenty-Point Programmes. The period of the Emergency and its immediate aftermath saw a dramatic increase in violence in Bollywood screens though, notably, the source of that violence was often the family, and its agent, a family member such as a brother, mother, or son. Together, the new villain and the increased family violence play out fears if not public fantasies of this period, and reflect in powerful ways upon the impact of constitutional crisis in public culture.

This paper investigates the silences and eruptions of social and political anxieties as performed in a trilogy of popular Hindi film of the late 1970s. Through a reading of blockbusters Deewaar (1975; d. Yash Chopra), Trishul (1978, d. Yash Chopra), and Shakti (1982, d. Ramesh Sippy), I explore the extent to which the traumas of the Emergency were displaced on the family, and the crisis in political culture was recast as a family romance in popular Hindi film. Bollywood's version of the family romance, I propose, is less a liberation narrative as psychoanalysis would have it, but rather an exorcism that required repeated treatment for a wound that would not go away. In situating the family as a primal scene for national trauma, the cinema reveals extraordinary mechanisms for repression and renewal which may explain the 1970's dominance in film history's reckoning of the decade.
Philosophers in Love: Or, On Bhavabhuti The Thinker

In Bhavabhuti’s Malati and Madhava, Madhava, a student on leave to study logic in Padmavati, finds himself tutored less in philosophy than in love. We encounter this novice of thought surprised to find himself moved to poetry after encountering the beautiful Malati. Madhava’s attempts to articulate his condition are notable for taking the form of occasional, incomplete arguments. Bhavabhuti depicts not only Madhava’s inability to order his thoughts, but more importantly, Madhava’s cognizance of his own condition. Madhava finally offers up the following: “My thoughts without seeking the reason are fixed on her.” His friend Makaranda offers a diagnosis and a corrective: “You cannot, dear Madhava, talk in the same breath of love and seeking reasons.” To seek for reasons is to model thought on the example of philosophers, to express oneself with the help of a philosophical grammar of causes and effects. Love in Bhavabhuti’s work expresses itself in a distinct, if not unrelated philosophical grammar.

Dhanapala once said of Bhavabhuti that he made the goddess of speech play as an actress. In this paper I consider only one of the many possible roles speech may be said to have taken on under Bhavabhuti’s direction. In Bhavabhuti’s work, one can, on occasion, listen to characters overhear themselves thinking in love, allowing the nature of thought and love, and the philosophical grammar appropriate to both, to come into view together. With the consequence, I argue, that we may think of love in a manner perhaps unprecedented in Sanskrit poetics or philosophical prose. Basing myself on a few select examples I discuss the possibility of a form of thought appropriate to love in the context of Bhavabhuti’s poetics and the stylistic registers expressive of this form of thought. To talk thus about a poet thinking, I suggest, is a particularly helpful way to frame the relationship between philosophy and poetry in Sanskrit letters.
Kanungo, Alok Kumar

Burial Practices among the Nagas in Transition

Nagas living in Nagaland have given up practising their ancestral way of burial in the last few decades from Angami and Ao to Konyaks as the Christianity made inroads among them. Nagas living in Arunachal Pradesh have only recently been forced to abandon many of the burial practices. The Nagas were extraordinarily sensitive to everything connected with the subject of post-death ceremonies and practices. However, this practice has been entirely abandoned a few years ago. From keeping the body for six months in the house in 1839 (first reported by M. Bronson), present day Aos do not keep the dead body even for the distant relatives to pay their last respect. Exposed burial among the Nagas of the Arunachal Pradesh was abandoned by the converted Christians in 1990s and made to stop in 2002 at gun point by one of the Naga insurgency groups. For the same reason the practice of the secondary burial has also disappeared. This may be a good sign for hygienic purpose but without Wanchos history being written and their origin being known we are lacking an important evidence which is vital to understand their past. However, there still remain many evidences related to the burial practices among the Wanchos which should be recorded either now or never. For example, no smoking of dead is done inside the house anymore though the body is kept in kitchen till the relatives and friends arrive from nearby villages, if not for weeks, at least for a few days; exposed burial are just being stopped so relics of this and secondary burials are still standing; though most of the cist/pot burial are covered under earth but still there are villages where these are existing in abandoned condition. Still the last generation of people are alive who practised the secondary burial. There still are old people who processed the skulls for the secondary burial. However, the dating of the chamber/cist containing multiple heads of several generations and identification of the cause of death is a serious problem as different methods are employed by people of different villages for detaching the skull from the body. Besides the skull is nailed/drilled haphazardly for ornamentation. Still the practices of post burial feast and offering of very elaborate and expensive grave goods are prevalent. This paper is an attempt at recording the history of changes in burial practices and surviving customs.
Kapadia, Aparna

Languages of Legitimacy: Brahmanical & Carani Narratives From Early Modern Gujarat

This paper examines differences between narratives produced by Brahmans and carans in the local kingdoms of 15th and 16th century Gujarat. It specifically focuses on the kingdoms established by numerous landowning, warrior chieftains who ruled over different parts of Gujarat and formed the primary obstacle to the regional sultans who, in this period were attempting to consolidate their political position over the entire region. These chieftains were men of obscure origins who had migrated into the region nearly a century prior to the establishment of the regional sultanate & had acquired land through various means, gradually gaining considerable political ascendancy. Along with maintaining a hold over their patrimonies vis-a-vis the imperial sultans, they also sought a place for themselves within the wider scriptural varna hierarchy as 'Kshatriyas'. Brahman poets were patronized at their courts to write their glories in Sanskrit. An alternative perspective however also came from the carans or traditional genealogist historians of the region. The carans were never comfortably incorporated within the Brahmanical varna framework but held immense ritual significance for the goddess-worshiping warrior chieftains. The two kinds of narratives are thus reflective of two very different forms of legitimacy that were being sought by the warrior chieftains. The paper explores the tension between these two strands by asking questions such as, how did the Brahman and carani representations differ from one another? how, if at all, did oral and written narratives interact with each other? in what way did each of these contribute to the moral and social world of local chieftains? This paper examines these issues through rarely utilized Sanskrit and old Gujarati sources to demonstrate how caran narratives destabilized the traditionally held notions of the role of Brahmans in the endowment of a legitimate Kshatriya status.
Kapse, Anupama

Sound in Phalke

Indian drama has always included song and dance in its theatrical repertoire. This paper asks how the arrival of silent cinema coped with the sudden 'absence' of sound. While silent film was able to replace dialogues with intertitles, it faced a much harder task when it came to the replacement of sound and the singing voice. Taking India’s first feature Raja Harischandra (1913, dir. D.G. Phalke) as a case in point, I examine how Phalke adapted the operatic structure of popular music-drama (sangeet natak) into a melodramatic style for the cinema.

I argue that Phalke transferred the aural power of extended song sequences into scenes of heightened emotion in Raja Harischandra, a film that tells the story of an honorable king who gives up everything he owns—even his wife—to keep a promise to the sage Vishwamitra. I highlight innovations in ‘sound’ cues that were specially developed by early Indian film-makers. Anchored in the visual medium of film, the actors’ physical gestures, and the props in the set took on the task of enacting the aural pathos that was a key feature of music drama. In fact, both sound and the singing voice were augmented with great care by the silent cinema precisely because of their absence—be it the creation of the film narrator, the deployment of an orchestra, the use of photographic backdrops, 'posing' for singing, or 'hearing' on screen sounds. Finally, I show how such techniques developed a modern expressive idiom from a traditional, theatrical song-and-dance-structure that renewed itself in the medium of the cinema.
Katz, Max

A Song of Exile: Displacement and Disaster in the Musical History of Lucknow

The exile of the celebrated king, Wajid Ali Shah, from his beloved city of Lucknow in 1856 has become an iconic moment in Indian history, memorialized in a thumri—or "semi-classical" song—written by the deposed king himself. But in the musical history of Lucknow, the tragedy of the king's exile was followed by an even more dramatic disaster: the war of 1857-8 between the British occupiers and their rebellious subjects, a social and political catastrophe that resulted in the downfall of the city as the premier musical and cultural center of North India. In this paper, I introduce the king's famous thumri as a point of entry to engage the legacy of the collapse of Lucknow, focusing on a renowned lineage of musicians of the city. Beyond their initial displacement from Lucknow, this family of musicians has endured a further displacement as their musical style is now considered old-fashioned, and they have been pushed to the margins of cultural and social relevance in the present-day world of North Indian classical music. Building on previous scholarship by Manuel, Kippen, Miner, and McNeil, this paper introduces new data from 12 months of field research in Lucknow to illuminate the history of an important musical lineage and its connection to the legendary city.
Kenoyer, J. Mark

Stone Bead Production and Drilling Technologies of the Indus and their significance for links to West Asia, Central Asia and East Asia

The study of South Asian stone bead production and drilling in the prehistoric Indus Tradition and Early Historic, Indo-Gangetic tradition, provide a background for studying bead technologies in adjacent regions. This paper will provide an overview of the current range of bead production techniques of the in South Asian, beginning around 7000 BC and continuing till around 600 BC. Highlights of comparative studies of regions adjacent to the Indus valley civilization will also be discussed to demonstrate the utility of this approach in the study of regional and extra-regional exchange. For example, Indus beads and bead technologies have been traced West Asia, and possibly to Central Asia. Recent studies of beads from sites in China will also be discussed.
The Relative Marginalities of Friendship, Conjugality, Fraternity: Ramasamy's Children, Women, Men

In Sundara Ramaswamy’s novel Kuzhandaikal, Penkal, Aankal (1998) (Children, Women, Men) conjugality and family on one hand, and friendship on the other are, relative to each other, both marginal and socially significant forms of sociality. While nonsexual or unromantic friendships between unrelated men and women are insignificant in the novel, same sex friendship is represented as an interstitial relationship that is both of social importance and socially marginal. It is an anomalous relationship: it exists outside the more thoroughly codified social networks formed by patriarchal kinship and sexual ties: it is interstitial in the social structure and therefore more free floating, more in need of labeling and social and ideological definition. Male and female friendships in the novel are a world apart (from each other) and yet are not private; they subsist in the case of some of the female characters in domestic intimacy and serve as emotional recompense to the wife in an estranged patriarchal marriage much to the jealous insecurity of the emotionally distant husband. Male friendships are often based on professional or intellectual conversations, but also provide a privatized (homo)social space where men although initially ashamed or reluctant and proud later become more emotionally expressive about their estranged marriages or familial problems than they normally are with their wives or children with whom they hardly ever share any intellectual or conversational or emotional intimacy. Friendship in this novel often represents the possibilities of larger bonds of sociality namely fraternity and conjugality. It often borrows its conceptualization from kinship to gain definition and identification and to socially and emotionally situate it as an image of sociality, human solidarity. These representations seem to exhibit a paradox: although the novel’s textual strategies make kinship and more implicitly conjugality into privileged loci of signification for representing friendship, they also make friendship into a paradigm of sociality. Conversely some of the few conjugal or romantic and familial relationships in the novel draw on a certain rhetoric of friendship; of an equal companionship precisely to avoid the patriarchal, ritual codifications of kinship and conjugal ties and to offer emotional recompense.
Khan, Shahnaz

Performing the Desi: Reading Hindi Films in Toronto

Noted social scientists argue that Bombay Cinema produces and circulates ideas about an authentic and moralistic India as they participate in nation building projects. Films create cinematic images of imagined homelands while narrative scripts centralize family relationships presenting extended families where children rarely question their elders - or if they do they are severely punished. Extensive contestations in India dealing with issues of class, gender and religion are rarely depicted in popular cinema. Instead there is a universalizing of the upper caste and upper class Hindu male while other groups are marginalized. Muslims in particular are shown as the exotic and increasingly as the violent other while women presented as producers and polluters of culture whose mobility and sexuality must be controlled, monitored and deployed to serve national needs.

As the dominant popular cultural institution in the region, Hindi cinema circulates these ideas in South Asia and to regions where people of South Asian origin live. Raghavendra (2008) however identifies a slippery distinction between the filmic text and the ways in which its viewers accept and modify the shared culture of Indian cinema.

In this discussion I draw upon interviews with Canadians of South Asian origins and explore the ways in which desire for and imaginings of the homeland shape diasporic encounters with the transnational cultural product Bollywood. As they perform a desi identity, respondents challenge some of the messages in the films. At the same time they continue to articulate its importance as a marker of the homeland.
Khan, Abdul Rehman

Madrasah Legacy: Its Boom and Transformation in Pakistan

Madrasah (faith-based Islamic religious educational institution) in the Muslim world, especially in Pakistan, has been under severe criticism since 9/11. Debates and discourses for and against the Madrasah education system have changed the world view about Madrasah as traditional educational institution. Nonetheless, it has now widely been recognized among the academia that the current debates are based on extremist arguments on both sides (pro-Madrasah and anti-Madrasah), which generate ambiguities and misconception and makes the issue more complex. This paper, therefore, revisits all the claims and looks into the transformation of this institution more objectively and carefully.

The paper also illuminates the facts and claims regarding Madrasah (institution and its student body) boom in Pakistan. Through an in-depth analysis of the existing literature, debates and discourse; based on empirical facts, this paper examines the veracity and depth of the arguments regarding Madrasah rapid growth in Pakistan. The paper also claims that Zia's Islamization process and Soviet-Afghan war were not the only two reasons for current Madrasah growth in Pakistan. Indeed, based on analysis of the historical and contemporary accounts, this paper concludes that the current Madrasah (institution and student body) boom, to a greater extent, roots in other more important political, social, cultural, economical and religious reasons and events, which is ignored by the contemporary scholars and researchers.
Khan, Zillur R.

Indo-Bangladesh Mutual Misperceptions: Causes and Consequences

Given the fact that without India’s moral, politico-economic and security assistance the course of Bangladesh’s struggle for freedom would have been long drawn, if not uncertain, the very thought of mutual misperceptions between India and Bangladesh could be unsettling. Yet due to natural and man-made circumstances relations between the two began to deteriorate rapidly after Bangladesh’s independence. What triggered the downslide in bi-lateral relations? Was it the anti-liberation forces trying to draw a wedge between the two, receiving covert strategic help from ISI-CIA in collaboration with Naxalites and ULFA? (A. L. Khatib in Who Killed Mujib?). Or was the deterioration caused first by Indian occupation of the new nation, when the downside of occupation was exaggerated by anti-Indian elements? The proposed paper will analyze interactions between ideologies (e.g., secularism and religious extremism, democratic socialism and militarism, etc.), events and leadership focusing on selected issues defining the bilateral relations and Muslim image in South Asia. The clash of ideologies took a lethal turn when a group of junior army officers with anti-secular mindset ended the new nation’s first experiment with democracy by assassinating its founder president Sheikh Mujib in a coup on August 15, 1975. Was that the message sent by religious extremists within the Bangladesh military? Allegations of harboring militants from seven sisters of north east India and ISI supported terrorists (JMB and LET) have caused and effected serious mutual misperceptions dangerously slowing the utilization of CBMs. Could SAARC help bridge the perception gaps? The research is based on primary (fieldwork, survey, interviews) and secondary sources.
Khan, Shahnaz

Indian cinema and its Pakistani viewers

Social scientists have noted that the dominant cultural institution in India, Hindi cinema, helps consolidate and promotes ideas of an ideal citizen. Such a citizen is articulated as North Indian, upper class and caste, male, and heterosexual while marginalizing others. Muslims are among those marginalized and demonized through cinematic narratives. Although it cinematic narratives idealize a select group of people, Indian cinema is enormously popular in many parts of the world, including in neighbouring Pakistan where the majority of the population is predominantly Muslim. This discussion draws upon interview data from Pakistan to examine the influence of Indian cinema on people’s lives. I argue that many viewers change the channel or self select films that depict Muslims but they are very vulnerable to the messages promoting consumerism. Such a desire for consumer goods places tremendous pressures on people who are living in a context of high inflation and political turmoil.
Khubchandani, Kareem

The Art of Queering: Queen Harish and Bollywood Drag

Queen Harish is a virtuosic Rajasthani performer who identifies as male, but performs as a woman. He does not fit into familiar identity categories of “hijra” or “drag queen,” and when he performs he passes as a woman. Queen Harish has traveled across India, as well as to Australia, New Zealand, the US, Japan, and Saudi Arabia to perform at weddings, dance festivals, and parties. In this paper, I examine how Harish’s performances participate in discourses of heteropatriarchal and orientalist understandings of globally circulating South Asian bodies. Following the lead offered by Jasbir Puar in her essay “Global Circuits: Transnational Sexualities in Trinidad,” I raise questions about the ways in which performances that mark gender (such as drag), and those that mark ethnicity (folk or Bollywood dance) affect each other in Harish’s performance. In her analysis of a desi drag performance in Trinidad, Puar suggests that the staging of ethnicity trumps that of gender; in such a situation she claims “drag is not drag.” I demonstrate that Harish’s performance style traffics in similar discourses that privilege the staging of an exotic or other-ed cultural identity instead of marking the disjuncture of cross-gender performance expected in drag. However, I also close read a moment in Harish’s performance at a gay, South Asian, dance party in New York in order to demonstrate the ways in which Queen Harish’s performance as a passing woman becomes drag. It is with this gesture that I argue for an understanding of Bollywood Camp (as imagined by Rajinder Dudrah) that allows queer, diasporic South Asians to apprehend Hindi Film song-and-dance for agential purposes. With this, I build on the writing of Gayatri Gopinath, Shohini Ghosh, Ashok Row Kavi, Raj Rao, and Thomas Waugh who have all described queer possibilities within Bollywood film. I demonstrate the realization of this possibility within live performance, as well as the contingency of the production of queerness. Finally, I use this moment of Bollywood Camp to raise questions about what it means to “make something queer.” The case study of Queen Harish’s citation of the courtesan figure from Hindi movies intervenes not only on Queer Studies, but also on the textual reading practices of film scholarship, demonstrating how a performance analytic can benefit Bollywood scholarship.
Kim, Jinah

Emergence of a Buddhist Warrior Goddess: Marici’s dual identity and the spread of Buddhist Tantras

This paper examines the emergence of Marici, a Buddhist goddess of dawn, as a warrior goddess in relation to the spread and absorption of the Tantras in early medieval South Asia. The early forms of the goddess Marici represents her as a lady of the Ashoka tree (Ashokakanta) attending the goddess Tara. Her manifestation as a multi-armed goddess in active stance, holding various weapons and riding a chariot, began to appear around the ninth century, and her militant form was established as the most popular emanation of the goddess by the beginning of the eleventh century. Marici is a relatively well understood Buddhist goddess, yet the reason behind her dramatic transformation from a tree lady to a warrior goddess is yet to be explored. The addition of a sow face in her warrior manifestations makes it possible to relate Marici to other boar-related goddesses with strong Tantric implications, such as Varahi (one of the seven mothers and a female counter part of Varaha, Visnu’s boar incarnation) and Vajravarahi (the most important Tantric Buddhist goddess). In particular, her emanation called “Oddiyana Marici,” in which she wears a tiger loin cloth, snake ornaments and a skull necklace, locates the origin of the form in the Swat Valley, in today’s Pakistan, where Tantric forms of Buddhism once flourished. The inclusion of this “Oddiyana Marici” in eleventh century Nepalese manuscripts of the Prajñāparamita sutra suggests truly trans-regional characteristics of the cult of Marici.

Protecting devotees is a typical function assigned to Mahayana Buddhist goddesses, and Marici is indeed an amazing protectress in her awesome manifestations. However, her role was not confined to that of a protective deity. Her iconographic connection with Vajravarahi and Prajñāparamita (the mother of all Buddhas, the Perfection of Wisdom), and her popularity at Bodhgaya, the site of Buddha’s enlightenment, all suggest her cultic and doctrinal importance as the true light that lies in the heart of Enlightenment. By analyzing visual representations and ritual manuals along with epigraphic evidence relating to the development of Marici’s warrior iconography, I suggest that Marici’s makeover reflects a shifting attitude towards the female principle in Buddhist practices, possibly influenced by the spread of the yoginitantras in Buddhist circles. Through the case study of Marici’s transformation, I also aim to demonstrate that Tantricization of Mahayana Buddhist goddesses was a process of negotiation rather than that of superimposition.
Kolsky, Elizabeth

To Burn or Not to Burn?: "Murderous Outrages" and Colonial Control on India’s North-West Frontier

In 1867, the Governor General in Council passed “The Punjab Murderous Outrages Act,” an exceptional piece of legislation designed to control the murder or attempted murder of servants of the Queen and “other persons” in certain districts of the Punjab. Generally, a murderous outrage involved the murder of non-Muslims (often British military officers) by Muslims who were interchangeably referred to as fanatics or ghazas. In 1901, in connection with the formation of the North-West Frontier Province, the Punjab Act was superseded by the Frontier Murderous Outrages Regulation. Both iterations of the law reflected the preference of officers in the Punjab administration and the frontier districts for rough and ready justice as opposed to the formal procedures required under what they referred to as the “ordinary law,” namely the Anglo-Indian Codes. As one colonial administrator evocatively noted, “The inherent right of a man to smoke a cigarette must necessarily be curtailed if he lives in a powder magazine.”

Among the many extraordinary features of the law was the provision that any fanatic killed in the act of committing an “outrage” or executed by the state would have his body disposed of as the state saw fit. Since the 1860s, the favored method of disposal was to burn the corpse. This was for two reasons: first, by burning the corpse, colonial administrators believed they could prevent the criminal’s remains from being mourned over and made an object of worship. Second, the burning of corpses was seen to have a deterrent effect as colonial administrators believed that a Muslim whose body was burnt after death was denied a place in Paradise.

The logic and rhetoric that framed the murderous outrages legislation had roots in other historical contexts (including Ireland) that will be examined in this paper. In addition, I will explore the moral and political issues raised in the enactment and implementation of the law, many of which have pressing contemporary relevance. Was (is) it just to use terror to control terror? Could knowledge about the religious beliefs and customs of subject populations be effectively mobilized to design forms of punishment that would control the spread of religio-political extremism? What does the suspension of ordinary law and its replacement by extraordinary law tell us about the modern state and its rule of law?
Konishi, Hiromi - (co-authors R. Law and J. Fournelle)

A Nephrite Jade Amulet from Harappa: Implications for Long-Distance Contacts in the Harappan Period

A semi-translucent, spinach-green colored truncated conical amulet with a high polish was recovered in a cemetery burial pit dated to Period 3B (ca. 2450-2100 BC) at the Indus Civilization city of Harappa. On-site specific gravity testing of this artifact indicated that it has a density of 3.0, which is too heavy for green agate and too light for vesuvianite-grossular garnet but precisely the density for nephrite – a rock in the actinolite-tremolite series that is one of the two recognized forms of jade. The amulet was brought to the University of Wisconsin-Madison for further non-destructive characterization using the X-ray diffraction (XRD) and variable-pressure scanning electron microscopy (VP-SEM) facilities at the Department of Geoscience. The results confirmed that the object was indeed composed of nephrite jade. Some scholars have suggested that the purported existence of “jade” at sites like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro is indicative of long-distance contacts between Harappan peoples and those dwelling in jade source areas such as China or Burma. It is quite possible, however, that the nephrite amulet in question was made from raw material obtained within the Greater Indus region.
Kovacs, Hajnalka

The Role of Persian Language and Literature in Muhammad Husain Azad’s Modernist Thought

Muhammed Husain Azad (1830-1910), the most influential critic of Urdu literature, is well known for his efforts to reform 'decadent and artificial' Urdu poetry in accordance with Victorian literary norms. While it would be logical to assume that Persian literature, which has for centuries served as a model for Urdu literature but lost all patronage and influence by this time, was completely replaced by English literature in Azad's vision, he continued to be preoccupied until the end of his life with questions pertaining to Persian language and literature. I argue, on the basis of the views expressed in his Sukhandan-i Fars and Nigaristan-i Fars, that even when aiming to follow the light of English lanterns, Azad continued to turn to Iran for inspiration, and went as far as declaring that just as Iranian literature served as a model for Indian writers for long centuries, it ought to be the same way in the modern times. Apart from an admiration for Iran's lead in modernization and the transplantation of Western scholarly style into Persian, Azad appears to have been influenced by the ideologists of the classicist movement in Iran in the early and mid-19th century (subsequently called Bazgasht-i adabi, "literary return") that advocated a return from the 'artificial, deviant, and corrupt' style of the Sabk-i Hindi to the supposedly 'pure and simple' style of the classical Persian poets. At the same time, Azad's vision for the renewal of the literary tradition included comparative linguistics of Iranian and Indic languages, a fashionable discipline in Europe in the 19th century.

This paper aims to bring to light some of the lesser-known components of Azad's vision for the modernization of Urdu literature, as well as some of the inherent contradictions within Azad's thought.
Krishnan, Meenakshi

Behind the Glamour: Bollywood Workers Constructing Global Identities

While much academic work has been done on the consumption and reception of Bollywood films, there has been little study of the actual workers in the Bollywood film industry. Much of the West, and indeed India itself, merely focuses on the glitz and gloss of Bollywood as represented by actors, actresses, and directors. This paper analyzes the working conditions and ethics of Bollywood workers (crew, lighting, dancing, costuming, set design, sound mixing, technicians, and extras) and their frenetic work schedules. By studying these behind the scenes workers in global Bollywood films, which are consumed by many South Asian Americans and Britons, the paper attempts to focus the analytical eye where the camera does not. Using ethnographic research conducted in a film academy and on film sets in Mumbai, India, the paper analyzes set workers’ perceptions of global Bollywood and their place in this production chain. The paper will also focus on emerging filmmakers’ perceptions of Bollywood workers and the way both sets of Bollywood actors find meaning in their work by negotiating notions of gender, social class, nationalism, and regionalism. In general the paper analyzes how selective perceptions of work and its impact on the world are important parts of their professional identity even while social class and gender determine their position within this global production chain.

No more than 400 words.
Kumar, Sangeet

Witnessing and New Media: Feedback Loop in the Coverage of the Mumbai Attacks

This paper analyzes the role of live television in the coverage of the Mumbai attacks on November 26, 2008 focusing especially on the role of new media in the live coverage. Through this analysis I seek to make an intervention within the theoretical field of Witnessing that has introduced a new understanding of media coverage of events as a continuation of the historical conflation of truth with presence in time and space. Live television, by promising its viewers proximity in time, even if removed in space, seeks to close the veracity gap and allows viewers to witness the event as it unfolds in real time. By analyzing the coverage of the attacks in Mumbai, I seek to extend the problematic of witnessing to argue that as media covered the event live, trying to get the closest shot and exclusive information, they also simultaneously transformed its very unfolding. Given that the entire attack was designed for publicity, the echoing of their actions on live television created an upward spiral of more violence from the attackers. And as victims trapped in hotels used network technologies to reveal their location on television they also simultaneously placed themselves in mortal danger. This high-tech game of hide and seek created a feedback loop where the act of witnessing the event was altering its trajectory every moment. Through my analysis of the event I seek to show that networked new media necessitate a new understanding of the idea of live television and of the metaphor of witnessing itself. I argue that the dream of de-mediatazed access to reality is in the end a self-defeating endeavor.
Kumar, Priya

Refugees as Waste in Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide

While scholars often tend to take diasporic fictions emerging from Anglo-America as representative of the experience of South Asian displacements everywhere, this paper aims to extend the meaning of “exile” by moving past metropolitan spaces and the voluntary choice of immigration to focus on the figure of the refugee or the indigent migrant. In particular, I will look at forced and clandestine migrations across the Bengal border that attended the partitioning of nation-states in the subcontinent that continue to the present day. If in the Punjab population exchange in 1947 was quick, ruthless, and nearly complete, then in Bengal it was less dramatic and extended over a much longer period. The initial attitude of the Indian government towards Partition refugees was welcoming, but gradually the mood changed; even in the newly truncated state of (West) Bengal, while earlier upper-caste landed elite migrants from East Pakistan were welcomed and absorbed, later migrants found it difficult to find a refuge in Kolkata and its outskirts. The poorest of these refugees were sent to various inhospitable and infertile areas in central India. In 1978, when the Left came to power in Bengal, 30,000 refugees sailed to the Sundarbans island of Morichjhapi and decided to settle on it. However, the new Left government declared this refugee settlement to be an illegal encroachment on forest land in an area that was reserved for the conservation of tigers ending in the Morichjhapi massacre.

My paper will look at some of the long-term legacies of Partition in Bengal by providing a close reading of Amitav Ghosh’s novel, The Hungry Tide, which illuminates this particularly shameful episode in the ongoing history of Partition in Bengal. I argue that the novel enables us to understand how refugees and indigent migrants are often relegated to the status of “human waste”—superfluous, irrelevant, and excess populations—who are denied even the barest, minimal rights of survival in a new global order that can only see them as a problem to be disposed of. My paper will focus on the novel’s representation of the Morichjhapi massacre, its efforts to depict the harsh life of the Sundarbans, especially the struggle between humans and animals, and its production of the Sundarbans as a place that was once a wasteland, but one that has been reclaimed by the “wretched of the earth.”
Kumar, Sangeet

Empire Talks Back: Theorizing Agency in India’s Call Centers

This paper seeks to add to the existing scholarship on the call center industry in India by extricating moments of human agency within its workspace. While most analysis of the industry so far has justifiably focused on the imposition of artificial accents and names, the learning of mundane cultural details and the affective and psychic stress caused from the unconventional work, little has been said about how employees within these work places push back against these instances of power. While these accounts of the exercise of power within the industry help us understand the nature of exploitation in an age of de-territorialized labor, such narratives have also functioned to elide over the novel ways in which employees resist against these unilateral impositions of power. In highlighting these moments, my study does not seek to provide a celebratory account of futile actions further entrenching existing hegemonies in the process. Instead, by complicating ideas of linguistic imperialism and accent imposition in the industry, by exposing novel ways in which employees engage with rude callers and by showing instances of upward social mobility made possible by this industry, I seek to rectify the dominant picture presented so far. My study relies on detailed interviews with employees, managers and their trainers in the city of Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore to foreground instances of their engagement with forces global capital and to show their assertion of agency.
Traveling through Mythic-History from Karavira to Kolhapur

The study of puranic literature in South Asia has been plagued either by the argument that "puranic India has no sense of history" or that puranic myths are allegories of ethnic or religious conflicts. In my current work on the Karavira Mahatmya, I have been struck by a very different perspective. The Karavira Mahatmya is an example of a form of religious discourse that brings together numerous mythic figures and narratives to articulate the greatness of the city of Kolhapur, Maharashtra, and its tutelary deity Mahalakshmi. As with many mahatmyas, the dominant narrative structure would appear initially to be the "travel itinerary", whereby stories are brought together simply because the principal narrator, in this case, Agastya, makes stops along the way and, prompted by his wife, tells stories about the places. In a narrative like this, the memory of place is constructed through the movements of the traveler from place to place (hence there is no history). For the Karavira Mahatmya, however, there is a second dimension to the itinerary that establishes the interconnectedness of the places and stories. This has to do with the historical development seen in the layering of mythic history onto the landscape (ksetra; field) through which Agastya travels. Although each place and event may be treated in isolation on the one hand (that is, a causal connection does not exist between one story and the next), the stories that are told move through a time line beginning from creation through the final transition into the human-dominated age. The result is a sense of Kolhapur's greatness coming both through the multiplicity of divine activity in this place as well as the guidance the divine has offered to bring Kolhapur into the present age. In my paper, I propose to investigate the intersection between travel itinerary and the mapping of mythic events onto place as a way to develop a trajectory of historical memory and mythic intensification that justifies the praise demanded by the mahatmya genre.
A Nephrite Jade Amulet from Harappa: Implications for Long-Distance Contacts in the Harappan Period

A semi-translucent, spinach-green colored truncated conical amulet with a high polish was recovered in a cemetery burial pit dated to Period 3B (ca. 2450-2100 BC) at the Indus Civilization city of Harappa. On-site specific gravity testing of this artifact indicated that it has a density of 3.0, which is too heavy for green agate and too light for vesuviantite-grossular garnet but precisely the density for nephrite – a rock in the actinolite-tremolite series that is one of the two recognized forms of jade. The amulet was brought to the University of Wisconsin-Madison for further non-destructive characterization using the X-ray diffraction (XRD) and variable-pressure scanning electron microscopy (VP-SEM) facilities at the Department of Geoscience. The results confirmed that the object was indeed composed of nephrite jade. Some scholars have suggested that the purported existence of “jade” at sites like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro is indicative of long-distance contacts between Harappan peoples and those dwelling in jade source areas such as China or Burma. It is quite possible, however, that the nephrite amulet in question was made from raw material obtained within the Greater Indus region.
Lemons, Katherine

A feminist and her fatwa: remaking an Islamic legal practice in secular India

Nadia Khan describes herself as a Muslim, a communist, a supporter of women’s rights and the rights of the destitute, a mother, and a wife. Through her work as a politician, Khan works to build an Islamic feminism that addresses the state, demanding its support in specific reforms to Muslim personal law. This paper is an ethnographic analysis of one of Khan’s public roles: fatwa-giver, or a renegade jurisconsult (mufti) for poor women in Utter Pradesh. A fatwa is an authoritative response to a specific question about how to live life as a good Muslim. These responses are not legally binding, either according to Islamic law or Indian Muslim personal law, but they have a moral-legal authority. While Khan reads Urdu and Arabic, and has studied the Quran and Hadith along with the canon of texts referred to regularly by Hanafi muftis in north India, she is not trained as a mufti. Nonetheless, Khan defiantly gives fatwas to the women who approach her, carefully noting the passages from the sources on which she bases her advice. She argues that this advice, based in her reading of Islamic legal texts, is both true to the tradition of Islamic law and supportive of women’s rights.

In this paper, I will look at one of Khan’s fatwas advising a woman to divorce her husband, suggesting that it is one example of an Islamic legal practice particular to, and perhaps emblematic of, the secular Indian landscape in which it was written. The fatwa Khan gives, and her explanation of it, participate in an emerging Muslim Indian feminism made possible through a secular discourse of women’s rights and an equally secular reading practice. This practice, though, is not her invention, but is a moment in the remaking and recuperation of, rather than radical departure from, the Islamic legal practice of fatwa-giving. The paper will trace the strands of this secular and Islamic legal practice and will ask what it tells us about secularism’s religiosity in contemporary India.
Lhost, Elizabeth

From Print to Punch: Conversation and exchange in India’s early twentieth-century vernacular press

Developments in printing and communication technology created new opportunities for exchange among printers and publishers in early twentieth-century India. With the growth and expansion of the Indian postal system and the international telegraph in the latter-half of the nineteenth century, the exchange of information and printed material not only became more efficient but also more affordable, leading to intensified exchanges across geographic and linguistic boundaries. Looking at several instances from the Indian periodical press, this paper explores the modes and implications of the transmission and trade of information in the first decades of the twentieth century. In particular, it focuses on two comic-satiric vernacular papers—the English-Gujarati "Hindi Punch" (1888–1931) from Bombay and the Urdu-language "Avadh Punch" (1877–1936) from Lucknow—to understand the ways in which Indian editors traversed and forged new networks of communication and conversation in the nascent Indian public sphere. Beginning with the arrival of London’s "Punch" in India, this paper examines two specific methods by which these particular publications inserted themselves into local and global information networks. Hailing from the commercially well-connected and media-rich city of Bombay, "Hindi Punch" traveled back to Europe and over to America where its cartoons were regularly republished in popular review journals. Having a more local, language-centric public sphere, "Avadh Punch" responded not only to rival papers within its hometown Lucknow but also undertook to review works of literary and linguistic comment from publications in Delhi, creating an Urdu public sphere for exchanging criticisms and commentaries. Taken together, these two journals provide not only evidence of the methods by which information passed between readers at this time but also open up new directions for understanding the influences of print culture in public society and the functional structures of the public sphere.
Liechty, Mark


This paper picks up some of the themes in Jim Fisher's 1975 article "Cannabis in Nepal" examining the politics surrounding tourist drug use in Nepal, Nepali responses to increased cannabis consumption, and the Nepali state's decision to ban "drugs" in 1973. The easy and cheap availability of pot had been one of Nepal's prime attractions since at least the early 1960s when a new generation of increasingly youthful tourists "discovered" Kathmandu. Along with its remoteness and exoticism, cannabis helped turn Kathmandu into one of the capitals of western counterculture by the late 1960s. State crackdowns on youth radicalism in Europe and America from 1968 onwards drove even more youth into politically-tinged cultural exile in places like Nepal where cannabis use—increasingly suppressed in the west—had become, for some, a "civil rights" issue. For them pot consumption in Nepal was an index of the liberties lost back at home.

Fisher notes that tourists' recreational cannabis use was at odds with longstanding use patterns in Nepal. Yet Nepali entrepreneurs quickly capitalized on tourist demand with some of the leading figures in the early tourist trade making fortunes in drug sales before branching out into hotel construction, etc. Paralleling these developments were growing anti-tourist, nationalist sentiments that blamed emerging local youth drug problems on "hippie" influences. Adding to the increasingly politicized debate were pressures from the US (and to some extent the UN) on Nepali to de-legalize "narcotics." For decades rumors of huge payoffs by US officials to the Nepali royal family (themselves rumored to be involved in the drug trade) have been in circulation. (Based on earlier documented precedent, these payoffs are anything but implausible.) While increasingly dependent on US aid, the Nepali state—the King and his inner circle—were not eager to be seen dancing to the US government's tune thereby endangering its leverage in Cold War geopolitics. Thus, according to palace sources, King Birendra's de-legalization of cannabis in 1973 may have come in the context of intense US pressure (and payoffs) but ultimately the decision resulted more from a perceived worsening of Nepal's international image at a time when the state had decided to invest heavily in tourism promotion, and the management of Nepal's tourist image. Hippies and cannabis had no place in the state's plans to take control of Nepal's tourist image that involved actively recasting Nepal as a consumerist "adventure" destination.
Linderman, Michael

Optimum Procession: a Maratha monument in a temple town, c. 1802

In 1802, Raja Serfoji II of Thanjavur (r. 1798-1823) invested in the construction and endowment of a large and elaborate chattram, or pilgrim rest house in the town of Orattanadu, just southeast of Thanjavur. The iconography and design of the magnificent entrance hall alluded to the grandeur of both royal and temple processions stretching back to the medieval period. The monument did not occupy center stage in the town, but was built along the southern leg of the Kasi Viswanathar temple’s processional circuit. Stylistic elements in the design of the entrance hall further connected the chattram with the temple’s rathamandapam, the mounting pavilion used to load the temple chariot for procession. From a procession’s point of view, these monuments constituted part of a series or network that anchored the ritual fabric of the town. This paper will show that, while functionally interconnected with the temple’s procession, its route, and its staging monuments, this royal chattram also facilitated the material equivalencies of the king’s own processional apotheosis.
Lindstrom, Katie E.

Picks and Pans: A Comparison of Harappan Pottery Preferences at Chanhu-Daro and Gola Dhoro

Archaeologists have long-considered distinctive Harappan style ceramic vessel forms and surface treatments to be a common and shared artifact class that can be used to identify communities who were once part of the ancient Indus Civilization. Once viewed as homogeneous across this expansive region, recent research indicates that regional variations are readily apparent, especially between sites in Sindh and Gujarat. The Sindh sites display what is considered to be the classic Mature Harappan corpus as defined by Dales and Kenoyer (1986), while in Gujarat Harappan style ceramics are often found alongside other abundant local and non-Harappan wares.

In this paper we compare the diagnostic Harappan vessel types present in the pottery assemblages of two small regionally distinct craft production centers - Gola Dhoro, situated on the southern edge of the Rann of Kachchh in Gujarat, and Chanhu-daro, located to the northwest of the great Rann, in Sindh Province. Chanhu-daro has many urban features of a much larger site (such as Mohenjo-daro) in its built environment as well as material assemblages. In contrast, Gola Dhoro’s built environment and material assemblage, especially the ceramics, show a significant presence of local culture. Differences notwithstanding, both sites produced objects that were of great importance to the social organization of the Harappan socio-economic polity. The comparative approach taken in this paper demonstrates whether similar types of Harappan settlements located in different regions of the Indus Civilization made use of the same suite of diagnostic Harappan ceramics. In doing so we add another dimension to the complexity of material culture preferences that simultaneously linked communities to their immediate neighbors and long-distance relations. The results of this collaborative paper can be used to facilitate the inter-site comparison of pottery assemblages at settlements across the Indus Civilization.
Loewy Shacham, Ilanit

A Royal Affair: Politics, Love and Marriage in Krsnadevaraya’s Jambavatiparinaya

The syamantaka episode is a short, fast-paced, adventure story from the Bhagavatapurana (BP) in which Krsna recovers the precious syamantaka gem in order to clear his name and quell false rumors of theft and murder. Indeed, in a mere thirty verses, Krsna sets out on a journey, revives a missing person who had been killed by a lion, finds the lost syamantaka gem, defeats the mighty bear-king and marries his daughter, Jambavati. He then returns home, clears his name and marries the gem owner’s daughter, Satyabhama.

These two marriages are given little elaboration in the syamantaka episode, even though the two new brides, along with Rukmini, are traditionally considered the chief wives of Krsna. But, where Satyabhama appears in later episodes of Krsna’s life – notoriously beautiful and proud – in both itihasa-purana and kavya materials, Jambavati does not; her personality and post-marriage life remain obscure.

An intriguing exception is the Jambavatiparinaya (JP), a five-act play written in Sanskrit and attributed to Krsnadevaraya (1509-1529), Vijayanagara’s most celebrated monarch. This paper argues that Krsnadevaraya took the terse episode of Krsna’s marriage to Jambavati from the puranic syamantaka episode and elaborated on it extensively in a way that shifts the focus and logic of the plot. In the JP, the story of the recovery of the gem becomes marginal and the adventure story of the BP is transformed into a love story, greatly influenced by Kalidasa’s Abhijnanasakuntala. Furthermore, the JP expands upon and resolves many of the BP’s silences and ambiguous lacunas. Reading the JP vis-à-vis Krsnadevaraya’s biography, I posit that the Jambavati story was composed in order to comment upon and perhaps legitimate the marriage of Krsnadevaraya with Tukka, the daughter of the Gajapati king of Oriya.
Hindi cinema has been described as one of the last “havens” for Urdu in post-Independence India. While this is undoubtedly true to some degree, such a formulation hides the changes wrought on Urdu poetry that were intended to make it compatible with the demands of this popular, and implicitly national, genre. This paper explores some of the aspects of the transition of Urdu poetry from the contexts of the written page and the elite mushaira to that of the cinema screen.

Sahir Ludhianvi’s nazm ‘Cakle’ (‘Brothels’) is an appropriate starting point for this examination. Originally published in 1945, Sahir reworked the poem substantially and significantly to provide the lyrics for the song ‘Jinhe Naz He’ for Guru Dutt’s 1957 film ‘Pyaasa’ (‘Thirsty’). While the phenomenon of a poet editing his work after its initial publication was not uncommon, several of Sahir’s amendments point to what I suggest was a clear desire to simplify the original poem, specifically through the replacement of the more Arabicised elements with more easily understood alternatives: hence, the refrain, “Jinhe naz he Hind par”.

Scholarship has shown how the emergence of radio, as an oral/aural medium, failed to allow any transcendence of the fundamental divide of script between Hindi and Urdu. As a broadly contemporary development, cinema had the same theoretical capability, and has been seen as a medium in which Urdu, divorced from Perso-Arabic script, has been able to thrive. However, the transformations wrought by Sahir on ‘Cakle’ suggest a number of imperatives that were most likely external to the poet, and intrinsic to the genre: the simplification of vocabulary, turning the nazm from a beautiful but somewhat exclusive piece into one much more easily accessible, points to the demotic and national aspirations of the film industry. Moreover, the excision of specific words and phrases can perhaps be viewed through the paradigm of what I am calling ‘secular’ Urdu – an style of Urdu that was profoundly concerned with its audience, and aimed for the broadest audience possible. Finally, this narrow case study raises questions regarding the imagined salvific potential of film for Urdu: specifically, I suggest, Urdu could only enter this medium when it complied with a set of conditions that mandated compliance with the standards of Hindustani, and the use of a restricted, popularly understood vocabulary.
Lutfi, Ameem

The Torch Bearers No More: A Study of Student Movements in Karachi in 1961

On the 18th of February 1961, for the first time since the imposition of Section 144 Cr. of the Public Protocol Order (PPO) that banned all public processions a left leaning student organization, The National Student Federation, organized a protest in Karachi blatantly dismissing the PPO. The police in its attempt to curb the protest arrested the prominent student leaders; an action which proved to be the proverbial fuel to the fire. Soon students all over the country began staging demonstrations to demand the release of the arrested leaders, thus starting the first serious political movement against a Martial Law regime in Pakistan.

What was interesting about this movement was that it was led not by ‘anti-state nationalists’ or ‘corrupt politicians’ but by one of the state’s favorite polities, a group that had occupied a privileged position within the state's policies: the students. Since the days of the Pakistan movement the students had been made to be the ‘torch bearers of society’ and had received a disproportionate amount of state support even after partition. This paper argues that the post-colonial state’s ideals in the education sector sought to create a depoliticized class of technically trained ‘responsible civil citizenry’ that could both lead the states development projects and become the modern-liberal face of the state. However, this particular imagination of an ‘ideal student’ was fraught with contradictions as a result of which not only did the state’s project always remain ‘incomplete,’ but it also produced unexpected consequences such as the student movement of 1961, during which the students perceived their role as ‘champions of social justice’ rather than ‘leaders’ of the developmental projects of the state.

Through oral narratives of student activists from the early 60's and archival material which I collected during my fieldwork in Karachi; this paper takes on the question of what the state's 'ideals' in the education sector were, and how did the students reconfigure them during certain 'chaotic' moments such those in 1961? Additionally, how did the state in the aftermath of the event with a more realistic conception of ‘what is to be and what can do done’, recalculate its ideals? Also, considering the special status of the students, the paper investigates the particular processes that led the students, who were to be loyal state supporters, to launch a fight against the state itself.
Mahadevan, TP

The Karnaparvan in the Textual Scheme of the Mahabharata

It is established now beyond any reasonable contradiction that the Mahabharata epic, largely in its present form, possesses a continuous textual history from ca. 2nd BCE to the present. Further, the Pune Critical Edition of the epic captures an archetype of the epic from this time, preserved in a Sarada codex of the epic from the Kashmir region. I have shown that this text or one close to it, a *Sarada text, came to the peninsula with the Purvasikha Brahmans ca. 50 BCE—or a century before, to allow for their acculturation to the Tamil culture and milieu and attested participation in the making of the Sangam poetry. I show from an analysis of the Sabhaparvan (SP) of the epic that they create the Southern Recension (SR) of the epic in the peninsula from this *Sarada text, ca. 300 CE. I propose to bring the Karnaparvan (KP) to a similar scrutiny. P.L.Vaidya, its CE editor, considers it to be an unstable text in its Sarada version—by extension, the *Sarada text, seen to be present in the peninsula from the evidence of the SP of the SR. How do the Southern redactors “schematize” the KP of the *Sarada text into its SR version? I showed that the rise of Vaisnavism is reflected in the schematization of the *Sarada SP into the SR SP: are there such sub-texts to be found in the SR KP? Karna answers more than all other heroes of the epic to the canror ethos of the Sangam poetry: is there any evidence of it in the KP of the SR? My paper addresses these and allied questions.
Majumdar, Rochona

Understanding the history of Arranged Marriage in India

In this presentation I want to parse out the constellation of practices that make up arranged marriage in order to understand why the institution lends itself to extreme depictions and judgments: it is either seen as a static and unchanging embodiment or an Indian tradition or as the sign of a radical Indian otherness that can be peddled globally as yet another aspect of India's soft power. My aim is to demonstrate that the expression “arranged marriage” contains within it a cluster of ambiguities. It names a sociocultural site marked by a series of tensions: between competing ideas of the joint family and individual autonomy, between questions of social status and considerations of romantic love, between civility and crass commodification, between liberal individualism and opposed notions of non-liberal attachments. It is thus misleading to either denigrate the institution as retrograde and backward looking, or celebrate it as an emblem of the future.

Like any other social practice, arranged marriage is constituted by freedoms and constraints. My effort is to highlight these aspects of the practice by situating them in their historical context. Only this exercise of historicizing marriage will account for the transformations that the institution underwent during the colonial period and also help in comprehending the changes that many characterize as a full-blown expression of a postcolonial modernity. Finally, such a history allows us to see clearly that the field of arranged marriage is not one without critiques—critiques that are generated by participants within the institution who recognize it as not something age-old but rather as a manifestation of certain exigencies generated by their context.
Majumder, Auritro

Development Discourse and the Creation of Hegemonic Space: Bengali travel writing and the Andamans

The Andaman & Nicobar Islands have always occupied a problematic position with respect to the Indian mainland. In 1858 the British imperial administration in India set up a penal settlement for confining rebels of the 1857 Rebellion in the process displacing the native Onge, Jaroa, and Nicobarese tribes from their lands. The gradual abolition of the prisons in the 1920s, in favor of settlement led, as one English historian has recently argued, to a more “liberal” regime. This is contrary to traditional nationalist descriptions of the islands as a space where “Indians” and “tribals” alike were subjected to the horrors and tyrannies of colonial rule, which were only brought to a halt when the islands became a part of the newly independent India.

This paper examines a corpus of writings that has been almost completely ignored by scholars working on the colonial/postcolonial history of the Andamans, namely travel narratives and descriptive accounts in Bengali. I map out what is a key thematic in many of these texts, namely, the discourse of development, derived in part from the colonial-era anxiety over a “dangerously anachronistic space” inhabited by hostile natives and former criminals. Yet, also, in their reflexive anti-colonial ethos, these texts articulate a new, post-independence hegemony of State intervention that incorporates such spaces into the nation-space. In contradistinction to previous and recent scholarly arguments focusing on the repression/development binary, I demonstrate that the postcolonial Bengali elites’ concern with the “preservation” of the near-extinct native populations also unproblematically assumes, and propagates, the State’s right to unilaterally appropriate the material resources of a people. In addition to reading these texts as sites of hegemonic articulations and tendencies of how “other” spaces/spaces of “others” are sought to be incorporated into the nation-space, the question of incorporation/appropriation also gestures in another direction – the coercive interventions of the Indian State in a globalizing, neo-liberal India.
Majumdar, Neepa

Why Bother With Disco Dancer

This paper considers the retooling of narrative, thematic, and star practices in the early 1980s to accommodate new forms of international popular culture through an exploration of the Hindi film *Disco Dancer* (Babbar Subhash, 1983), which was one among several pop music movies that concentrated on the male star primarily as performer and only secondarily as romantic hero. I will argue that *Disco Dancer* is particularly important as a trend setter because of its domestication of disco into a melodramatic mother-centered narrative, while remaining at the heart of debates over cultural hierarchies. To put this bluntly, Disco Dancer is considered to be "trashy" cinema, which calls for analysis of its national and international appeal as understood both through camp aesthetics as well as more regular forms of identification. Yet, at the same time, the film's reframing of the maternal melodrama of prior films such *Mother India* (Mehboob Khan, 1957) and *Deewar* (Yash Chopra, 1975) also leads to certain experiments with form as the film struggles to construct a cinematic language that is adequate to disco. The paper will also consider the international travels of its songs both in 1983 when it came out and in their contemporary manifestations through the phenomenon of Russia's Tajik Jimmy and others such as MIA.
Mallah, Qasid Hussain

Recent Research at Harappan Settlements Located in Sindh
Mallampalli, Chandra

A View from the South: Contesting the Hindu Joint Family in Madras Courts, 1820-1880

Toward the middle of the 19th century, legal reformers in India were engaged in a lively debate concerning the nature and viability of the “Hindu joint family.” The debate was anchored in an Orientalist binary that distinguished stagnant societies such as India’s from more progressive Aryan societies of Europe, based on the nuclear family. In south India, however, scholar administrators such as James Henry Nelson questioned the very coherence of the joint family concept, its relevance to south Indian society and the teleology underlying the debate. Nelson, a member of the co-called “Madras School of Orientalism,” went to great lengths to show how the joint family notion, derived from Sanskrit texts, did not match South Indian family models. Drawing upon Nelson’s ideas and decisions of the Madras Sadr Adalat and High Court, this paper explores the manner in which textual notions of the Hindu family were invented, then mediated and contested within South Indian courts.

The first section of my paper will compare and contrast early decisions of the Madras Sadr Adalat, in which the voices of Brahmin pandits were influential, with the late nineteenth century decisions of the Madras High Court. By this time, the judiciary had eliminated the roles of pandits and judges made use of available translations of texts to guide their decisions. In what ways did dispensing with the pandits open horizons for new critiques of the Hindu joint family? The remainder of the paper deals with Nelson’s critiques of Hindu law and his own interpretations of key decisions. At issue in this larger debate about the joint family, I argue, was not simply the interpretation of texts or the results of “empirical” studies of actual usage, but also how key historical transitions in the experience of family in India were posited and interpreted.
Mannur, Anita

Union Carbide and the Ethics of Environmentalism: Fictionalizing Disability in Indian Literature

The field of South Asian Studies has a long history of promoting intersectional analyses, examining the interlocking relationship between gender, class, sexuality, race and ethnicity. However, there is very little work that addresses the ways in which the categories of disability and environmentalism are used to constitute one another, or the ways that those social, political, and cultural practices have impacted the cultural landscape of South Asian literary production. As a means of considering how discourses in environmentalism and disability can be productively put into conversation in a South Asian context, this presentation considers literary responses to the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal, India. Despite having shocked the world in 1984, there is a relative dearth of literary and cultural work about the Bhopal disaster. As a way to address the 'silence' around this moment, I propose a comparative analysis of two of the only novels to examine the havoc wreaked by the Union Carbide gas leak. In particular I look at Indra Sinha’s Animal’s People and Amulya Malladi’s A Breath of Fresh Air, novels that consider how the aftermath of the Bhopal environmental disaster becomes manifested in the form of violent forms of disability, both psychic and physical. In my reading of these two works, I consider how the Bhopal tragedy becomes rendered as an ethical moment through which to consider the traumatizing effects of globalization on the human mind and body. In Sinha’s novel, the character, known as Animal walks on all fours due to a severely twisted spine—a result of the environmental disaster that destroyed the fictionalized town of Khaufpur—whereas in Malladi’s novel, the environmental disaster produces psychological damage. In considering the tenor of being physically disfigured alongside becoming psychologically damaged, I suggest that the novels collectively cleave a space for understanding how disability studies and environmental studies be put into conversation in order to better understand the ramifications of considering the disabled as a metaphor for the disabled nation. In the final analysis, this presentation hopes to bring a fresh perspective to both literary studies and South Asian Studies by asking how environmental studies and disability studies can help to reexamine how we think about the Union Carbide disaster.
Manohar, Namita

Food, Music, and Dance: Reinterpretations of Motherhood by Tamil Professional Women in Atlanta

This paper investigates how Tamil immigrant women reinterpret Tamil motherhood as a bastion of resistance to their “economic integration” into American society. It draws from semi-structured qualitative interviews (each approximately 4-5 hours in duration) with 33 first-generation, Tamil immigrant professional women in Atlanta.

It finds that, for Tamil immigrant women, America simultaneously constitutes an “achievement” and a “threat” to be continuously negotiated in the service of constructing and retaining “authentic” Tamil family forms. America offers my participants upward social mobility evinced in their successful economic integration into white, upper-middle class American society. However, this mobility also carries the threat of Americanization and the corresponding loss of Tamil family forms, structurally emergent from their engagement with professional work, and their location within white-dominated, suburban Atlanta neighborhoods.

To counter this effect, my research finds that Tamil women reinterpret two key symbols of Tamil motherhood – namely cooking, and cultural socialization of children – to be sites of resistance to American assimilation. Far from relegating “feeding their families” to a routine, time consuming chore, Tamil women cook to retain Tamil ethnicity by ensuring that their children eat South Indian food, and are familiar with Indian gastronomical traditions. The labor they invest in this form of cooking is juxtaposed to the “cook-in-a-minute” American tradition, and is characterized as a labor of love and ethnic transmission both literally in terms of establishing this cuisine as their families’ predominant eating tradition; and metaphorically in creating memories of “mother’s home cooked meals” for their children.

Additionally, Tamil women also assume the primary responsibility for supervising their children’s acquisition of Tamil cultural skills. On one hand this involves chauffeuring children in the afternoons and evenings to a variety of organized cultural trainings ranging from language, music, dance and religious instruction. On the other, this necessitates Tamil women’s active engagement with the Tamil community in Atlanta, forming coalitions of like-minded Tamil mothers invested in creating spaces of belonging for their bicultural children to perform ethnicity. While these investments are similar to those of upwardly mobile American families, for Tamil women the ethnic value of these activities is the most crucial.

Thus, for Tamil women reinterpreting motherhood around music, food, and dance not only solidifies their status as “good mothers” caring for their families’ needs despite their professional commitments; but importantly, serves as a bastion against potential identity losses that accompany integration, by retaining the Tamil character of their families.
March, Kathryn

New Himalayan ‘Traders’: Male Wage Migration and the Tamang ‘Coparcener’ Model of Gender

In 1975, a negligible percentage of the population of the small mountain community of Mhanégang had ever migrated out to work; by 2006, almost two-thirds of the adult men no longer lived to work in the village. A generation ago, every household in this community was organized for subsistence agro-pastoralism with some trade. Marriage, inheritance, family, work, residence and tradition created and conceptualized the community as an integral whole, with a known past and knowable future. Households, then, revolved—economically, socially, politically and ritually—around what I call a ‘coparcener’ pair: the senior man and woman, whose respective inheritances, labor, social ties, and religious obligations constituted the household, which provided emotional moorage as well as physical benefit to both, and bestowed publically acknowledged value for the collaborative contributions of both.

Today every household has been affected by the growing global wage labor market; every aspect that previously reinforced the sense of local integrity and continuity is being tested and scattered. For some, these changes have brought new opportunities for income, education, and adventure—transforming families dramatically, and in ways that the men, women and children in them generally perceive as desirable. For others, global forays have further impoverished their families, created ever sharpening disparities between the sexes and the generations. For everyone, the experiences of these new Himalayan ‘traders’ are, I argue, transforming Tamang gender relations: while men continue to see themselves in, and be valued for, their capacity to provision their families with their subsistence, women often no longer find themselves to be productive coparceners; instead, women are, increasingly, dependent consumers of wealth produced by men.

Using over thirty years of life history narratives, intensive interviews, community ritual performances, and songs, as well as household surveys and censuses, Beyond a better understanding and management of the socio-economic pressures affecting rural family choices, however, this research is also about the personal and familial meanings vested in migration. As people interpret what it means to leave, to stay behind, to send or be sent out, to be able to choose to go, or stay, or not to have a choice, they are creating new senses of themselves, their identities, households, community, and gendered value.
A Paradox of Authority in the Gorakhabani

Little is historically known about Guru Gorakhnath, the semi-legendary yogic preceptor of the Nath sampraday. Usually believed to have lived some time between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, Gorakhnath’s geographic origins are highly contested and there appears to be no concrete evidence recording his historical existence. However, little extant documentation there may be surrounding the life of Guru Gorakhnath, there is a profusion of literary works attributed to this yogi, making him in a very real sense an “author”.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Gorakhnath is credited with the authorship of a substantial amount of literature written in vernacular languages. The Gorakhbani is just one compilation of verses attributed to the leader of the Nath sampraday. Some of the themes propounded in this text are the importance of guru-sisya lineage and the centrality of sabad (sound). Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of the Gorakhbani is the enigmatic speech that it employs. Ultabamsi (paradoxical language) and sandyabhasa (liminal language) riddle the verses of the Gorkakhbani, allowing the audience to interpret it in a multiplicity of ways and rendering it a type of “secretive” text.

Linguistic analysis of the Gorakhbani indicates that it is unlikely that these verses were composed before the seventeenth century, situating the poetry centuries after Goraknath lived. However, sectarian tradition continues to consider Gorakhnath to be the author of these sayings. In this paper, I will examine the complex issue of authorship surrounding this text and suggest that the authorship of this text should be understood through its own rubric.

Due to the importance placed on the guru within the Gorakhbani, Gorakhnath must necessarily be regarded the author of the text. As Gorkhanath is the paradigmatic guru of the Nath sampraday, without his guidance his disciples would be unable to comprehend his esoteric message. However, the literary techniques and paradoxical language employed in the text force the listeners and readers of the Gorakhbani to come to terms with the contradictions within it. The disciple’s power to claim authority over the text’s message is at times equal to that of Gorakhnath’s; rendering the guru in the irrevocably paradoxical position of being both the text’s immortal author and an empty authority. In short this paper will explore the idea that the author of the Gorakhbani is, like the text itself, in a sense a secret.
This paper explores the relationship between labor movements and musicians working in the Malayalam motion picture industry based in Thiruvananthapuram. It considers the extent to which Malluwood musicians have imbricated discourses of music and labor in response to Kerala’s distinctive political modernity. Widely known for grassroots democratic participation and robust trade union activism, Kerala’s arenas of public culture provide a heuristic social context for problematizing the politics of creative work in South Asia. Even before the state installed the first democratically elected communist party in 1956, workers in agricultural, manufacturing, and service sectors organized to improve working conditions, hours, and wages. While there are many stories of performing artists who mobilized their craft to support labor solidarity in Kerala, accounts of artists forming their own professional associations to negotiate with owners of the means of production in Kerala’s cultural industries are less common.

The Malayalam Cine Technicians Association (MACTA) represents the interests of a wide federation of creative workers in Malluwood, including cinematographers, make-up artists, lyricists, and costume designers, as well as music directors, playback singers, and sound technicians. Excluded from the list of technicians and artists eligible to become members of MACTA are the freelance musicians whose collaborations on cinematic soundtracks and songs are routinely overshadowed by the stardom of music directors and playback singers. Who protects the interests of these creative agents in an increasingly competitive field of musical production? As Malluwood film song aesthetics and economics move away from the large orchestras of “old” Bollywood toward smaller acoustic ensembles and digital manipulation through sampling and multi-track recording technologies, musicians work even harder to compete for fewer jobs. Drawing on archival and media sources as well as ethnographic interviews and experience learning about the division, distribution, and hard realities of musical work in Malluwood, I present evidence of how conceptions of music as labor have expanded possibilities for exercising creative agency for some musicians, while reinforcing unequal positions in hierarchies of musical production for others.
McCrea, Lawrence

The Place of Vidyadhara's Ekavali in the History of Sanskrit Poetic Discourse

Late Medieval Sanskrit poetics has, until recently, fared rather poorly at the hands of modern scholarship. The dominant trend in the field has been to regard the rasa/dhvani theories of the Kashmiri aestheticians Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta as the highest development of poetic thought in India, and works produced after these theories were authoritatively systematized in the popular Kavyaprakasa of the eleventh century theorist Mammata have often been stigmatized as merely derivative. Three major works in particular: the Ekavali of Vidyadhar (c. 1300 AD), the Prataparudrayasobhusana of Vidyanatha (c. 1300), and the Sahityadarpana of Visvanatha (c. 1350 AD), have generally been dismissed as mere imitations of the Kavyaprakasa, and consequently received very little attention from contemporary scholars. This paper will focus on the most neglected of the three, the Ekavali, and will seek to underline the features that distinguish it both from Mammata's work and from its fellow "imitators". Despite its disregard by modern scholars, for some of the most important later figures in Indian poetics the Ekavali would seem to have held an importance in the field at odds with this rather offhand assessment. The famous fourteenth century Andhra poetic commentator Mallinatha wrote only one work on poetic theory: an elaborate and historically probing commentary on the Ekavali. When the great sixteenth century polymath Appayyadiksita sought to set forth the classic Alamkarika position on figurative signification, he based his treatment not on the Kavyaprakasa, but specifically on the Ekavali, distinctive for its engagement with contemporary Nyaya theory on the question. In fact, one of the most characteristic features of the Ekavali is a far more intense engagement with Nyaya and Mimamsa logic and semantics than is found either in the Kavyaprakasa or contemporary works on poetics. And this engagement is coupled with an intense interest in recapturing and extending the insights of earlier authors on poetics who specifically criticized or were criticized by Mammata. Far from being a mere recasting of the Kavyaprakasa, then, it seems that the Ekavali can best be seen as a key player in a kind of subterranean counter-tradition of Alamkarasastra, stretching back to such key anti-Mammata theorists as Mahimabhatta and Ruuyaka, and forward to Mallinatha and Appayyadiksita, among others.
McGranahan, Carole

The Case of “Naughty Tibetans:” Political Subjectivity and the Imperial Politics of the Non-Colonial

What were the possibilities for imperial political subjectivity for peoples resident in British India, but not colonized? That is, for peoples such as exiled Tibetans who were not colonized in either their home or host country, but whose relations with the British were decidedly imperial? In this paper I consider the story of—as British officials termed them—some “naughty Tibetans” led by Rapga Pangdatsang, founder of the nationalist Tibetan Improvement Party, estranged from the conservative 1940s Tibetan Government, and resident of Kalimpong in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Drawn to intellectual currents in China and India, and especially to newly emergent Asian forms of nationalism, Rapga Pangdatsang wanted to effect political change in Tibet but in so doing ran afoul of British officials in India. Convinced that Rapga was a Chinese agent working to bring down the “friendly government” of Tibet, British officials manipulated legal loopholes to deport him to China.

Grounding this inquiry are a series of interrelated questions: in relation to the social and political contexts of this tumultuous period, how can we best understand Rapga Pangdatsang’s Tibetan Improvement Party? In relation to British empire in Asia, how does the story of an imperial but not colonial subject challenge how we understand the categories and conceits of empire? And, in relation to historical sources and our access to and interpretations of them, what sources are extant for telling what sort of histories of the Tibetan Improvement Party and why?

In reconsidering Rapga Pangdatsang and his Tibetan Improvement Party, I argue that we are immersed into a complex yet hopeful world of Tibetan politics in a time of global change, the idealism of a rebel intellectual living on the threshold of multiple societies, the arbitrary nature yet very real effects of colonial categories and policies, and multiple, but frequently overlooked subaltern genres of cultural and political expression. Taking place at the geographic and temporal edge of empire, this history reveals how although Tibet was never colonized by Britain, Tibetan political status at individual and state levels was—and remains to this day—irreducibly affected by British imperial policy.
McHugh, James

The Disputed Civets and the Complexion of the God in South India

Civet is an extremely pungent, fatty secretion of a gland found near the anus of the civet cat. This peculiar material is not mentioned in early South Asian sources on perfumery and aromatics, though it does appear in texts dating from the later medieval period, where it is represented as a stinking material derived from a cat. Using mainly Sanskrit texts as sources, this paper first presents a short history of civet in South Asia, examining how this strange material was incorporated into the discourses of medicine, perfumery, and into Hindu liturgies. Nowadays civet is still used in the rituals of the large, wealthy temple of Lord Venkateshvara at Tirupati in South India. Here civets used to be kept to provide materials for an anointing ritual that is claimed to maintain the stone of the temple icon smooth and free from cracks. Recently, however, these civets were confiscated by the local wildlife authorities, and this caused a row between the local government and the extremely wealthy, powerful temple management. Using newspaper reports and interviews I will also explain this controversy. Having explored the background to civet in South Asia this paper will consider how, in this dispute, texts and traditions—a sacred history of civet—have been cited in order to justify the return of the temple civets, so necessary to maintain the “complexion” of the god. The paper will be of interest to scholars of South Asian religions and material culture, as well as to scholars who are interested in the clash of ecology and tradition. The paper is a case study of the manner in which institutions are sometimes forced to articulate supposedly ancient traditions in order to validate practice.
McNamara, Daniel

What "is" Yogacara? The Role of the Trisvabhavanirdesa in Vasubandhu’s Corpus

The Treatise on the Three Natures (Trisvabhavanirdesa, TSN), a brief and poetic introduction to the Yogacara Buddhist Three Nature theory, occupies an important space in contemporary academic interpretations of early Yogacara thought. By stark contrast, no reference to (or commentary on) the TSN has yet been brought to light in the Indian, Tibetan or Chinese traditions. Such a striking inconsistency begs the question of motivations for inclusion and exclusion of the TSN in the literary corpus of Vasubandhu.

This paper will first engage the question, “what if Vasubandhu didn’t write the TSN?” by investigating concepts of the author and the oeuvre. This discussion will be based mainly on Michel Foucault’s seminal essay, “What is an Author?,” but will engage the author function in general and will investigate what is at stake in the formation of any corpus for Vasubandhu (taking “Vasubandhu” to refer first and foremost to “the author of the Abhidharmakosa”).

The second part of the essay will discuss what I call the reading communities of Vasubandhu, centering mainly on Tibet and America. Of particular importance here is the role of the TSN in the competing theories that Yogacara “is” idealism (articulated most clearly by Jay Garfield) and that Yogacara “is” phenomenology (as claimed by Dan Lusthaus). This section will employ theoretical frameworks provided by Andrew Tuck and Kevin Vose; it will also utilize Paul Griffiths’ Religious Reading and Jonathan Boyarin’s edited volume The Ethnography of Reading. The former two texts discuss (respectively) the construction of Nagarjuna and Candrakirti as pre-eminent philosophers: Tuck poignantly demonstrates the tendency for Western readers to read popular Western philosophical trends into Nagarjuna (e.g., Kant and Wittgenstein), while Vose describes the valorization of Candrakirti in India and Tibet, beginning four hundred years after his death. The latter pair of texts provides a platform for discussing contemporary scholarship as a religious reading community in its own right.
McNamara, Karen

The “Modern” Herbal: Medical Knowledge and Practice in Bangladesh

In this paper I will trace how knowledge about herbal medicines and healing is constructed and contested in Bangladesh. Many allopathic companies have recently started to manufacture herbal medicines which has created a new category of production of herbal medicines in the form of an herbal license, in addition to the existing Unani and Ayurvedic licenses. The renewed interest in herbal medicines in Bangladesh is related to global WTO rules, national history and interests, the success of the allopathic pharmaceutical industry and the market potential of producing and exporting herbal medicines globally. Even though there is a strong allopathic industry in Bangladesh, the realm of formal herbal medicinal knowledge had always been left to Unani and Ayurvedic systems. Therefore, these traditional manufacturers feel threatened by the new herbal medicines, not only because they see the new herbal as infringing on their market, but also because the new herbal medicines are not a part of the fabric and history of local healing in Bangladesh. I will examine how both traditional and allopathic pharmaceutical companies make knowledge claims about herbal medicine and how these claims are viewed by various practitioners of traditional medicine. I will ask what counts as legitimate “modern” medical and scientific knowledge and how are these forms of knowledge influenced by politics, bureaucracy, and profit-making?
From Mian Fuski to Mian Musharraf: Humor and the Citizenship of “Ms” in Gujarat

Comics, jokes and parodies enable transgressions disallowed by the law, reaffirm the political status quo and mark the boundaries of group membership. This paper investigates the different portrayals of the Gujarati Muslim—from Mian Fuski, the comically timid Muslim, in the eponymous popular Gujarati children’s comic book series of the 1950s to contemporary jokes that refer to the Muslim as simply “M” and Mian Musharraf, the former Pakistani military dictator. The publicity of such humor does much more than display the shifting registers of citizenship in Gujarat. I argue that humor manages spheres of communal intimacy and distance in particular political contexts. Mian Fuski’s close friendship with the staunch Brahmin Tabha Bhatt illustrated one among the many possibilities of quotidian interactions between compatriots in the Gujarati polity. In contrast, the Mian Musharraf and “M” jokes parody the legal-constitutional status of Muslims and designate an alternative system of civic ranking in which “M” stands for both “Muslims” and “Traitors.” The circulation of these speech acts today forecloses the earlier communicative possibilities of neighborly relations or "padoshi sambandh" reflected in the stories of Mian Fuski. I show how Humor provides the vocabulary and conditions through which formal ideas of citizenship are enacted and mocked and informal practices of inclusion and exclusion are forged. Through an analysis of comic books, jokes and everyday talk between 1947 to the present, my paper reveals the political work performed by humor in both reflecting and circumscribing the material experiences of Muslim citizenship in Gujarat.
Menon, Rajiv  
(Co-authored with Elizabeth Chacko)

"Hybrid Traditions": Indian American Dance Competitions and Shifting Diasporic Identities on Campus

While numerous discussions of identity among Indian American youth have focused on the assertion of hybrid identity through the “culture show” and club culture, this paper examines the development of the “cultural competition” and a resistance to diasporic hybridity on American college campuses. The “culture show,” which has been a major focus for scholarly discussions of ethnic identity and hybridity among Indian Americans, usually provides a social environment for the performance of various types of acts, including skits, musical performances, fashion shows, and various types of dance performances. In contrast, folk dance competitions are intercollegiate contests that focus on a specific type of “traditional” performance and are, as the name implies, competitive. In opposition to discussions of hybridity in relation to culture shows, the rhetoric of these folk dance competitions is concerned with issues of “tradition” and the culture of the “homeland.” In order to appeal to judges, most of whom are first generation Indian Americans, competitors must avoid “diasporic inauthenticity” in favor of the production of notions of cultural “purity.”

By discussing two categories of folk dance competition, Bhangra and Raas-Garba, we seek to convey that these supposedly hybrid contexts are sites for the production of homogenizing narratives of cultural “authenticity” and “tradition.” By focusing on folk dance competitions hosted by the South Asian Society of a large, private university in Washington, DC, we argue that these competitions produce rhetoric that marginalizes diasporic culture in favor of the “pure” culture of the “homeland.”

Through participant observations at two major competitions in the Washington, D.C. area (“Raas Chaos” 2008 and 2009, and “Bhangra Blowout”, 2010) and subsequent revisitation of these events through video recordings, focus group discussions, and unstructured interviews with Indian American participants in these dance competitions, we will demonstrate that performance has developed into an accepted means of conveying “authentic” cultural identity. We will also argue that these competitions redefine the “homeland” in regional and local terms, bypassing diasporic and national identity in the context of these performances. However, as we will outline, the diasporic performers in these competitions have numerous scales of identity that cannot easily be suppressed through the rhetoric of the competitions and expectations of “tradition.” We assert the competitors convey the impossibility of such assertions, as diasporic identities consistently interrupt and undermine these homogenizing narratives of “tradition” and “authenticity.”
Metz, John

Climate Crisis in the Himalaya: Another Misleading Consensus?

When climate change skeptics exposed the International Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) prediction that Himalayan glaciers will disappear within 35 years as a casual observation rather than a rigorously researched projection, they expanded the number of people who believe that concerns about climate change are greatly exaggerated and no action need be taken. At the same time, virtually all development professionals, environmental advocacy groups, Himalayan NGOs and grant-giving foundations assume that global warming is an established fact and are designing programs to mitigate its impacts. This is not the first time that a Himalayan environmental crisis has been unquestioningly accepted by donors, researchers, and activists. From the mid-1970s to the early 1990s the belief that a downward spiral of unrestrained population growth, deforestation, and erosion was creating a regional environmental catastrophe dominated environmental discourse and set development project agendas. Careful research to define these processes, however, revealed that this hypothesized environmental crisis, labeled the Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation or THED, was so laden with simplistic, incorrect assumptions and so lacking in empirical evidence that it led to distorted development initiatives and needed to be rejected. Today, the climate change discourse assumes that a similar highland-lowland catastrophe is unfolding in South Asia. Is the adoption climate change as a proven fact that is engendering an environmental crisis repeating the errors of the past? This paper seeks to examine the parallels and differences between discourses of the THED of the 1980s and climate change of the 2000s. My goal is to evaluate the unexamined and underlying assumptions on which climate change discourse rests, the quality of the evidence on which the discourse is based, and the sophistication of the responses to the climate change being proposed by activists, donors, and funding agencies.
Halide Edib Adivar: Perceptions of Self in Travel Narratives and Exile in 20th C. India

On January 9, 1935, Indian Muslim intellectuals invited Halide Edib Adıvar to Delhi to give a series of lectures. Her friend and host Dr. Ansari then asked her to share her observations about India with the world. In 1937 with the publication of Inside India, Halide Edib reluctantly added travel writing to her already impressive body of works that include literature, history and philosophy, political essays, and social criticism. Inside India is a remarkably rich text. The first Indian travel narrative by a Turkish woman has been described as “the most eloquent statement on Indian society and politics in the 1930s.”

A British critic, H. Grey, wrote in 1937:

It is illuminating for British readers to look at modern India through Madame Edib's unprejudiced eyes…. Madame Edib lived in close intimacy with both Hindus and Muslims, and shows insight into the problems and personalities of both camps. In town and village this trained observer picks out the significant feature, and records it in terse phrases…

Inside India, a complex, multi-layered text, is an equally valuable resource in what it reveals about the intertwinnings of history, gender and subjectivity. In India Halide Edib speaks with a confident, adult voice. Invited to lecture in India she comments on gender and history but it is the private moments, the comments on gardens and architecture, the interactions with the servants who want to rub her legs of the Ottoman princess that she participated in exiling that force her to examine who she is and how she became Halide Edib Adivar. My paper will discuss how Halide Edib perceives herself and the various interactions between the self at home, the self abroad, the self while on a trip. How travel allows certain aspects of the self to emerge and how it complicates other aspects of the self are questions I aim to explore in this paper.
Mitchell, Lisa

Spaces of Communication, Spaces of Politics: The Railway Station in the History of Indian Democracy

From the railway journeys of Gandhi and other anti-colonial activists in the 1910s through 1940s, to recent agitations in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan, railway stations and their larger networks of communication have been important sites for the development of new forms of political practice and communication within the history of Indian democracy. As new semi-public spaces in India since the mid-nineteenth century and as the points through which representations of the outside world (including newspapers, nationalist speakers, and the mail) were more regularly and frequently brought into local communities, railway stations have provided direct links between the local and the trans-local (be it regional, national, or global). Halting a train or cutting off communication by sitting on the railway tracks or pulling up rails sends a message that can be heard far beyond the immediate location of such an action. From their very inception in India, railway stations have been primary targets of sabotage, used to express discontent, anger, and political protest against the government. Halting trains, destroying government railway property, and disrupting railway activity continue to be popular methods of expressing protest. This paper will analyze the ways in which the public spaces associated with railway stations have facilitated new forms of political practice within the history of Indian democracy, including “train-wrecking,” the ubiquitous “rail roko” [train halting], and mass ticketless travel to political rallies. Bringing together theoretical approaches to the study of public space, ethnographic approaches to the mapping of discursive and communicative networks, and historical approaches to the role of the railway station within urban and national politics, the paper draws from my recent research (July 2008 through May 2009) in the Indian Railway records housed in the National Archives of India, the Indian Railway Museum Library, Government Railway Police archives, and Railway Protection Force records. It also incorporates interviews with senior railway officials, railway police, people’s movement activists, and leaders of political parties.
Commodification of Spirituality and the Sacred Cultural Landscape of Pushkar, India

In a sacred milieu, pilgrimage drives economy. Sacred towns allow for economic transactions, prompted by pilgrimage, resulting in a dynamic physical setting which subsequently affects pilgrimage attitudes. It can be contended that the spatial arrangement of sacred towns interweaves the rituals of pilgrimage with the commerce of pilgrimage.

The site of my inquiry, Pushkar, has thousands of pilgrims and international tourists visiting it for its sacred value. Interestingly, the landscape offers not only a religious milieu but also an indulgent consumerist milieu to the visitors. Learning from how the landscape is spatially patterned to encourage the pilgrim economy, my paper intends an integrated development of the cultural landscape.

Pushkar, a quaint town in the Ajmer district of Rajasthan, India, is an important pilgrim destination. It is famous for its Brahma Temple built during the 14th century AD and has in recent years become a popular destination for foreign tourists. The landscape is characterized by the Pushkar Lake nestled within the Aravalli Mountains. The lake has 52 ghats where pilgrims come to bathe in the sacred waters.

The town’s socio-economic structure is completely dependent on the activities related to the lake and the temples surrounding the lake. In a way, the lake and the temples act as employers as well as consumers. Pilgrims offer food to the deity; the offered food gets consecrated and becomes an important commodity for pilgrims. Pilgrims pay for these offerings, setting up an important economic system that depends upon the huge demand for the sacred product. Besides the offered parshad, there are several ritualistic objects sold in the bazaars surrounding the temples. People buy these objects as souvenirs as well as a means of engagement in their spiritual journey, which they intend to continue long after.

The economic control of temples is more coercive towards tourists who come here in pursuit of spirituality. Insistent holy men pursue tourists to partake in ritualistic cleansing.

The paper will distinguish between the consumption patterns of a pilgrim versus that of a tourist and how the markets strengthen this divide even further, to suit the local financial interest. The tourist resists being the pilgrim and the place dynamics encourages this resistance. This paper seeks to investigate how the spatial landscape is transformed by the local religious economy to allow for increasing consumerist indulgences for pilgrims and for tourists in their pilgrimage to spirituality.
Mody, Sujata

Contest and Competition: Literary publics in conversation with Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi

In January of 1903, when Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi took over the editorship of a still fledgling Hindi journal named “Sarasvati” (est. 1900), Hindi literature and a Hindi literary public were concepts in transition. By the end of next decade, Dwivedi had transformed the journal into a leading literary force in the Hindi public sphere and established conceptual boundaries for Hindi literature and a Hindi literary public that explicitly linked them to the wealth and progress of an emergent Indian nation. Literature, constructed as a collectivity of knowledge for the nation, as well as a Hindi reading public addressed as Hindi enthusiasts and well-wishers of the nation, were collectivities integral to Dwivedi’s cultural project of modernization. During his lengthy tenure as the journal’s editor, Dwivedi was successful in expanding the journal’s readership—he more than doubled the journal’s circulation in his first year as editor and he created a community of readers in Hindi that included men, women, and children both within the geographic confines of the North Indian Hindi belt, the journal’s primary arena of influence, and abroad in countries such as the US, England, Japan, British Guiana, and the Philippines. Dwivedi was also, however, equally adept at alienating readers, primarily because his strategies for building a Hindi literary corpus and a Hindi literary public sought to rigidly define these national collectivities. In this paper, I examine the strategies employed within the journal to build Dwivedi’s ideal collectivities and the conversations that they often stifled or sustained. Through a strategic engagement with notions of contest and competition—signifying both literally, as contests and competitions organized to encourage reader participation in the construction of a literary corpus, and as ideological challenges made by readers and competing journals—“Sarasvati”, though undoubtedly the chief vehicle for promoting Dwivedi’s agenda, also becomes a dynamic forum for critical engagement with his professed literary ideals.
Mohamad Khan, Pasha

Marvellous Histories: Between Qissah and Tarikh in Late Mughal India

The genre of Urdu and Persian narrative fiction known as the qissah was denigrated widely by late 19th-century Urdu literatateurs as egregiously fantastical, representing a world that corresponded to no reality that could be justified according to the newly ascendant empiricist and rationalist epistemologies. Mirza Asad Allah Ghalib, the devoted qissah-fancier and prominent poet, defended his nephew Badr al-Din’s translation of a voluminous qissah, the Bostan-i khayal, against such slings and arrows in a way that perplexed his modern editor, suggesting that if absurdity was the charge, then histories (tawarikh, sing. tarikh)—his example being the Shahnamah of Firdausi—were just as absurd as qissahs like the Bostan-i khayal and the Dastan-i Amir Hamzah. Ghalib’s casual assumption that the Shahnamah with its demons and its heroes raised by giant birds was a history rather than a qissah hints at the extent to which the boundary between the supposedly fantastical qissah genre and the truth-telling genre of history was contested in the Mughal period and up to the end of the 19th century. Before Western modes of thought became modish, what counted as history, and how was a speech or a piece of writing identified as a qissah? This paper will examine the disputed boundary that defined these two genres, drawing, on the one hand, on supposedly historical Persian and Urdu qissahs such the Haft sair-i Hatim and Gul-i Bakawali, and, on the other hand, on histories recounting marvellous occurrences. Involved and deployed in the contest regarding the truth-value of such narratives were discordant epistemologies, changing ideas of “custom-breaking” (kharq al-’adah) beings and events and of the place of mirabilia (‘aja’ib), and the categories of exaggeration (mubalaghah) based on custom or recurrence (‘adat) and the intellect (‘aql) that had become codified in Arabic and Persian philological works by the 18th century. The paper will additionally look contemporary materials dealing with these ancillary issues.
Mohammad, Afsar

Shi'i History and Memory in a Local Ritual

The seventh-century history of the battle of Karbala that defined the boundaries of Shi'i religious identity undergoes deeper changes in the public ritual of Muharram in several villages in the South Indian state of Andhra. Based on my ethnography in two villages in the district of Karim Nagar in Andhra, I explore the process of retelling the history of Shi'i Islam by local non-Muslim communities. During the ten-day public rituals of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, these villagers narrate each event of the battle of Karbala. The protagonists of the battle of Karbala become local martyr-saints and receive devotion from both Muslim and non-Muslim caste groups. Each event from the history of Karbala transfers into a local memory and place history. While recollecting the memory of the battle of Karbala, these villagers revisit the past of their village and retell the history of Karbala in light of their memory of the village. In their retelling and reimagining the past, the memory of the martyrs of Karbala goes to the extent of even re-constructing a local Karbala in a local public religious event. This aspect of localization records the oral history of various local caste groups and authenticates local ritual practices. This paper focuses on the aspect of history as interpreted by these caste groups. Primarily their interpretation of Islamic history undergoes two important changes: 1) Combining local place history of the village, 2) Blending the Hindu classics such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Bhagavata with the history of Islam. However, my focus will be on the idea of how these caste groups understand the aspect of history and the memory of the martyrs of the battle of Karbala. When narrating these stories of Karbala, these villagers assertively argue that their narrative is the "proper" history of Karbala and they use a distinctive term "tarikh katha" (historical narrative) to specify this mode of telling. One of the goals of this paper is to try to understand the perceptions of history from a local memory and ritual narratives.
Morse, Daniel

Talking to India: The BBC and the Printing of Broadcast Modernism

Responding to Simon Eliot’s suggestion that the twentieth century “was not going to be a century of the book, but rather the century of the government form and the circular, of the specialized magazine and the tabloid newspaper”, “Talking to India: The BBC and the Printing of Broadcast Modernism” reflects upon another popular form of dissemination, the print version of broadcast talks. After reviewing the literary circle at the BBC’s Eastern Service, which included Mulk Raj Anand, George Orwell, and Ahmed Ali, this paper turns to the publication—in England and India—of Eastern Service talks in the form of pamphlets in order to challenge Jurgen Habermas's assertion that broadcasting is inimical to print culture. Through its analysis of these published talks, the paper goes on to show how the print versions were used as a means of preserving and extending the dynamic interactions between writers throughout the empire.
Mruthinti Kamath, Harshita

The Garvam of Satyabhama: An Examination of Krsna’s Proud Queen in Classical Telugu Poetry

Satyabhama, one of the many wives of Krsna, has captured the narrative imagination of classical Telugu poets for the past seven hundred years. An examination of classical Telugu literature reveals the significant role of Satyabhama, particularly her characteristic of pride ("garvam"), within texts such Potana’s Mahabhagavatamu and Timmana’s Parijatapaharanamu. The primary objective of this paper is to compare the portrayals of Satyabhama’s pride within these two texts, with an attentiveness towards the dominant aesthetics of the given narrative.

In the Mahabhagavatamu, Potana emphasizes Satyabhama’s proactive role during Krsna’s battle with the demon king Naraka. Satyabhama not only accompanies her husband to the battlefield, as described in the Sanskrit versions of this narrative, but also raises Krsna’s bow to fight the enemy. Due to the fact that the primary aesthetics of Potana’s narrative is heroism, or vira, Satyabhama’s pride can also be read as embellishing upon this particular aesthetic.

Satyabhama’s pride takes on an alternative manifestation with the Parijatapaharanamu, a mahakavya written by Nandi Timmana, one of the court poets of the Vijanayagaram king Krsnadevaraya. In the Parijatapaharanamu, Krsna receives a parijata flower from the peripatetic sage Narada, which he immediately gifts to his chief queen Rukmini. Upon hearing the details of the parijata gift, Satyabhama becomes enraged at her secondary position to Rukmini and even kicks her divine husband on the head when he comes to beg forgiveness for his oversight. Because the primary aesthetic goal of Timmana’s text is erotic in nature, Satyabhama’s pride can be seen as elaborating on the aesthetics of eroticism, or srngara rasa.

The alternative portrayals of Satyabhama’s pride not only depend upon the dominant aesthetics of a given text, but also the literary context of a particular poet. As discussed by Shulman and Narayana Rao in their introduction to Classical Telugu Poetry, Potana is a temple poet whose devotional text is in homage to the deity Krsna, while Timmana is a court poet whose mahakavya is in honor of his patron king, Krsnadevaraya. Thus, the second objective of this paper will address how literary context shapes the portrayal of Satyabhama’s pride within both Potana’s and Timmana’s texts. Ultimately, this paper will suggest that Satyabhama’s pride in Potana’s text embellishes on the heroic deeds of Krsna as deity, while her erotic pride in Timmana’s text elaborates on the erotic activities of Krsnadevaraya as god-king.
Mukharji, Projit

The New ‘Gods’: Magic, Islamiyo Tontro and the Supernatural Universe in Post-Colonial West Bengal

Vernacular Islam, especially in Bengal, has all too readily been identified with Sufism. Amongst the many consequences of the homogenization of heterodoxy under the label of ‘Sufism’, has been an over-emphasis on spatially specific sites, dargahs, mazhars, nazargahs etc. as the focus of such vernacular Islam. Since such spaces have, in a large number of cases, become increasingly more exclusivist in the wake of the region’s now long history of communalization, a belief has emerged that vernacular Islam itself has fared badly in the region. This narrative of loss and disappearance of vernacular Islam has been particularly strong for the period since the 1990s. A look at printed Bengali magical compendia however strongly contradicts this pessimistic view. The post-1990s period has witnessed not only a continuation of older traditions of Bengali Islamic magic, but has also shown signs of its elaboration and further development. A number of new deities and supernatural figures have emerged in the last two decades in these magical texts. These new supernaturals are invoked in a growing repertoire of spells, charms and magical diagrams included in the compendia. The texts themselves, often anonymously published and sold by the wayside in Calcutta and elsewhere by itinerant sellers, avowedly draw upon a tradition of ‘Islamiyo Tontro’ rather than Sufism. The textualised world inhabited by these new supernaturals are not only more difficult to police by the religious orthodoxies, but are also much more amenable to the incorporation of new material than the spatially specific Sufi shrines. The paper will provide a preliminary survey of the new developments in Islamiyo Tontro, explore why it has so far been historiographically neglected and investigate the complex relationship that exists between the rise of communalism and the success of Islamiyo Tontro.
Mukherjee, Sinjini

(Re)Defining the Dead: Circulation of Organs and Transplant Tourism in India

This paper aims to address questions relating to the changing conceptions of the body and its various parts within the medical discourse, and society at large. Against the larger backdrop of medical tourism, a phenomenon that is dramatically altering the healthcare landscape of India, one can trace some of the most interesting shifts taking place in medical practice, prompted by developments in the field of organ transplantation. To this intent, the departments of Nephrology and Transplant Surgery in hospitals of Delhi are the preferred sites for this research, where the human kidney assumes an ‘extra-bodily existence’. This, combined with my research at the 2nd ELPAT (Ethical, Legal and Psychosocial Aspects of Organ Transplantation) Congress held in Rotterdam (2010), makes for an analysis of transplantation in a cross-cultural context.

With circulation as the critical lens, I investigate transplantation on two levels. First, through a study of the movement of organs within a circuit of bodies, I examine the alterations in the practice of medicine that have deep implications for the ways in which the body and its parts are conceived. A shift in preference from “cadaver” to “live organ” donations, from framing of the “brain dead” to the “non-heart-beating” donor, the oscillation between “organ scarcity” and “organ harvesting”, are some of the transformations that have been historically contextualised and analysed in this paper. These shifts in medical categories have significant impact on and challenge the prevailing legal system which then needs to bring these changes within the folds of ‘legality’. Similar effects are felt on the existing moral orders of society. However, the direction of influence can also be reversed where laws and ethical protocols guide the course of technological research; thus, giving rise to a circuitous reality. At the core of this paper will be questions pertaining to what constitutes ‘life’ and what constitutes ‘death’ and how and why different actors in this particular field are engaged in reworking and rearticulating this distinction and towards what exact ends. From here, I will analyse how these transformations in the medical, legal and moral systems further translate into a universal protocol for medical practitioners while, at the same time, giving rise to a human rights discourse. This is the second level at which circulation is dealt with, where ideas and concepts coming out of a particular setting are universalised across cultures and national borders. In the end, the question that is addressed is how do these discourses shape the medical, cultural and social ambit of transplantation outside of Europe and the US and what does this mean for professionals involved in organ transplantation in India.
Mukherjee, Mithi

The British Empire and India’s Search for its Place in the World in the Twentieth Century

This paper is a historical exploration into India’s vision of the world in the aftermath of the First World War and of its place in it. Through a discussion of the Indian National Congress’ engagement with new world organizations like the Commonwealth, the League of Nations and the United Nations, this paper will explore the extent to which the discursive framework of empire and anti-colonialism structured and determined India’s sense of its place in the world in the twentieth century.

Contesting existing scholarship that sees the ideology of nationalism and Gandhian non-violence as the central planks of India’s international relations in the twentieth century, I argue that India’s vision of its place in the world was structured not by a discourse of national power and national interest but rather by a supranational discourse of justice grounded in the figure of a neutral and impartial judge – the Commonwealth, the League of Nations, and the United Nations—thus conceptually excluding the possibility of war. This juridical discursive framework, I argue, was constructed by the British Empire in India and also determined the specific nature of the anti-colonial movement led by the Indian National Congress.
Nakassis, Constantine

Youth Status and Hero-Oriented, Commercial Film in Tamil Nadu, India

Typically Indian film has been read through the lens of religion or mythology; political mobilization; political economy or ideology; caste politics; fan devotion; or the moral frameworks, fantasies and desires of makers and audiences. It has not been, however, read against concepts of youth status. And yet Indian film, and Tamil film in particular, is rife with representations of youth status. Indeed, Tamil commercial film has historically been dominated by hero-stars whose image management draws on particular representations of youth masculinity and status; e.g., the style of Rajinikanth, or MGR’s paddaiya killaparathu. In this paper I demonstrate that Tamil commercial cinema must be read as the narrativization of status; in particular, youth concepts of status (style, geththu, etc.) as they are variously distributed among major characters (the hero as ratified status, the villain as excessive status, the comedian as failed status).

Drawing on over two years of ethnographic fieldwork among Tamil youth and in the Tamil film industry, I demonstrate that such a reading is necessary because (a) this is how young male viewers (the largest theater audience of such films post-liberalization) understand and engage with such films; and thus (b) this is how producers craft such films (vis-à-vis their understanding of (a)). I further argue that actors’ status-ful representations of themselves, both inside and outside of the film text, abide by the same logic of status-negotiation in the youth peer group. That is, youth evaluate actors in ways similar to how they evaluate their peers’ status-raising, and to this extent actors also must abide by the logic of the youth peer group.

In conclusion, then, I argue that perspectives of film which take as their starting point the filmic text—as a self-contained unit of meaning—are bound to reproduce staid dualisms surrounding realism–escapism that have plagued analyses of Tamil film. Instead I argue that we must see film as always already imbricated in the pragmatic goings-on of everyday life, as a resource for pragmatic interactional work by viewers as they engage in often non-film related activities. This means that in order to fully grasp the social life of cinema, we must reorient our theoretical and methodological approach to film away from both text-focal and ‘reception’-based approaches.
Nandi, Swaralipi

Of 'Desi' brides and foreign grooms: The dynamics of hybrid marriages in Chadda's "Bride and Prejudice"

Gurinder Chadda’s “Bride and Prejudice,” a remaking of Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, is based on the assumption that the Victorian era still finds its parallel in the modern day Indian society. Chadda’s film however goes beyond the issues of Austen’s novel to embrace the transnational hybridity that constitutes the current emerging global image of India as seen in the interracial love stories in the film. This paper attempts to critique the concept of hybridity that Chadda projects as a celebration of transition for India, moving from its conservative structures to a more fluid global entity. While apparently Chadda’s film celebrates the post-national bent in Indian marriages (as Jigna Desai terms it as “the desertion of the nation by the diaspora”) whereby middle-class Indian parents give away their daughters to Westernised or even white grooms, the film can be critiqued for its stereotypical representation of the Indian middle class morality and an unproblematic approach to the new hegemony of global citizenship as the new parameter of power in the matrimonial market. Along with these, my paper also questions Chadda’s view of a hybrid India where the global and the local blend easily but in its colorful locales, the Bollywood style celebrations and the eligible ethnic girls it ends up as an "consumable exotic" for the global audience.
Narayan, Rochisha

Reshaping Family and Inheritance in Eighteenth-century Benares

The eighteenth-century Benares Raj was undergirded by an expansive lineage-politics. Its first ruler Mansaram, a bhumihar landlord, rose to power in the provincial Mughal court through the support of his agnatic and collateral kinsmen. However, such kin were gradually marginalized as a result of an increased preference for patrilineal succession that followed Mansaram’s death. At the same time, such patrilineal structures became critically dependent on male heirs. This shaped the polygynous intra and inter-jati marriage patterns of the early rajas of Benares. The rajas incorporated same jati and lower-jati women into the household through a series of marriages. These were in turn ranked according to the jatis of the women. While these polygynous marriages ensured the continuation of the dynasty, they also fuelled considerable competition between lineal heirs.

This presentation will discuss how familial contestation of inheritance and succession intersected with the bhumihar patrilineal kinsmen’s efforts to consolidate their status as brahmans. Eighteenth-century genealogical narratives of the rajas of Benares and the patronage practices of members of the household are revealing of how they laid claim to brahmanhood. I argue that during the late eighteenth century, competing upper-jati lineal heirs exacerbated these processes in their efforts to marginalize the offspring of inter-jati marriage and lower-jati wives. Simultaneously, they challenged the position of the latter in the family by underscoring the legitimacy of endogamous marriage practices. Under the exigencies of Company rule in the late eighteenth century, these assertions served to elide multiple forms of marriage and subsequently, the stratified layers that constituted family.

The shifts in familial understandings in late eighteenth-century Benares critically informed inheritance patterns where definitions of legitimate sonship and, the contours of the family within which they operated, had been drastically reshaped along jati boundaries. Such reconstructions for example, enabled direct upper-jati female descendants and their male children to inherit over sons belonging to a lower-jati. Although patrilineal inheritance remained the norm, my aim here is to show how the analysis of temporal shifts in understandings of family provides a textured and historical narrative of patrilineality that must be examined here through the interpenetrating axis of gender and caste.
Narayan, Kirin

Creating and Crafting: Narratives of Vishvakarma

Narratives about Vishvakarma and his descendents are a means of performing and reflecting on identity among many traditionally artisan groups. Even with migrations and shifts in occupation, such stories continue to be told among families. In this paper, I examine narratives of a community associated with carpentry—and allied professions—in Gujarat. In particular, I expand on the usual patrilineal narratives to more closely explore the role of Vishvakarma’s daughter as another iconic creative form. How, I ask, do such narratives perform insights about the creative process?
Nichols, Robert

Class, State, and Power in Swat Conflict

In the literature on Swat, social and political power has been argued to rest in competing lineages and factions and in hierarchies of socio-economic status and class. The role of the state, during the Swat State period (1915-69), then later, after the merger with Pakistan, has tended to buttress established interests even as religious resistance has empowered activism among a range of participants. One argument of this paper is that evidence from the recent period supports analysis that while political Islamic agendas have motivated many, the dynamics of a wider social movement in a Muslim society best describes the mobilization of much local and regional ‘jihadi’ activism in Swat. A second argument is that deployment of centralizing state power has recently challenged previous hierarchies of lineage, faction, class, and political party.
Nuckolls, Charles

Marital Oaths in a Telugu Fishing Village

This study analyzes the oaths made by married women who are accused of marital infidelity. Oaths are addressed to the goddess "Sati Polamma," a kind of earth goddess similar to the Greek eumenides. A broken oath results in the permanent addition of the goddess to the woman's household pantheon. As such, Sati Polamma functions as a source of power for the affected woman and her family. How are we to understand the transformation of sin (papamu) into power (sakti.)
Friend or Foe? Muslim Views of the British in 19th century India

Consistent with the “normative” view of the history of Islamic-Western encounters, Muslims of Syed Ahmed Khan’s generation in India saw the British as the ultimate “other”. They were rivals on many fronts; to the rulers and the military-minded, they were invaders and occupiers of lands previously under Muslim rule; they were the enemy. To Syed Ahmed Khan the British were superior (to Muslims, not Islam) in culture, education, and scientific knowledge and therefore they could serve as a model upon which Muslims can build their own path towards intellectual and material progress in a post-Muslim era in India. In fact, Khan argued that Muslims must remain loyal to the British as their interest is better served by their continued rule of India as opposed to the self-rule sought by nationalist Indian groups such as the Indian National Congress which included many Muslims. Khan poised himself as a bridge between Indian Muslims and the British by highlighting the positive of each to the other side. This paper examines the pros and cons of Khan’s approach in light of a possible Islamic theological response to the loss of Muslim political power. On the one hand, Khan’s approach promoted a relatively peaceful path by advocating the educational and evolutionary reform (by opposing the nationalistic path) as a solution to recover the loss of Muslim power, and, on the other, it legitimized the subjugation of Muslims by non-Muslims by accepting the status quo. The religious and theological understanding of Syed Ahmed Khan’s approach may be helpful in understanding many contemporary political movements in the Muslim world which seek to frame the issue of polity in dichotomous terms, free of nuance.
Pai, Gita

Making Space for Minakshi

During a nine-day festival in January, the movable metal image (utsavamurti) of goddess Minakshi leaves the Madurai temple and processes to the Pudu Mandapam, a pillared hall near the east gateway. A daily ritual for Minakshi’s festival icon takes place within the mandapam’s central nave while an aisle around this nave serves as the processional space for her circumambulation. Festival processions, as a type of public ceremonial, are an important element of south Indian temple rituals. However, this aisle in the Pudu Mandapam is also a busy commercial complex housing several tailoring units: merchants eager to sell colorful fabric and tailors keen to convert this material into garments or bags. Other stalls sell bindis, plastic bracelets, toys, kitchen gadgets, and handicrafts. This paper examines the mandapam as a social space: a space that is not an inert, neutral, or a pre-existing given, but rather, an on-going production of spatial relations that must negotiate between the day-to-day mercantile operations, postcolonial temple reform efforts, and early modern conceptions of kingship.
Pande, Ishita

Rethinking the child-wife: Unlawful Intercourse and the politics of age in colonial India

This paper returns to a well-documented history of legal interventions into the ‘problem of child marriage’ in India between the years 1891, when an imperial legislative council raised the ‘age of consent’ to 12 for Indian women, and 1929, when a more representative council passed the Child Marriage Restraint Act. Feminist scholars have alerted us to the real and symbolic significance of these laws governing intimacy, which brought women’s voices into the political realm, launched transnational feminist (if uneasy) alliances, served to unfasten the grip of the community on the ‘native woman’, and brought the (nebulous) promise of ‘universal’ rights in the private and public domains. I return to this government of sexuality to contextualize another problematic universality: the emergence of the ‘child’ who was the object of this legislation.

Building upon and pushing beyond the recent critical (re)turn to liberal universality on the woman question, on the one hand, and the proliferating cultural-relativist understandings of childhood, on the other, I reassess the history of child marriage in India in the light of what might be termed an ongoing global ‘politics of age.’ To pick apart this ‘politics of age’, I will show how the borders between childhood and adulthood were increasingly digitally (and not just biologically or culturally) constructed, and were premised on the close nexus between numbers and objectivity, one the one hand, and between digits and modes of subjectification, on the other.

This paper thus interrogates the role of biology, law and ‘culture’ in the definition of childhood and highlights the primordial role of sexuality in this construction. It outlines the ‘politics of age’ captured in a shift from a focus on the ‘status of women’ as an ‘indicator of civilization’ in colonial discourse to the emergence of the ‘treatment of the child’ as a developmental index in a transnational humanitarian discourse at the turn of the twentieth century. Finally, it accounts for the emergence of the child-woman in the modern-colonial archive.
Patel, Geeta

Margin calls: Marginalities and fiscal sovereignty

Since the 1990s in India and in the wider SAARC configuration, techno-financial speculation (shares, crops, genetics and land) and insurance figurations (protection, education, death, care) have begun to be viewed as immanent to lives and livelihoods. At the heart of these two technologies lie notions of fiscal sovereignty and of enumerative marginality. The most commonplace and oft repeated presentation of the two taken together pertain to collectivities: collations of farmers without political resources who are expected to find a kind of financial salvation by turning their margin calls into solvency or death. Despite the overtures that link them, sovereignty and marginality have often been posed as antinomies of one another. In this discussion I sound them out as complementary, and orchestrate them through the geopolitics of south-south transactions and comparisons to pose the following more general questions: What forms of relationality are implemented in, contained in and by, and assured by margins taken in their most literally expansive sense: as calls that fall short, as calculations of surety, as won over, as unfeasible detritus, as edgy hedges, as precarious futures? How do figurations of marginality, picked up through south-south engagements, shape forms of collectivity? What clusters of critical attachments, which have enabled translations or been foreclosed through the limits hedged by translations, come to configure marginalities? These questions will allow me a series of guidelines to explore the ethics of fiscal sovereignty as enumerative marginality lived out through the imbrications between techno-financial speculation and insurance figurations.
Patel, Simin

A Cosmopolitan Crisis: The Bombay Riots of 1874

Amongst the various methods of conflict resolution the Parsi community of Bombay adopted in the 19th and early 20th centuries, rioting was sporadic and received bad press. Both the Parsi Sethia (merchant prince) class and the intelligentsia attributed acts of violence to lower middle class and lower class Parsis, hardly representative of the peaceful and prosperous community at large. Author Dinshah Taleyarkhan’s was a common response: “The Parsi cases (of rioting) were confined to a few of the uncultivated order … The feelings of these Parsis were in some measure excusable, but they were of no significance in the community, and certainly were not countenanced.” (Taleyarkhan 1874, p. 16) Recent scholarship has also viewed the riots as anomalies, both in the mutually advantageous history of Anglo-Parsi relations and the communal harmony that characterized colonial Bombay. Rioting has neither been considered a cultural ‘given’ nor an occasion when Parsi consciousness was most clearly revealed nor an inherent aspect of social change in a burgeoning, cosmopolitan urban centre. Community historians have instead focused on the more legitimate ways of conflict resolution- the legal battles, public lectures, debates, argued in the security and splendour of the public buildings (the High Court, the Municipal Corporation) that dot Bombay’s urban landscape. With most scholarship placing a premium on cordiality in the community’s dealings in Bombay, the riots stand orphaned and uneasy. My interest is primarily in reconciling the instances of rioting with the larger social history of the Parsis in colonial Bombay.

For my paper I will explore the internal dynamics within the community during the periods of rioting. This would involve examining the reaction and response of various factions, particularly those of the rioters themselves. In part this would mean the writing of a lower class Parsi history, one that acknowledges collective violence as a form of community self-expression, without however making violence the mainstay of the lower classes. In recreating what historian Jim Masselos calls the ‘active text of the riots’ (Masselos 2007, p. 107), the focus will be on the contested spaces of the streets and the residential neighbourhoods, where community stratification was clear, though, as the tensions during religious processions, especially the Mohurrum festival indicate, not unchallenged.
Paul, Bimal

Impacts of Climate Change and Policy-Making in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is the front line of global warming. This South Asia country faces a grave challenge in the form of climate change. Although Bangladesh does not play any role in bringing about climate change, ironically, it is expected to be its worst victim. Climate change is going to affect Bangladesh adversely in many ways, particularly because a large part of the country will be inundated as a result of sea level rise, causing displacement of almost 30 million of its 150 million people. It will also create enormous human security problems within the country as well as in South Asia, where more than one fifth of total global population live. The objective of this paper is to examine the economic, demographic, health, and environmental impacts of climate change in Bangladesh. The government has already devised strategies and outlined action plans to address climate change. This paper will critically examine these strategies and plans, and will evaluate their effectiveness along with recommendations for further actions required to deal with the emerging issues associated with global climate change.
Meet the poet; the world of the Sanskrit kavi as presented in Rājaśekhara’s Kāvyamīmāṃsā, “Investigation in Poetry”. Whether he ever finished the book he envisioned and introduced in the first chapter is unknown; all we have today is the first chapter of the envisioned eighteen—Kavirahasya, “The Secret of Poets”. It is the first text dealing almost exclusively with the main participants in poetic activity – in particular, a poet and his critic, as well as with a poet’s proper work – the composition of a poem. It is the work that became an inspiration and template for the later genre of kaviśikṣā (“handbook for poets”). It is also often the only authority on the topics related with training of poets such as plagiarism, poetic conventions, or typologies of poets and critics.

This paper, using Kāvyamīmāṃsā as the main text, will try to answer the questions pertaining to the profession of the poet. We will look into poet’s workshop, examine various types of poets, witness a poet at work, learn his daily schedule, visit his mansion, meet his servants, scribes, companions and patrons. We will also try to find out how the poem gets made: what are the necessary ingredients, how to “cook” it, and who is qualified to savor it. Rājaśekhara, himself an acknowledged poet, will take us to his atelier and help us understand what it is the poets do, how and why they do it, and what we need to know in order to participate in the cultured world of Sanskrit kāvya.
Perkins, C. Ryan

Constructing the Public in Late Colonial India: Sharar, Chakbast and Gulzar-e Nasim

In this paper I highlight the fictive and phantasmic nature of the public sphere through an examination of what has been generally recognized as the longest and bitterest of polemics ever known in the history of Urdu literature. In 1905, a 23-year-old Kashmiri Hindu Brahmin, Brijnarayan Chakbast, published a new edition of Pandat Daya Shankar Kaul Nasim’s masnavi, Gulzar-e Nasim (c. 1844) (Rose Garden of Nasim). Shortly thereafter in March, Abdul Halim Sharar published a review of the masnavi in his periodical, Dil Gudaz, which became the focus of an ensuing debate that filled many prominent Urdu newspapers and periodicals for the next year and involved the major literary personalities of the period. With newfound forms of print technology, and particularly with weekly and monthly papers/periodicals that circulated in a more immediate temporality compared with the traditional form of the book, readers and authors began experimenting with the new possibilities this forum presented in relation to public debate and discourse. While Sharar’s own critique of Gulzar-e Nasim, based as it often was on ethnic and religiously predicated assumptions, met harsh criticism, many individuals supported Sharar through their own articles in various weekly or monthly publications. Yet, on closer examination it appears that many of the articles written in support of Sharar were in fact Sharar’s own writings that he tried to disguise using pseudonyms. The fact that some of those in the debate accused Sharar of writing under different names in various journals to make it appear that the public was behind him highlights not only the fictive and phantasmic nature of the public sphere but the difficulties that go along with any attempt to employ abstract categories such as the public sphere and publics in the study of this period. Rather than dispense with these categories entirely I argue for a renewed focus on the ways in which printers, publishers, authors, readers and listeners understood the public at this period and the ways in which they went about trying to create particular publics employing novel methods but also drawing from traditional forms of discourse. The transformation in public debate and discourse away from face-to-face encounters to one where the printed word began acting as one of the primary mediums for an exchange of ideas and critique brought with it many subsequent changes, perhaps most significant was the ability to write publics into existence.
The 1823 report of Thomas Munro’s survey of schools in the Madras Presidency noted that the majority of the free elementary schools in the region were run by the Maratha court of Tanjore, a kingdom that had been brought under British supervision, its territory reduced to the fort and city of Tanjore. The Tanjore district schools, located in the Maratha court’s chatram almshouses, and other schools and institutions of higher learning in Tanjore city, had been established or reorganized by King Serfoji II (1798-1832) a European-educated polymath, who undertook projects of modernization in nearly every sphere of culture and learning. Serfoji’s schools initiative both complemented and differed from the missionary efforts that dominated education in South India, and anticipated the colonial state’s interventions in public education in Madras by many years. As early as 1800, the Tanjore ruler addressed many of the issues that were to engage diverse groups of British and Indian advocates for native education in the early 19th century, particularly in Bengal. His enterprise was also distinctive in its configuration of Sanskrit, vernacular and English, as well of traditional and modern learning, key subjects of what L. Zastoupil and Martin Moir (1999) have called ‘The Great Indian Education Debate’. This paper examines Serfoji’s conception of ‘navavidya’ (the new learning), the relationships among English, Sanskrit, Persian, and three vernaculars (Tamil, Marathi and Telugu) in his vision for modern education, and the valuation of European and sastric curriculum and pedagogy in his court and public schools. It also aims to address the larger question of the ways in which the Tanjore court, under Serfoji’s leadership, garnered its reputation as a nexus for the production and dissemination of new and recast forms of knowledge to larger publics. How did the polyglot, cosmopolitan Maratha court relate to a changing polyglot South Indian ecumene, and what were its conversations with competing or complementary educational projects, of the colonial state, of missionaries and of other groups in colonial society?
Peterson, Kristin

English as the Medium of Instruction in Visakhapatnam School

This study compares the influence of English on Telugu language instruction in several schools, both public and private, in the large coastal city of Visakhapatnam. Of particular interest are the obstacles that threaten and suppress indigenous learning traditions and educational expectation.
Postcolonial Technopolitics

In the early twenty-first century, India is often invoked as an exemplary post-colonial technoscientific space. India’s economic liberalization (dating from the early 1990s), its entry into the World Trade Organization’s IPR regime, and its post-9/11, post-tsunami role in global security discourse have formed an enabling frame for the emergence of particular forms of proprietary techno-scientific knowledge. New forms of citizenship, subjectivity, and knowledge-based development proper to the twenty-first century post-colonial state are emerging. What modes of knowing, and what kinds of citizen-subjects, are proper to this historical moment? The proprietary logics of technology and personhood are more complicated than either policy makers or anti-commodification activists have allowed. Terms such as development and the “digital divide” have filled the space of these questions, becoming shorthand for what is seen as a regrettable, but redressable, unevenness in the distribution of the new global forms of wealth: high-speed connectivity and rapid flows of information and capital. I suggest that we push harder on the assertion of a putative incommensurability between the “high-tech” and the “primitive.” Rather than being radically disjunct, these concepts are mutually constitutive. In order to explore the nature of this mutual constitution, and to understand the ways in which it is continuous with the legacies of colonialism but, at the same time, reinvents itself in novel ways, we must do more than catalogue the modern inequities that continue to characterize postcolonial technosciences.
The Mahabharata Critical Edition: The End of Mahabharata Textual Studies or A Stop on the Way?

Traditionally, the end objective of textual criticism is to examine the extant manuscripts of a literary tradition and to reconstruct the most ancient version of the text possible. Consequently, once this text is established and variants provided through a critical apparatus little remains to be done. Of course, scholars can always agree or disagree with editorial choices, challenge readings on different grounds, or indeed question the entire undertaking, but other than that textual studies seemingly take us no further.

Nevertheless, new tools developed in the field of evolutionary biology (e.g. phylogenetic algorithms) suggest that there could be much more to textual studies than mere reconstruction. Unexpectedly, the tools approached for the purpose of refining editorial choices actually provide us with a wealth of information that demands a resetting of our original goals. For instance, we see that stemmata are not only useful diagrams for choosing readings but also maps of the text’s history. As maps, they can provide us a better understanding of the cultural phenomena of the Mahabharata textual tradition. Hence, textual criticism could make itself more broadly relevant to Indological studies as its final goal does not necessarily have to be the edition of texts. Instead, textual criticism can allow us to formulate a whole new set of questions that were previously unthinkable due to lack of evidence. In the behaviour of variants, in the patterns of contamination, in the practices of the scribes—which now can be scrutinized in ways that were not possible in the past—we find abundant material that can potentially give us many clues about India’s cultural life across the centuries.

I propose that the Critical Edition of the Mahabharata rather than being the end of Mahabharata textual studies should be the starting point of a whole new approach to the manuscript material. Once there is a critical edition the burning need for a common text and a collection of variants is satisfied. Therefore, we are well suited to undertake new enterprises. In this paper I outline some lines of research that spring directly from a close analysis of manuscripts that do not have as their purpose the reconstruction of a text. These questions derive from a curiosity to discover more about the cultural life of India, to understand the mechanisms operative in the dissemination of texts and to observe how such mechanisms are deeply related to the wider historical context.
Portillo, Jamie

A Heritage of Difference: Conservation, Construction and Tourism in Leh, Ladakh

A close relationship to Tibetan geography, culture, and religion earns Ladakh, India the nickname “Little Tibet.” Heralded by Indian and Jammu and Kashmir State tourism departments, this euphemism and its associated representations also appear in popular travel guides which enjoy numerous translations and global circulation. Yet in the capital of Leh Town, Ladakh’s population and built environment reflect more than just its neighboring border; rather, they epitomize millennia of cultural diffusion along ancient Silk Road trade routes. In the main bazaar, Leh’s cosmopolitan social climate is further evinced by the constant influx of domestic and international migrants and tourists into the burgeoning urban sphere. While clever marketing strategies couple visual images with genuine cultural praxis to project an authentic and traditional (read: past) Buddhist culture, this picture is incomplete. Leh Town’s Heritage Zone comprises both Tibetan and Muslim-inspired architectural forms, and its ancestral homesteads, neighborhoods, and places of worship are increasingly recognized by national and international conservation architects aiming to restore and maintain the town’s unique built fabric. This research further disrupts the idea that destination branding (Ooi 2001) in Leh focuses solely on the reconstruction of the past. This paper presents a snapshot of a heritage tourism economy which necessarily erases its Muslim heritage while simultaneously reifying and codifying a singular, modern Ladakhi cultural heritage. Further, it shows how the emphasis on Ladakh’s Tibetan built heritage and exclusion of other aspects of the built environment are compounded and complicated by the deliberate exclusion of Tibetans-in-Exile living in a nearby refugee settlement. So as state, national and local tourism officials highlight so-called “traditional” Tibetan Buddhist attributes of both the built and cultural environment, local Ladakhi political society associations actively prohibit, prevent, and punish nearby Tibetans-in-Exile who attempt to participate in the tourist economy.
Powell, Suzanne

Hindu Widows of Visakhapatnam

This paper discusses the life histories of several Hindu widows in the city of Visakhapatnam. What kinds of resources, psychological and social, are available to women who have lost their husbands? Widows in Visakhapatnam are able create a "continuity of self" by using and transforming the moral systems and marital ideologies they maintained prior to widowhood. The study focuses specifically on Jalari (fishing caste) widows.
Prasad, Leela

Tales from a Familial Terrain: A Telugu Folklorist Imagines India in a Colonial World

I discuss the remarkable collections of oral narrative published in English by Medara Nagaya Venkataswami, who grew up in the Central Provinces and eventually became a librarian in the 1920s in the Nizam State of Hyderabad. A prolific essayist, oral historian, and independent folklorist who documented, translated, and analyzed Telugu folklore meticulously between 1890 and the 1920s, M.N. Venkataswami remained somewhat outside the ring of colonial anthropology even though he engaged some of its discourses and methods. Venkataswami’s collections are fascinating for their richly annotated tales, but in the light of an extraordinary biography he wrote of his father who was a pioneering hotelier in the Central Provinces, they become intriguingly reflexive. My paper will discuss this self-reflexivity by focusing on two questions: How (and perhaps why) does Venkataswami acknowledge genealogies and family ties in his collections of folktales? How do the experiences of migration and of borders (of caste status, of colonial anthropology, of regions of the Deccan, for example) organize Venkataswami’s documentation of “Telugu” and “Indian” culture? In exploring these questions, I hope to provide a preliminary understanding of how M.N. Venkataswami, amidst multiple subalternities, fulfilled his own creative life and arrived at an aesthetic representation of cultural forms that were vibrant sources of pleasure and social kinship in the everyday life of a community.
Prasad, Ritika

Re-Negotiating Difference: Proximity and Separation in Railway Travel

In 1873, the editor of the Ahmedabad Samáchar brought a charge against the Bombay, Baroda, and Central Indian Railway for compelling him to sit in the same carriage with a sweeper. The Small Cause Court of Ahmedabad referred the case to the Bombay High Court with the remark that the complainant’s notion of having been wronged by the railway by being made to share a carriage with a sweeper “was based on a vain superstition of the Hindoo religion.” The High Court endorsed the opinion and the case was dismissed. The case highlighted a range of demands for separation in third-class travel that were to be made on the basis of distinctions argued through socio-religious taboos on contact. While the focus in such demands was on preventing contact between high-caste and low-caste Hindus, occasional suggestions were also made to separate members belonging to different religious communities from each other during railway travel. “Re-Negotiating Difference: Proximity and Separation in Railway Travel” details the history of differentiated arrangements in the relatively new space of the railway, to explore relationships between railway technology and the socio-religious ordering of Indian society. Specifically, it contextualizes it within (a) the interplay between an imperial logic of colonial religiosity and the imperial need for commercial profit to; and (b) the ways in which the spatial organization of travel dovetailed into the logic through which a cohesive national community was being defined as part of a nationalist project: demands for such distinctions thus became both the indictors of a logic of differentiation in the national community being constructed, and the subject of an attempt to both critique and erase such distinctions.
Prasad, Binoy

A Decade of Separation: 2009 Parliamentary Election in Bihar and Jharkhand

A decade ago, Jharkhand was carved out of Bihar to ensure its economic and political development. The political culture of the Jharkhand region – with a few industrialized cities and tribal groups constituting nearly 27 percent of the electorate – was considered more matured compared to mainly rural and raucous Bihar. However, it so happened that in the five years preceding the 2009 parliamentary election, the government of Bihar could provide stability and a relative prosperity whereas Jharkhand stayed in the throes of economic depravity and political uncertainty. Without a provincial government, Jharkhand went to the poll reeling under the Maoist violence and lawlessness.

However, the politics of Bihar affected the politics of Jharkhand: the Congress-led alliance, the NDA, was in disarray; the teaming up of Lalu Yadav’s RJD and Ram Vilas Paswan’s LJP drove the Congress into the arms of the JMM (Jharkhand Mukti Morcha), a regional party headed by a tribal leader, Shibu Soren. Soren had the unique distinction of being the longest, most discredited, but at the same time an irreplaceable political player in Jharkhand. Whereas more regional parties like the JVM (Jharkhand Vikas Morcha) and AJSU (All Jharkhand Students Union) proliferated, the left parties declined. The emergence of smaller parties also amounted to discrediting of the national or regional parties. The fragile alliance system in Bihar and Jharkhand caused multi-cornered contests in almost every constituency.

In 2004, the joint front of the Congress, the RJD and the left parties had swept the polls in Jharkhand claiming 13 out of 14 seats. The only seat the BJP won was lost in a by-election to an independent. In a reversal of fate, the Congress-led alliance did very poorly in 2009. The BJP-JD (U) alliance – the NDA – did exceedingly well in Bihar claiming 32 out of 40 seats and in Jharkhand, the BJP alone claimed 8 out of 14 seats. The JD (U) which secured 20 out of 24 seats it contested in Bihar had no share at all in Jharkhand. The RJD-LJP alliance had put up their candidates in 11 constituencies, but they were routed from Jharkhand. Just as in Bihar, the unpopularity of Lalu-Ram Vilas alliance was reflected in Jharkhand also.

The paper takes a comparative look at the growth of political culture, alliance formation and party competition leading to the 2009 parliamentary election in Bihar and Jharkhand and analyses the outcome.
Punjabi, Bharat

Re-claiming the Commons: Enclosures and the Politics of Water and Land in the Mumbai Countryside

Since the colonial period, rivers in the Thane Western Ghats have been dammed to meet demand for water from Mumbai city. The social and environmental impacts of these dam projects have been borne by the tribal community, even as the benefits of these projects have been diverted downstream to large commercial horticultural farms in Thane and suburban townships in Mumbai. The first focus of this paper is on key colonial era debates, which sealed the fate of Thane’s tribal farming communities with respect to their access to the district’s rivers for agricultural purposes. The second focus is on contemporary intra-rural water politics in the Dahanu block of Thane district. The stories and narratives, which emerge from ethnographic and survey research in two villages on a canal system, reveal a long and arduous cycle of contestation by the tribal Warli community and local social movements against upper caste Maratha horticulturists, and the state over access to canal water, agricultural land and even village paths. The third theme is the manner in which tribal farmers in Thane district have been victims of periodic rounds of dispossession from land which is being diverted for urban expansion by private capital from Mumbai. The interlocking of agrarian and urban capital in this region has only been reinforced with neo-liberal policies in the last twenty years. The narratives of tribal farmers’ experiences with dispossession from land and water on Mumbai’s fringes as well as in Thane coupled with the continuing construction of more large dams in Thane district for Mumbai city’s urban expansion highlight the formation of enclosures. More recently, James Scott has described this as a part of the process of ‘internal colonialism’ faced by rural tribal communities in several parts of South and South Eastern Asia.
Secular and “Dissonant” Islam in Partition Identity Politics

This paper analyzes Muslim identity discourse as outlined by the Indian political and religious leader, Muhammad Shah -- also known as Aga Khan III (1877-1957). Muhammad Shah followed in the footsteps of the famous nineteenth century Muslim reformer, Syed Ahmad Khan, pursuing Syed Ahmad Khan’s campaign against “backwardness” among Muslims and support for continuing British rule. During the nationalist period, Muhammad Shah steered his political agenda in the direction of separatist politics, where he played an integral role in pushing for the installation of separate electorates for Muslims, and as first president of the All India Muslim League, in the call for Partition as well.

Whereas scholars such as Faisal Devji and Aamir Mufti have emphasized the political contingencies that have informed this kind of rationalized Islam, I read documents of the Muslim League and Muhammad Shah’s speeches to the Indian Muslim community to understand how the secular “grammar” of identitarian Islam obfuscates Islamic teachings and practices that cannot be assimilated into secularism’s epistemic logic. I make this argument about contours of modern Muslim identity on the basis of a seeming paradox of Muhammad Shah’s life. Although Muhammad Shah campaigned for a reformist Islam in his public life, as Ismaili Imam, he was revered as the descendent of Muhammad and object of devotion. Within this sphere of Ismaili religiosity, Muhammad Shah was the messianic sovereign of the Ismailis, with his authority resting not on the values and codes of the colonial public domain, but rather, on the basis of vernacular devotional practices outlined in Ismaili devotional texts, the gināns. Through readings of ginān poetry, I show how these practices – informed by both Shi’i messianic thought and medieval/early modern bhakti and panth ideas – reveal the older forms of Indo-Islamicate literary and devotional production that are expunged in modern reformist ideas of Muslim identity. Furthermore, I argue that these “dissonant” practices – those which are occluded by the discourse of religious identity the modern period – are located in the in the vernacular; these pre-colonial formations of Islam dislodge and undermine the identitarian cast of the public idea of Islam invoked for politically instrumental politics, most notably Partition.
In this paper I will describe and analyze how values underlying irrigation and agricultural policies at the national level in Sri Lanka impinge on outcomes of such policies at the micro level of irrigation systems with paradoxical results. At the macro level, beyond the immediacy of food security, income generation, and poverty alleviation in a sector where 70% live below poverty level, agriculture is viewed as a symbol of the heritage of the ancient Sinhalese kings. As a sector that is viewed as having suffered under foreign invasions, the perception is that it is only with the development of agriculture which supports over 65% of the population that “Sri Lanka could regain the pristine glory enjoyed in the years of yore.” This ideological framework is implemented as a development strategy in irrigation systems through engineered communities of pre-settled and re-settled populations based on the premise of the traditional Sinhalese trilogy of values of tank-temple-farm which would revive the imagined or real social cohesion of the small group village hamlet.

I will examine the outcomes of the above dialectic in an experiment known as the tripartite model for irrigation management transfer implemented as a pilot study and prelude to a national program, the Ridi Bendi Ela Scheme: Hamlet based farmer organizations federated at the irrigation system as a single legal civil entity progressively took over the operation and management of irrigation systems up to and excluding the reservoir and main sluice, which remained in the hands of the state irrigation bureaucracy that historically had built and operated them, while the overall supervision of the project remained with the district administration. To increase farmer income and enable them to take over their responsibilities, a farmer company as a corporate entity undertook credit, agricultural input supply, extension programs to diversify agriculture, and market products in partnership with the private sector.

My data is derived from fieldwork in this irrigation system conducted intermittently since the introduction of this program in 1998. Systematic fieldwork including the examination of archival data and the administration of a participatory rural appraisal evaluating the impact of this innovation on the twelve hamlet based community was conducted in 2008-2009.
Managing Gender, Depoliticizing Difference: The Cultural Logics of Indian Tech Multinationals

Large Indian technology multinationals have emerged as central figures in the global knowledge economy, and as icons of India’s economic success. Less recognized, however, is their importance as centers of cultural production. Having moved away from simple cross-cultural training strategies meant to bridge cultural “gaps” between Indian workers and clients abroad, large Indian technology multinationals use the discourse of international business and organizational management to produce an “appropriate” corporate culture that at once emulates their American counterparts while also emphasizing its distinction from it.

Drawing on corporate training materials and interviews with technologists as well as human resources personnel, this paper examines the ways in which these companies strategically rework and deploy an American-centered management literature to depoliticize and manage difference in an Indian social and political context. Through the “science” of management, class, gender, and caste differences that exist within the industry become problems with ready technical solutions.

In this way, powerful companies manage potentially volatile differences between employees while at the same time producing something I call “appropriate difference”—an “Indian” disposition that is nonetheless palatable to clients abroad and to the Western imagination more generally. The successful management/depoliticization of difference among employees and the production of appropriate difference helps to move Indian companies up the global value chain, cultivating valuable corporate brands that distinguish these firms as much more than just low-cost service providers.

The paper analyzes three ways in which firms engage in these cultural processes: 1) through cross-cultural training that ostensibly helps Indians work with people of other cultures, 2) through soft-skills training, which focuses on “good communication,” but without apparent cultural associations, and 3) through diversity programming, which is geared primarily towards retaining women in the IT workforce. A gendered analysis of all these strategies, as well as interviews with women working in these companies, reveals the deep-rooted assumptions about gender and class that make the deployment of such management strategies possible.
Rahaim, Matt

Displacing the Body, Converting the Courtesan: The Baiji's Voice in Sant Tukaram

Sant Tukaram (1936) is one of the most influential Indian films of all time, and the first to find an international audience. Most accounts of the film focus on its protagonist, Tukaram, a 17th century singer-saint whose devotional songs constitute the movie's moral core. This paper instead examines another singer in the film who is usually ignored: a courtesan who is sent to tempt Tukaram with erotic song. The courtesan not only fails to corrupt him, but is herself converted to Tukaram's moral-devotional path. This conversion is marked by her song performances immediately before and after the confrontation, which demonstrate a radical change in her voice and physical bearing. This moving scene, however, signifies more than a personal crisis. Both in Sant Tukaram specifically and, more broadly, on the early 20th century concert stage, the displacement of eroticism by devotion was made visible and audible through distinctive changes in postural and vocal practices. Combining recent historical scholarship on courtesanry and music reform with an analysis of the courtesan's vocal and kinesic performance, I argue that the transformation of this particular musicking body on film mirrored the transformation of female performance practice in urban Indian public space in the 1930s.
Raheja, Natasha

Digital Diaspora: Online Articulations of Sindhi Hindu Identity

My paper attempts to situate the experiences of Sindhi Hindu immigrants within the larger trajectory of Hindu nationalism. Through a textual, semiotic, and discursive analysis of web spaces consumed and produced by members of the Sindhi Hindu diaspora, I will argue that sites such as Sindhishaan.com, Sindhology.org, and Sindhitattler.com create a narrative that privileges an authentic Sindhi Hindu identity. I will suggest that, in the postcolonial moment, Sindhi regional identity, like Indian national identity was recoded as Hindu by right-wing ideologues. In an attempt to legitimize Sindhi immigrants as “Indian” coded as “Hindu,” these online communities overcompensate for the pluralistic background of Sindhis by violently silencing diversity. Hinduness is reproduced through a potent selection of images and content that subtly advances a nationalistic agenda. These websites provide a new and creative language through which religious divides can be re-engineered and further polarized. By examining the regional case of Sindhi Hindus, we can understand how Hindu nationalism is malleable and may tactically change its rhetoric across various contexts to incorporate marginalized communities that may not otherwise smoothly fit into a homogeneous, hegemonic vision for the Indian diaspora. Finally, in the face of increasing regionalism in the Indian subcontinent, my paper will question the way in which Sindhi Hindus may re-negotiate their identities in the contemporary moment.
Rajasingham, Nimanthi

The Factory is like the Paddy-Field: the Gam Udawa, Performance, and Ideology in Sri Lanka

The Gam Udawa Jayanthiya was a spectacular cultural festival organized each year in Sri Lanka from 1978 to 1994 by Prime Minister and later President Ranasinghe Premadasa. The festival was held in rural areas of the country to mark the completion of a year’s work toward “shelter for all,” a massive venture undertaken by the party in power at the time, the United National Party, to provide cheap housing and infrastructure for rural Sri Lanka.

This paper will analyze the ideological importance of this cultural festival for two specific post-1977 phenomena: the transformation of the economy toward neoliberalism, and the state’s escalating war against Tamil separatism. I will examine the Gam Udawa festivals’ role in managing both these crises by discussing the monuments and statues built for these festivals. Each festival site featured statues of the great kings of Sri Lanka and replicas of famous Buddhist sites like Bodhgaya in Bihar India, the Temple of the Tooth (said to hold the relics of Buddha’s tooth), and Adam’s Peak (a well-known pilgrimage site and supposedly the location of Buddha’s footprint). They also included replicas of modern civic buildings like the Parliament, the National Museum, and the Colombo airport. I will also analyze the celebratory booklets published for the events, and video recordings of the massive pereharas (parades) organized each year. My method will pay special attention to the performative nature of my archive.

Building upon this evidence, I will argue that the Gam Udawa festivals facilitated the introduction of export-oriented garment factories into rural villages. In 1992, the UNP government inaugurated the 200 Garment Factory Program (GFP) and declared all of Sri Lanka a Free Trade Zone. Implementing the GFP was no easy task because the village, often characterized as an agricultural, self-sufficient, traditional space, has long been considered the backbone of Sri Lankan society. This paper will explore how the ideological work of the Gam Udawas paved the way for villagers to partly accept the factories into their midst. I will develop Caitrin Lynch’s arguments in Good Girls, Juki Girls: Gender and Cultural Politics in Sri Lanka's Global Garment Industry, by arguing that the performative culture of the Gam Udawa is crucial to understanding contemporary Sri Lankan debates about modernity and tradition.
Ramachandran, Tanisha

Slum Tours and Slum Salvation: Slumdog Millionaire and the Call to Care

From news items and documentaries to heart wrenching pleas from aid agencies, the western world is inundated with imagery of far-off, mysterious, “dark” lands. What emerges from these narratives are “exotic” places, populated by impoverished, violent and “backward” thinking people. This singular narrative is presented and re-presented throughout dominant Western discourse. Slumdog Millionaire is one more visual document that presents a one-dimensional image of the “dark” world – in this case, India, the world’s largest democracy. The India represented in Slumdog Millionaire focuses on poverty and violence, which become a synecdoche for India. Arjun Appadurai refers to this process as a “metonymic freezing,” where certain perceived characteristics of the “the Third World” become markers of representation of its complete socio-cultural space in Western discourse. Looking at the discourse of Christian Missionary and Aid organizations, one can draw parallels to British colonial and missionary activity in India during the 19th century. It is from this perspective that I will analyze not only the movie but also the responses and reactions to the India presented in the film. An investigation of the media responses to the film will demonstrate more overtly how a missionary lens is still being employed to image India, and that the Euro-American world continues to feel the weight of the White man’s burden.
Secular Reform, Ecstatic Embodiment and Naked Worship in South India

For hundreds of years, devotees of the Devi Renuka/Yellamma in South India have processed before her naked in fulfillment of a religious vow (harake). Such vows are made in order to secure the Devi's favor and take the form of material offerings or bodily practices. At the time of the annual pilgrimage, tens of thousands of devotees travel to Renuka/Yellamma's temples across the Central Deccan plateau to fulfill their vows. Few persist in the practice of bethale seva or naked worship, however, which was criminalized in 1986 in response to protests. For the Dalit activists who organized the protests, bethale seva is a backward and superstitious practice imposed by licentious upper caste men on outcaste women. It is incompatible with self respect and the goals of political and social equity.

In this paper I consider the reform of bethale seva as an instance of the work the body is made to do to become a fit subject of modernity for the Indian nation. Sexual citizenship and religious recognition preclude opening one's body to the presence of the Devi as do practitioners of bethale seva and other modes of ecstatic embodiment. Citizenship in its broad sense, I suggest, is contingent upon secular embodiment. Making the body secular requires not so much the banishment of religiosity as its reformulation as essence and belief (Asad, Mahmood). Religion, within Indian modernity, rather than receding from public and political life has advanced as a homogenized textualized Hinduism. The production of national religion has entailed the reform if not the eradication of marginal forms of religiosity such as adivasi and outcaste modes of Devi worship. As the reform of bethale seva demonstrates secular embodiment also requires the reformulation of the sexual capacities and significances of the body. The containment of fertility within the bounds of conjugality displaces the possibility of its dispersal in and through bodily cultivation of the Devi's presence. I draw on ethnographic research, colonial histories of the reform of temple women and alternate histories of the body within an Indian archive in order to elaborate the particularity of Indian secularism and its religious and sexual entailments.
"Domestic Workers Falling": Bangladeshi Maids, Feminist Blogs, and Transnational Feminism

Foreign domestic worker deaths and serious injuries in the Middle East increased dramatically in 2009. Most alarmingly, between October 2009 and January 2010, at least ten deaths, (mostly alleged suicides), and life-threatening injuries of foreign domestic workers were reported in the national Lebanese print press. Among these were the cases of three young Bangladeshi maids: "Shania Sh.," who fell from her employer's balcony, apparently while cleaning windows in December 2009; "Safia D.," who died by hanging in her employer's home in December 2009; and "S.I.," who died after imbibing detergent, also in her employer's home in January 2010. These types of violences have begun to be understood in feminist studies under the somewhat cynical banner of "domestic workers falling," to draw attention to the ways that these injuries are euphemistically referred to in the mainstream press.

In this paper, I examine the response to mainstream representations of the fates of "Shania," "Safia," and "S.I." by turning to an alternate press: transnational progressive blogs, which are emerging as an important site for transnational activism. I analyze the representation of the Bangladeshi workers in Ethiopian Suicides (a Lebanese-based, mixed English and Arabic language independent blog); Human Rights Watch (a blog that is the arm of the larger, internationally-funded NGO); and Women Magazine of Bangladesh (a Bangladesh-based, mixed English and Bangla language independent blog).

I note the ways in which these three blogs provide different emphases, historical contexts, and theoretical perspectives to understand what happened to the Bangladeshi maids. I draw upon what I see to be an emerging transnational feminist theory, one that is grounded in a pan-South Asian paradigm, and is associated with the relatively newly-formed Women Unlimited Press in New Delhi and the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Colombo. Specifically, I argue that the work of feminists such as Kumkum Sangari, Radhika Coomaraswamy, and Nimanthis Perera-Rajasingham provide an interesting correlate to the work of U.S.-based transnational feminists such as Inderpal Grewal. The work of the former usefully locate domestic worker violence within larger contexts of patriarchal violences, and isolate what Sangari has termed "alibis for violence" that continue to circulate and inform even progressive feminist spheres, including feminist blog culture.
Razvi, Sayyeda

Urdu as the In-Between: Language and the Politics of Translation in Colonial India

This paper considers translation, specifically translation into Urdu in late nineteenth and early twentieth century India, both as a sociolinguistic exercise and as a kind of theoretical problematic for understanding the development of Urdu literary culture in South Asia. With its roots in Persian as a colonizing language during Mughal rule, Urdu was the product of the interaction between Persian (and later English) and various North-eastern dialects. In 1836, Persian was replaced by Urdu (alongside English) as the administrative language in Northern India but in the light of the colonial government’s policies which supported the use of Urdu for local administration and the traditional Persian/Indian Persian/Urdu literary hierarchy, Urdu emerged both as the preferred language of the colonizer as well as one of the major vernaculars of the colonized. Furthermore, in the second half of the nineteenth century Urdu became embroiled in the heated Hindi-Urdu controversy which contributed to communal division between Hindus and Muslims that culminated with the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947.

In this deeply politicized context, Urdu occupied the position of a lingua franca in many parts of (mostly Northern) India for the larger part of the nineteenth century and this paper attempts to examine how the historically liminal status of the language contributed to its emergence as a kind of language of South Asian modernity. The extensive use of translation (mostly for pedagogical purposes) carried out under the aegis of colonial as well as local institutions such as Delhi College in the nineteenth century and Osmania University Hyderabad in the first half of the twentieth century, was an important component of this development. This paper explores how translation as a methodology (when applied to classical Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit texts) enabled the development of a mostly elite Urdu literary culture in conjunction with its functionality in making Urdu the medium of instruction (in relation to the translation of Western, mostly scientific texts) that increased public access to knowledge. I argue that translation, theoretically both an inclusive and exclusive practice, enabled a synthesis of Urdu that was simultaneously the language of intellectual discourse and everyday communication.
Reddy, Gautham

A Non-modern represents the Modern: A Study of Two Novellas by Vishwanatha Satyanarayana

By his many critics, twentieth-century Telugu writer Vishwanatha Satyanarayana (1895-1976) has been consistently lampooned as an ultra-orthodox Brahmin reactionary who blindly resists modernity and social progress. It is no secret that since the onset of British colonial rule, modernity in South Asia has been associated with a degree of westernization. The literature of colonial modernity based itself on imported literary templates, inextricably intertwined with the various reformist projects of its authors. Expressing oneself in the mode of a novel or free-verse poetry not only signified an orientation toward specifically modern, i.e. western cultural and aesthetic sensibilities, but also a particular ideology. Consequently, for the modern contemporaries of Vishwanatha, modernity implicitly bore utopian visions of the future.

Employing pre-colonial themes, aesthetic principles, and a literary sensibility that had been marginalized for over forty years, Vishwanatha’s popular works aggressively critiqued these utopian visions. Yet perhaps more troubling for the modern agenda was his equally powerful command of the modern literary forms, explicitly divorced of their ideological connotations. In this essay, I intend to examine two such modern novellas: Ha Ha Hu Hu (1932) and Vishnu Sharma Learns English (1960). Both stories describe the descent of legendary figures to Earth and their bewildering encounters with modernity. Ha Ha Hu Hu is the story of a Gandharva who falls into a busy square in London, the center of western civilization, only to receive a rather uncivilized reception. In Vishnu Sharma, Vishnu Sharma and Tikkana, two literary greats of the pre-colonial period, descend to Earth in order to study English with a low-level college Telugu pundit. Through the eyes and experiences of these outsiders, Vishwanatha vigorously interrogates the nature and value of modern constructions of self, knowledge, and culture.

While critical of the modern utopian project, both these novellas reflect a modern consciousness. What does it mean to criticize modernity when one thinks and communicates in a thoroughly modern manner? Vishwanatha’s success partially lay in his ability to eloquently respond and challenge modern critiques of Indian traditions in their own terms. Through a close reading of these two particular texts, I intend to explore Vishwanatha’s representations of colonial modernity and his own ambivalent relationship with it. It will be my contention that Vishwanatha complicates the western standards of colonial modernity and opens the door for new types of modernity in South Asia.
Renganathan, Vasu

Tamil Poet Saints' perceptions and the Saiva Temple Architectures in Tamil Nadu

The Tirumantiram, one of the Tamil Saiva works, attempts to link symbolically the two widely studied Saivite topics namely the consciousness in one’s heart (Cit) and the material representation of Nataraja’s blissful dance in Chidambaram. Crucial to this linkage is the understanding of the ‘blissful state’ in one’s heart as a result of internalizing the glory of the divine (Siva) - what is otherwise termed mukti or ‘salvation’ in Saiva Siddhanta. In order to attain this ‘enlightened state’ (Tirumular uses the Tamil word ‘Telintaar’ to refer to this state of mind), one has to follow closely the yogic practices that Tirumular suggests concerning how the divine elements of Jiivan ‘life’ and Vindu ‘source of human creation’ ought to be controlled. We draw information about temple architectures of the Saiva temples of Tamil Nadu from a number of verses of Tirumantiram. This paper attempts to relate to the conceptual basis of some of the Saiva temple architectures of Tamil Nadu as they are discussed in a number of verses of the Tamil poet saints, especially in Tirumular's Tirumantiram. Demonstrating the metaphor of human body as temple and Jiivan (the soul) in its enlightened form as Sivan, Tirumular constructs a system where the human body acts as a location for the divine. It is argued in this paper that the material representation of this conceptual idea is well represented in various forms of temple architectures. Especially, I attempt to discuss in my paper how the temple architecture of Chidambaram parallels to the ideas as portrayed in Tirumular's Tirumantiram in a number of ways.
Rinker, Jeremy

Can Fowl Talk with Fox?: Facilitated Inter-Caste Dialogue from Below as an Essential Response to Caste-based Marginalization

“Why should we talk to people who do not want to talk to us?” an Ambedkar Buddhist friend responded to me as I pushed my conflict resolution belief in the importance of direct communication in conflict de-escalation processes. This was not the first time I had heard such a sentiment, yet, such a common sentiment among the Ambedkar Buddhists I have been studying since September of 2002 is more often expressed as a subtle fear of engagement with the unknown ‘other.’ The fact is that, while the Ambedkar Buddhists of the Trailokya Baudha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana (the TBMSG) are actively engaged in what they, themselves, call a “dhamma revolution” [Sponberg (1996)] and others have called a “silent revolution” [Jaffrelot (2003)], their activism has also reified an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality among many dalit Buddhists of Maharashtra, as well as among the ‘others’ whom they hope to transform. This paper addresses TBMSG’s creation of a new Buddhist identity as a response to oppression and attempts to place this new identity on the backdrop of the on-going processes of globalization this marginalized community faces. In arguing that TBMSG narratives of injustice invoke core movement dialectics between dalits as Buddhists and dalits as victims, this paper explores ways that religious affiliation (and interaction) can be both constructive and destructive of pro-social change. The organizational dialectic created by TBMSG’s own narratives of victimization and religious transformation underscores an implicit need within the TBMSG movement to engage both intra and interfaith dialogue processes to move beyond discursive rhetoric in developing pro-social interaction between those often understood as the ‘globalizers’ and those seen as the ‘globalized.’ In other words, to overcome the teleological dialectic of simultaneously identifying themselves as both victims and self-actualized Buddhists, members of the TBMSG movement must engage in intra and inter-religious dialogue. Primary to this engagement is a process of reconciliation and it is here that, I believe, processes of globalization have a positive role to play. As Abu-Nimer (2002) has argued, “one of the obstacles facing dialoguers is the accusation that they are giving up the fight against injustice. But the opposite is true. Dialogue is not a substitute for social action.” Rather, this paper argues for the important role that both interfaith dialogue and globalization can play in the creation of a socially just society.
Romain, Julie

Towards a Definition of Temple Patronage: Courtly Culture in Post Gupta South India

This paper discusses the impact of court culture on the evolution of south Indian temple art and architecture of the seventh and eighth centuries – a period directly following the major north Indian Gupta dynasty and the naissance of regional temple building across the subcontinent. The difficulty of identifying specific royal patrons with regional temple styles has long occupied art historians. Complicating the matter further is the issue of patron-artist relationships, and the attribution of individual artists to specific temple sites. The artist’s identity and their voice, which provides historians with clues about their training and creative motivation, is virtually unknown. It is largely expressed through the material remains – the visual art produced to decorate the temple structure. Rather than look at stylistic or iconographic attributes of Indian temple sculpture, my paper will consider the court patron’s sensibility toward and reception of Hindu temples. It will focus on the relationship between material evidence found in narrative reliefs, and the textual evidence available from epigraphy and literary culture.
Roy-Asthana, Mantra

The Avatars of the Diaspora: Most eligible bachelor and rich tourist shopping for “Indian culture”

When the diaspora visit India, are they expected to “act” British or American and thus conform to notions of people who ‘go abroad’ lose their ‘culture’ and/or denigrate their own heritage and/or become rich tourists? This paper discusses some of the ways films made in India depict the diaspora. In Hyderabad Blues (1998) Nagesh Kukunoor demonstrates how Varun becomes the most eligible bachelor on reaching Hyderabad with marriage proposals flooding his parents’ house. Moreover, his long stay in the United States comes with some perks: his accent and his critique of arranged marriages and caste consciousness. While Ashwini mocks Varun's American accent (he's become American enough) and resists everyone’s fawning over his NRI glamour, his friends condemn his notion of dating without the promise of marriage (losing 'culture'). How do we respond to Varun? Is he wrong in challenging ‘arranged marriage’? Is he wrong in speaking with an American accent? Is he not Indian anymore? Through his friends’ and family’s reactions, I argue, Kukunoor examines the dis-placement the Varuns encounter on returning ‘home’. In Bong Connection when Andy from New York visits his father's childhood home in Kolkata, his uncle and aunt are shocked to hear his interest in folk music and instead urge him to visit the touristy places and shopping plazas. Is Andy essentializing his sense of ‘roots’ by indulging in rural folk music? Or is his interest in the rich tradition of folk music (and scope for fusion music of recent times) genuine? Or is he only an American looking for an ethnic cultural product? I argue that Anjan Dutt implies that the diaspora often ends up valuing the vanishing arts of modern India while an obsession with medicine, engineering, MBA, as disciplines of study, undervalue them. But how is Andy viewed? The privileged who has the time and money to become involved in ‘baul’ music? Or is he the un-self conscious America-bred enthusiast who searches for his ‘roots’ in music and family? In engaging with some of the stereotypes of the diaspora in Indian films, this paper examines how filmmakers complicate the perhaps popular perception of Indians living abroad and their “Indian” identity.
Rudisill, Kristen

Democracy, Corruption, and Citizenship: Lessons from Cho Ramasamy

Playwright, actor, and political commentator Cho Ramasamy (b. 1934) is widely known throughout India as a political satirist. Many urban writers of the post-colonial period turned to irony and satire in order to comment on the nation’s political situation, but Cho has been one of very few to use it to comedic effect on the popular Tamil stage. His work began to take a turn toward political satire with his 1964 play Campavaami Yuke Yuke, in which Krishna is arrested and brought to court on a charge of murder, only to have Sage Narada tell him that he can escape if he bribes the judge. Cho’s most famous play, Mohammad bin Tughlaq (1968) is where he created the character he has come to be identified with through his Tughlaq journal, where he criticizes whichever government happens to be in power as well as all politicians, candidates, and policy initiatives. Although he pokes fun at everyone, Cho did serve in the Rajya Sabha in Delhi, and does come from a position (well-educated Tamil Brahmin) that informs his criticism of individual targets, especially during the anti-Brahmin movement and the early years of Dravidian party rule in Tamilnadu. His comedic plays work in a way similar to his political commentary, and Cho uses both formats to satirize Dravidian politicians, as well as politicians from all parties, students, women, heads of household, brahminism, and democracies in general. In this paper, I will analyze Cho’s use of comedic satire across several plays, focusing on Mohammad bin Tughlaq and Inpakkanaa onru Kanten (“I dreamed a sweet dream” 1971), and paying particular attention to state politics and conflicting ideas of citizenship. Each of these plays is specifically about elections and politics, delivering explicit, though humorous, warnings and injunctions about the proper way for citizens to participate in India’s democratic process.
Rupakheti, Sanjog

Leviathan or Paper Tiger? State Making & Kingship in Early Nineteenth Century Nepal

A model of an ‘oppressive’ feudal state continues to shape the scholarly debate on the Nepali state formation post-1769. Furthermore, the period between 1846 and 1950 is overwhelmingly relegated to the ‘dark ages’ in Nepali history, characterized by Rana exploitation and excesses. During this period people supposedly toiled and suffered while meeting the exorbitant revenue demands to an extent that Nepali state functioned merely as a revenue sponge. My paper offers an alternate conceptualization of state-society relations. It will argue that the Nepali state was not solely motivated by fiscal imperatives or by the lack of political relations with society. State making in Nepal was anchored in a variety of people and activities-professional and ritual-order groups- each of which participated differently in the tasks of promulgating codes, maintaining rights over objects and services and thereby in regulating caste, labor and gender relations. It will illustrate how the process of state making that began long before the Anglo-Gorkha War (1814-1816) reached new heights following the promulgation of the Ain in 1854. In so doing the paper questions the overriding assumption in the historiography that understands the Nepali state as a definitive product of military conquests. Instead it argues that the Ain with its copious details on administrative, judicial and legal regulations laid and ideological foundation to the centralization of resources, loyalty and information. The state by encouraging people to report excesses to the Durbar and rewarding them with grants and patronage, translated the normative aspect of the Ain into real practice. Similarly, the frequency and the volume of such state-society interactions dispel the otherwise static notion of power and rule in the nineteenth century Nepal. The nature and content of these state-society interactions then allow us to glimpse the process of state making, which was both gradual and conspicuous for its absence of military conquests. A critical examination of these relationships reveal the complex processes by which social relations, such as caste structures, gender based division of labor, slavery were created and reproduced overtime.
Ruparelia, Sanjay

Stranded Between Government and Opposition: The Politics of India's Left Front since 1989

Since 1989, the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) has sought to define its national politics through two principal objectives: to limit the advance of Hindu nationalist forces and to halt the deepening of neo-liberal economic reform. More recently, it has sought to prevent growing strategic ties with the US. For these reasons, the CPI(M) has provided external parliamentary support to anti-BJP coalitions in 1989, 1996 and 2004, without joining government. It has also sought to block the advance of liberal economic reform at the Centre while pursuing in the states where it governs, particularly West Bengal.

This paper investigates the origins, dynamics and consequences of this political strategy and its various tensions. It examines three causal factors in particular: the logic of political self-reproduction in India's federal parliamentary democracy; the narrowing of economic policy options in India's federal market economy; and the conceptions of power, political responsibility and political possibility that inform the strategies, tactics and decisions of the party. The paper argues that these factors have stranded the CPM-led Left Front between government and opposition in contemporary Indian democracy.
Salomon, Richard

Biscript and bilingual documents as artifacts of interregional contact in South Asia

Biscript inscriptions -- that is, inscriptions in which the same or similar text is repeated in two scripts, whether representing the same or different languages -- are fairly common in pre-modern South Asia, and typically reflect communication between adjoining or overlapping cultural zones under the auspices of transregional empires. In earlier period, the scripts concerned are typically Kharoṣṭhī, the regional script of the northwest, and Brahmi and its varieties that were used in the rest of South Asia. Such are particularly prominent during the Kuśāna Empire in the first to third centuries A.D., when biscript or even triscript inscriptions (with Bactrian, Greek, or the undeciphered "Kamboji" script) are found along the northern, western, and southern fringes of its Indian and Central Asian territories. In later periods, biscript records involving northern and southern scripts and bilingual or multi-lingual inscriptions with Sanskrit and various other Indian or Islamic languages are not infrequently found in various parts of India.

Such multiscript documents reflect the exceptionally complex history of writing in India, where local script varieties developed freely and with relatively little central control and standardization, in contrast to, for example, ancient China or Greece. In this, as in other cultural spheres, for example language, central imperial authority in India tended not to suppress or level local variation.
Samarasinghe, Stanley

Post-War/Conflict Economic Reconstruction in Sri Lanka: A Road Map

Sri Lanka’s economy survived the 25 year old civil war (1983-2009) but lost one generation of opportunity to prosper and move forward when the rest of the world, especially many countries in Asia did so. Even in the conflict years the economy showed a remarkable resilience with GDP growth averaging a little over 4.0% and in years when a ceasefire prevailed it averaged 5.5%. Had there been peace the country’s growth rate would have been at least 2 percentage points higher. Sri Lanka is an export-dependent country with a GDP of about $40 billion. That means post-conflict economic success would depend partly on internal policies, strategies and initiatives and partly on global economic conditions. This paper will first review the domestic political economy of development in the context of a society that has emerged from the war even more fractured along ethnic, social class and regional lines than ever before. As a pre condition to economic success Sri Lanka has to build a peaceful state that is acceptable to its multi-ethnic polity. It also has to build capacity of government to handle the economic challenges that lie ahead. The country must also address stark regional disparities in development that exists, especially the relative backwardness of the war-affected areas. Internationally Sri Lanka will have to rely on global markets for its exports, international capital flows to augment investment and imported technology to modernize industry. Sri Lanka has to mend its relations with the major economic powers in the West that have been impaired to some extent in the last few years by human rights issues and governance issues. Sri Lanka has good relations with the emerging Asian economic giants, India and, most notably, China. The latter has emerged as the leading donor to Sri Lanka in the last two years. Sri Lanka-India trade ties have grown rapidly in the last decade and India is a major lender to Sri Lanka. To some extent these Asian economic ties counter-balance those with the West. However, for the foreseeable future Sri Lanka will have to heavily rely on western markets. This paper will attempt to develop a possible roadmap for Sri Lanka’s economic development in the next ten to twenty years taking into account the local, regional and global challenges that it has to encounter.
This Revolution Was not Televised Either: The Digital-Aesthetic Transformation in Indian Film Music

By the mid 1990s, a combination of technological and creative innovations in the Indian film music industry ushered in a new cinematic soundscape. The resulting “sound” represented a cataclysmic change of aesthetics, incorporating an increasingly globalized musical sensibility informed by Western styles and approaches to global popular music. However, while implementation of digital technology and editing software allowed increased music freedom and experimentation, it also allowed an increasingly smaller group of people unprecedented access and influence on the musical product.

Western aesthetics have long altered Indian film music expectations as eclectically-inspired film songs included explicit instrumental codes and styles borrowed from Hollywood films (Arnold, 1991). Because of access to digital technology, music directors can now easily include sound effects; world music style and instrument sampling, world beat sounds and globalized rhythms that increase the hybridized nature of the Indian film sound. This, in turn, reinforces the notion that film song’s construction is less informed by Indian classical music fundamentals as was the case in prior decades and is now more Western in its musical perspective, aesthetics and orientation (Ranade, 2006).

In this paper, however, I critique the notion that Indian film music is becoming increasingly Westernized through deconstructing the categories of “Western” vs. “Indian”, and rethink digitized sounds in a transnational and global context. This paper examines the musical construction of the contemporary Indian film sound from the lens of the decision-making processes of those in control of the technology and from the public demand on an increasingly globalized sound. To this end, the studio decision making process will also be examined not only from popular music and cultural theory perspectives, but linguistic and semiotic perspectives as well as it advances towards the creation of a new Indian popular music identity.
Satkunaratnam, Ahalya

How many boyz are raw? How many start a war? The Sri Lankan Civil War through the Works of MIA

During the several months leading to the final battles between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan armed forces that took place in May 2009, a famous UK-based, former Sri Lankan refugee, Tamil woman and international celebrity, M.I.A., rose to prominence in various media circuits. Her rise on the international stage was not only for her Grammy-nominated song or her work on the soundtrack of the Oscar-winning world-wide phenomenon of Slumdog Millionaire, but also for her stance on the Sri Lankan civil war and the political events that were taking place on the Island-nation as the Sri Lankan Army sought a military solution to the decades long civil conflict with the LTTE. In this paper, I examine how her words and actions in those final months, her interviews, music performances and her personal campaign to bring the much ignored Sri Lankan civil war to the forefront of political and entertainment news were interpreted and responded to by the Sri Lankan diaspora and the Sri Lankan government. I will demonstrate that her body and her works inspired political responses by communities globally and by the Sri Lankan government that articulated several contested histories of the Sri Lankan civil conflict. Exploring M.I.A.’s work and its consumption, I will consider more broadly how transnational circulations of material and visual culture have been and continue to be vital to the understanding and experiencing of the Sri Lankan civil war both by those abroad and in the homeland.
Sauder, Paul

The Role of the Plantation Tamils in Post-War Peace Building and Reconstruction in Sri Lanka

The Plantation Tamil community (about 1.0 million or 5% of the total population) did not join the Tamils in the north in the civil war that lasted from the early 1980s to 2009. As an ethnic community they have been the most socially and economically disadvantaged group in Sri Lanka for an extended period of time. However, the Plantation Tamil political leadership chose to remain in the political mainstream and work with the government in Colombo to advance their social and economic conditions. The Plantation Tamil political leaders have been coalition partners in government throughout the war period. The results have been positive though not spectacular. This experience contains valuable lessons for inter-ethnic relations in post-conflict Sri Lanka. There are also serious unresolved issues affecting this community that must be addressed if peace building and reconstruction are to succeed. These include the viability of the 19th century plantation model in the 21st century and the problems of education and employment of the younger generation of plantation Tamils who have little appetite to work as plantation laborers and seek better jobs and prospects outside the sector.
Schildt, Henri

Iconographic Scheme of the Namaskāra Maṇḍapa at the Peruvanām Śiva Mahādeva Temple

The Peruvana? Siva temple is located in the Trichur District and Cherpu village. The temple is one of the most significant historical temples in Kerala. The ancient sphere of the temple extended, according to the claims of hereditary knowledge and myths, from Kodungallur to Trichur. The still surviving annual Pura? festival named Peruvana?/A?a??upu?a Pura? may preserve vestiges of the original mediaeval temple institution. The Temple complex is unusually monumental in scale, with two central shrines of the circular I?a??ayappan, the square multistoried pagoda-like Ma?attilappan, from the 11th and 12th centuries, a ruin of the mediaeval rectangular treasury and a late mediaeval front pavilion (namaskara ma??apa) of the I?a??ayappan, all surrounded by an ample portico (nala?pala?/ cu??a?pala?).

The namaskara ma??apa is of the ordinary type in Kerala, but the narrative reliefs over the architraves both inside and outside the canopy and over the architrave of the alinda, are extraordinary and vivid descriptions of life in pre-modern Kerala. In these reliefs small human figures are lined up forming processional sequences of festival scenes with musicians, pastoral scenes, hunting scenes and battle scenes. On the western side of the canopy there is a Pura?ic scene of churning nectar from the milk ocean. The human figures of these reliefs wear outfits typical of Malabar in the past, and the types of weapons and musical instruments are recognizable as well. The wooden carvings are probably from the late 18th or early 19th centuries, made after the notorious raid of Tippu Sultan.

The 12 wooden columns of the alinda are lavishly decorated with motifs which describe deities and which presumably follow directional rules of placing deities on different structural parts of temples. The purpose of iconography is contemplative in the Kerala namaskara ma??apa, built for the temple priests to have a darsana of the deity of the shrine, and to contemplate different qualities of different deities and events in Epic / Pura?ic stories. The iconography is also set up on the structural parts in the manner that it seems to fix the pavilion to the four cardinal directions.
Schonthal, Benjamin

Religion and the History of “Fundamental Rights” in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka’s Supreme Court, issues of religion are almost always debated through the language of “Fundamental Rights.” In most cases, religious groups who appear in the country’s highest court (either as petitioners or respondents) cite a violation of their constitutionally guaranteed “Fundamental Rights” to “freedom of thought conscience and religion” (Article 10 of the Constitution of 1978), to freedom from discrimination on the grounds of religion (Article 12) or to “manifest religion or belief in worship, observance, practice or teaching” (Article 14[1][e]). Many observers would cite a pragmatic reason for this. Unlike violations of civil code or penal code provisions which are heard by lower courts, the constitution’s section on Fundamental Rights is justiciable by the Supreme Court; religious groups who cite Fundamental Rights violations therefore ensure a hearing before the chief court on the island. However, I would argue that there is another reason. Since the 1940s, there has been a growing trend among religious groups (and others) to articulate political and social grievances as a violation of Fundamental Rights.

In this paper I examine the development of “fundamental rights” discourse in Sri Lankan legal and political culture from the 1940s to the 1972. In particular, I trace a shift, in the 1940s and 1950s, from political elites seeking to address the political concerns of minority communities through the extension of “communal representation” to politicians seeking to guarantee non-domination by the Sinhalese majority through outlining a series of statutory “fundamental rights.” I will show that a number of factors precipitated this change including, colonial denunciations of communal electorates and reserved seats, the influence of British legal-academic ideas about constitution-making, the impact of constitutional developments in India and the influence of a growing international declarations and charters outlining fundamental human rights.
Schwarz, Henry

Radical Performance in the Theatre of Survival

What do concepts look like? This paper examines the linkage of aesthetics and politics in a contemporary radical street theatre from India that aims to repeal colonial-era laws defining criminal behavior. The performances of Budhan Theatre of Ahmedabad combine documentary realism and artistic composition to record and demystify the criminal situation in order to change it. They understand the criminal label as an historical act of signifying, and the process of change as dependent on re-signifying. Their performance technique combines gritty realism with experimental distancing effects to demystify repressive representations and to change them as a matter of survival. Their published output includes plays, films, song and visual art.

Yet this effect is not achieved simply by painting a more realistic picture. The formal structures of the texts themselves comment on how their dominant realist effects are generated, in the process of musing on how mainstream society constructs its repressive versions of reality. The elements are not ornamental but rather integral and conceptual, adding didactic lessons, maxims and slogans to the realist narrative. This generic discontinuity both questions repressive versions of reality while revealing how they are put together, and interrogates the efficacy of art to achieve political ends. Thus the event is both an activist appeal and a philosophic meditation on the springs of action leading to heightened self-awareness.

Formal techniques of juxtaposition borrowed from cinematic montage form the nucleus for generating concepts from inert, realist diaganesis. These techniques are carried over between dramatic performance and film versions of the texts, illustrating a fertile cross breeding between genres in the creation of an activist, interventionist aesthetic practice. The combination creates concepts from mere story, both showing and telling simultaneously in a powerful spectacle of performativity. Performance techniques are drawn from a variety of traditions, mobilizing ancient versions of abhinaya and Brechtian verfremdung within the radical, activist imperatives of modern Indian street theatre to produce a hybrid, multi-leveled dramatic event.
Scott, J. Barton

The Light of Truth and the Law of Tolerance in Late Colonial India

“The virtue of toleration is never strained, especially in matters of religion… Religion never suffers by reason of the criticism—fair or foul—of its critics; it always suffers from the laxity or indifference of its followers.” With these words, M. K. Gandhi weighed on a controversy then raging around Swami Dayanand Saraswati’s Satyarth Prakash (Light of Truth). First published in 1875, the book had transposed Dayanand’s polemic style, honed in the rhetorical arena of the shastrtarth, to the emergent world of Hindi print media. The Satyarth Prakash not only lambasted Dayanand’s Hindu, Jain, Christian, and Muslim opponents, it came to serve as the “bible” of the Arya Samaj, the reform society that so famously promulgated Dayanand’s controversialist practices in Punjab and elsewhere. But nineteenth-century polemic practices played very differently in the final decades of colonialism. In Sindh in 1944, the Satyarth Prakash was banned when its acerbic remarks about the Prophet Muhammad were deemed offensive to the religious sensibilities of the province’s Muslim majority. The Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha quickly rallied against the ban, drawing more moderate politicians like Gandhi and Nehru into the fray: with the demand for Pakistan looming, Sindhi “sensibilities” proved a matter of national significance. This paper uses the 1944 ban on the Satyarth Prakash to consider the mutual determinations of print media, cultural regulation, and the discourse of religious “tolerance” in late colonial India. If, as Gandhi’s comments suggest, the incident demonstrated a failure of tolerance, it did so within a very particular conjuncture. Indeed, if the 1944 ban demonstrates anything, it is the impossibility of reducing tolerance to an individual virtue or practice—rather, tolerance as a “technology of domestic governmentality” (to quote Wendy Brown) emerged precisely at the intersection of legal prohibition, print media circulation, and the affective appeals of communal politics. The ban, moreover, dramatizes the decisive shift in the cultures of print controversialism between 1875 and 1944: in the 1940s, it seems, it was texts’ well-publicized failure to circulate that rendered them effective tools for religious mobilization. This presentation, like the larger essay of which it is a part, explores the 1944 ban by analyzing primary documents pertaining to the affair, including government reports, the internal correspondence of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, selections from the Arya Samaji press, and the pages of the Satyarth Prakash itself.
Sears, Tamara

Visceral Visions and Visions of Viscera at Terahi’s Mohaja Mata

Warrior women, sexualized specters, and entrail-eating ascetics are among the many figures populating the exterior walls of the tenth-century Mohaja Mata goddess temple at Terahi. Located deep in rural Madhya Pradesh, Terahi was a small but significant place once tied to a cluster of important sites, including Mahua, Kadwaha, and Indor. Originally Saiva in affiliation, these sites gave rise during the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries to dozens of Saiva, Vaisnava, Sakta and Jain temples and to two substantial stone monasteries associated with Saiva Siddhanta ascetics. The interaction and competition between these various religious groups was indexed through iconography, sculptural program, and occasionally architectural form. However, no temple distinguished itself quite as profoundly as Terahi’s Mohaja Mata whose exterior and interior program was dominated by powerful Tantric goddesses paired with boldly fearsome figures baldly feasting on viscera. The temple’s esoteric imagery may reflect the assimilation and formalization of new Sakta-Tantra practices during a moment that was also marked by increasing mobility, travel, and trade.

This paper examines both the meaning of the temple’s imagery and the intervention that it represented within a growing sacred center located in a geographic periphery. In what ways did the temple’s imagery signify a broader shift in ritual practices? Or did it reveal a desire to harness the spiritual power of Tantric goddesses by incorporating radical imagery? I follow three approaches in addressing these issues. (1) I look locally, regionally, and trans-regionally to identify both the visual and textual sources for the temple’s imagery and sculpted program. (2) I examine the resonances that the temple may have had with developments at other local and regional sites. For example, the Mohaja Mata temple is contemporary with a broader shift in Saiva iconography that replaces images of Parvati and warrior-son Skanda with those of the more fearsome goddess Chamunda and khatvanga-dhara Natesa. This, in turn, corresponds with similar patterns of paring Siva with increasingly fearsome goddesses in other geographic regions. (3) I consider the ways in which temple imagery may have mediated the relationship between goddess and devotee by evoking radical sensory responses through the visualization of gruesome bodily practices. The goal in the end is to better understand the relationship between the local and the regional, and to look further at the incorporation and transformation of Sakta-Tantra traditions as they became rooted in new places.
Sen, Rumela (co-author E. Teitelbaum)

Mass Mobilization and the Success of India's Maoists
Bengali filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak’s personal attachment to the aftermath of the partition of Bengal imbues most of his films with a deep suspicion of the new Indian nation, whereby the criticism of the displacement simultaneously proclaims a loss of regional identity. This article analyzes the manner in which Ghatak’s Subarnarekha (1965) outlines the impossibility of maintaining familial norms in the face of economic depravity and the sheer commotion of migration, specifically with reference to the figures of post-migration diaspora women. The women of the diaspora are a far cry from the pre-partition ideals of womanhood, and this difference is interpreted as a loss of moral values and national identity by the male characters. If the unwillingness to ‘let’ women work, or marry into a different caste must be given up because of the political condition, it directly affects the self-perception of a community. Contrary to expectations of comparatively sophisticated portrayals of women’s roles in highbrow parallel Bengali cinema, Subarnarekha seems to present Sita as the sacrificial female figure who kills herself to avoid a possible incest, much in the mode of mainstream Hindi cinema of the 50s and 60s.
Emergence of divergent ideological and economic components in the Tamil society

Emergence of divergent ideological and economic components in the Tamil society - A materialization of intrinsic ferment or extraneous influences (5th century B.C and 10th century A.D)

Ancient Tamilakam, between 5th century B.C and 6th century A.D was perhaps one of the most progressively dynamic regions in the Indian sub-continent. It served as the confluence point of many variant cultures and ideologies, yet it had its own unique identity which pervaded and perhaps survived the many external barrages in many different ways. This paper attempts to understand some of the basic traits which helped define the cultural identity of the ancient Tamils and how different ideological, political and economic components either contributed towards conserving or redefining, these constituents of the Tamil society, like gender identities or caste and class differentiations at the relevant periods specified above.

Furthermore it also endeavors to examine, whether such attempts on the part of religious sects and cults of Buddhism and Jainism, along with other marginal cults of the Hindu religion were the result of local and internal compulsions or were they a cumulative effect of the need for a progressive growth within the religion and/or were they the influence of extrinsic elements which were attempting to attain a position of ascendance in the Tamil society. This study has been done by perusing literature, epigraphical records, and also art and architectural remains.
Setty, Rohit

'Borrowing' Against the Tide of Privatization: National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education

In India, private teacher education institutions have increased from 3000 to over 12,000 in four short years, while the number of government affiliated institutions has remained the same. In order to regulate these private institutions, the Ministry of Education has developed the New Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE), to be released by the end of 2010.

This paper attempts to frame the discussion of teacher quality in terms of: a) the borrowing, transfer and lending of education policies, as inferred in the proposed teacher education structures within NCFTE; b) a reformed nationalized system that stems the tide of privatization in teacher education; c) the reconceptualization of the “crisis” of teacher quality, typically thought of in terms of teacher shortages; and d) the modalities of professional development that afford teachers a space to use their practical knowledge in the face of policy reforms (Elbaz, 1983). This paper is divided into: naming the problem, conceptualizing the issues at hand, and making a case for further study.
Sevea, Iqbal

Who Speaks for Islam?: Sharia Discourse in Modern and Contemporary India

This paper explores the attempts by the Deobandis, Barelvis, Shia groups and Muslim feminists in India to negotiate a space for sharia within the secular state structure. The stances of these movements are located within the context of debates over the need for a uniform civil code and the attempts by Muslim movements to reconcile the modern state structure with Islamic norms as well as intra-Islamic contestations over the codification of sharia and Islamic authority. It is highlighted that two themes dominate the contemporary discourse over the implementation of sharia. The first is the call for the “protection of sharia” from state and judicial encroachment. This is centered upon the need to “protect” sharia as a sphere that is autonomous from state interference. The second is the attempt by various Muslim movements to “define” sharia. More specifically, this paper traces the attempts by the ulema, dominated by the Deobandis, in post-independent India to establish an autonomous framework for the implementation of sharia. Their demand for a dar-ul-qaza system is examined in detail. It is further stressed that the formation of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board in the mid-1970s was, on the one hand, an attempt at creating an official framework and centralized authority for the implementation of sharia and, on the other, an endeavor to shape a codified “unified sharia”. This, it is argued, not only challenged traditional norms and extant conceptions of Islamic authority but was also perceived as an attempt by the Deobandis to impose their norms as Islamic law. The paper will study the responses by the Barelwis, Shias and feminists including their establishment of rival all-India sharia boards.
Shah, Ami V.

Urban Renewal, Development Discourse, and Poverty Reduction

According to the United Nations Development Programme, “The Government of India has signaled its strong commitment to the alleviation of urban poverty by launching the national flagship programme Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (HUPA)” (March 2009). Supported in part by the UNDP’s National Strategy for Urban Poor (NSUP), this policy for urban renewal is seen as integral to the achievement of the first Millennium Development Goal, aimed at poverty reduction. However, the discourse connecting service provision, quality of life, and increasing incomes has been disjointed, and in certain instances, separated from the larger context and mission of urban renewal in India. This paper begins by considering the formulation of the JNNURM, contextualizing its approach towards the urban poor. We then move from the national to local arena, examining the translation of the national goals of the JNNURM to the context of Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Ahmedabad’s rhetoric, from both the policy arena and the popular press, has obscured the policy’s gaze at the impoverished. Rather, the application of the JNNURM has led to a substantial re-imagination of the city through neoliberal policies, some of which capture and transform the spaces of the urban poor. In so doing, the result is that certain impoverished communities become ensnared in a new urban landscape which serves to exclude them from the larger transformations occurring across the city, entrenching specific expressions of poverty.
The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) Program, Gujarat: Fostering Spaces for Empowerment?

The Indian government enacted the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) Residential School Program for girls in 2004. As a national program designed to increase educational access for the most marginalized girls, the KGBV program uniquely employs a curriculum focused on fostering girls’ “empowerment”. This paper investigates how empowerment is manifested in one KGBV school. The paper presents an ethnographic study of a KGBV in Gujarat, and identifies initial findings related to the KGBV program’s ability to foster empowerment. Traditional ethnographic methods are complemented by the use of photovoice, to give priority to the educational experiences and articulations of the girls themselves – the beneficiaries of government and development programs – vis-à-vis empowerment.
Shah, Svati

Spectacle and Erasure: The Decline of Urban Red Light Commerce in India

This paper builds on the author’s previous work on sex work and migration in Mumbai by discussing the decline in the numbers of people living and engaging in sexual commerce in the city’s centrally located red light areas. Kamathipura, an area of particular interest, has been at the center of debates on sex work and the city since the rise of the contemporary anti-trafficking framework. The spectacle of prostitution, produced in and through Kamathipura, has been essential in attempts to build a sense of prostitution as equivalent with violence and danger. The paper discusses the effects of spectacularization on the decline of Kamathipura, and places this decline within the context of other urban red light districts that have either been forcibly shut, physically eliminated, or otherwise erased from public view. This phenomenon, the paper argues, is understood to be part of a broader instantiation of the state-sponsored regulation of poor migrants in urban areas, as the Indian state moves closer toward establishing itself as a liberalized contemporary of elite nations.
Shankar, Santosh

Broadcasting the Imagined Community: Documentary Film and Constitutional Propaganda in the Early Ind

How might a text written primarily in English and labeled “sovereign democratic (Indian) constitution” be propagated to people estranged from western practices and definitions of literacy? This paper explores a crucial moment in the transition from colonial subject-hood to national “citizenship” in mid 20th c. South Asia by bringing into focus a relatively underexplored archive of film production, viz. politico-juridical (or “news”) documentaries compiled and staged by the nascent Indian state. The documentary film, I suggest, was the primary vehicle that transported the constitution of India from relatively isolated corridors of Parliament to sites and locations where the future and potentiality of national history encountered the constituent-citizenry named as its sovereign, self-determined subject (i.e. We, The People). The Indian documentary provokes us to think on the debris accumulated by “revolutions” even as it compels us to think on the origins of rights-based civil-society in India under the auspices of a national-state pushing an agenda of modernization, “secularism” and social reform. The primary archival sources for this paper are documentary films produced by the Indian state from 1946-1950, the period over which the constitution of India was drafted and instituted as wishful basis for a more just socioeconomic national polity. The titles of these films range from “The Good Citizen” to “Our Democratic Constitution” to “Bad Habits, Good Manners”, etc. - all clearly indicative of the seriousness with which the Indian state understood popular reception as fertile terrain for the implantation of statist pedagogy celebrating national-modernity as historical rupture. All this is not to suggest that the viewing public were passive recipients of nationalist propaganda. Indeed, the news-documentaries of the early Indian republic were quite literally part of the price people paid for the entertainment that followed: the ministry of “Information and Broadcasting” mandated the screening of these documentaries before the audience could get to what they really desired - the “feature film”. What then, can we glean from this archive of film-making, about the subject-author relationship in postcolonial democracy, an institution in which the elite are always anxious to educate the subaltern into the passive politics of civil-society? How is a slippery political legacy like civil disobedience appropriated by a party dominated state eager to pacify and nationalize the historical diversity of discontent against the state?
Shapiro, Gabriel

Partition in Film and Literature: Memory, Sanity, Trauma

In this paper I will investigate the various ways authors and directors have used figures of cognitive impairment, e.g.- insanity, dementia, amnesia, as both a metaphor for the “collective insanity” of the partition of 1947, and the inability of individuals and groups to understand or articulate the experience of trauma and its aftermath. To do this, I will be looking at several short stories, novels and also their film adaptations dealing with the partition of India, including “Malbe Ka Malik” by Mohan Rakesh, “Toba Tek Singh” and “Thanda Gosht” by Saadat Hasan Manto, Cracking India by Bapsi Sidhwa, and the films Earth, directed by Deepa Mehta (1998), Partition, directed by Ken McMillan (1987), and the short film Thanda Gosht, directed by Rajeev Jhaveri (2008). In several recent scholarly articles on the relationship of cinema and literature to partition the argument has been made that popular cultural forms provide “alternative histories” and “spaces for collective mourning.” This paper does not dispute these claims, but seeks to define how various methods of making the trauma of partition figurable, particularly in the form of characters with questionable faculties of memory and cognition, mirror the collective struggle for meaning and understanding that has continued, both within India and Pakistan, but also within South Asian diasporic communities, many of whom have their initial exposure to partition through popular fiction.
Sharma, Shital

Voicing Authority: Women as Producers and Performers of Class in Contemporary Pustimarg Vaisnavism

The Brajbhasa kirtans of the astachap (eight-seal poets) have been sung in Pustimarg havelis by hereditary male kirtankars for centuries. Their performance, popularly known as haveli sangit, has acquired both canonical and elite status within the tradition. In this paper I introduce a counterpoint to this Pustimarg performance practice by discussing the oral poetic genres of dhol-pads, lavanis, and garbas. I focus on the contemporary uses of these popular oral genres in the context of Pustimarg women’s bhajan mandalis (devotional singing groups) in the city of Ahmedabad, Gujarat. I demonstrate how their performance and sponsorship of bhajan mandalis not only reinforce their identities as Pustimarg Vaisnavs but also serve to reify their class privileges.

An analysis of these popular oral genres allows us to map the ways in which Pustimarg women have historically been able to appropriate traditional forms of textual authority by producing forms of Pustimarg devotional literature. Late nineteenth century published works indicate that female laity and also the wives and daughters of Pustimarg hereditary leaders were actively engaged in composing dhol-pads, lavanis, and garbas in the vernacular languages of Hindi, Gujarati, and Brajbhasa. Their literary compositions have persisted into contemporary times through their performance by women in domestic and public settings such as in havelis and in women’s bhajan mandalis.

The expansion of global capitalist economies and the emergence of the urban middle-class have reconstituted our understandings of the domestic/domicile. For example, women who come from middle-class Pustimarg families can afford to sponsor and host bhajan mandalis in their homes for auspicious occasions. The decline of temple patronage and nationalist reinventions of “classical music” have also enabled hereditary musicians to refashion themselves and their pedagogy to make music more democratic than ever before. Not only do Pustimarg women participate in bhajan mandalis and sing dhol-pads and garbas, there has been a growing trend among Pustimarg women from upper-class elite families to pay for kirtan tutorials and learn to sing in the rag-based style by male kirtankars. Pustimarg women are now able to engage in learning what has traditionally only been the purview of hereditary male musicians. Such shifts in performance contexts and practices inform and are informed by Pustimarg class politics. By performing bhajan mandalis or by paying for kirtan lessons, contemporary Pustimarg women continue to reaffirm and reproduce their sectarian identities through the economies of class.
This Town Isn’t Big Enough for the Two of Us: Struggles for the High Priestship of Bombay, 1830-1900

Migrating to Bombay in the 18th and 19th centuries brought new social and economic opportunities for Parsis, but precipitated changes in old communal institutions which had not been anticipated. In this paper, I focus on debates emerging in the 19th century about the authority of the priests of Bombay. For centuries after their arrival in Gujarat, the priestly authority of the Parsi Zoroastrian community was divided geographically into five panthaks, each of which fell under the dominion of a different group of priests. Over time, the town of Navsari, under the jurisdiction of the Bhagaria panthak, became recognized as the center of priestly legitimacy, and members of all priestly groups had to travel to the city in order to be initiated as priestst. However, the growing community of Bombay fell outside of the panthak divisions. Throughout the 19th century, two families from originally from Navsari, the Sanjanas and the Jamaspasas, struggled for the high priestship of Bombay. Though the Jamaspasa family was traditionally higher ranking, in 1830, Dastur Edalji Dorabji Sanjana was picked to be the high priest of Bombay’s first Shahanshahi Atash Behram (the highest grade of fire temple). Edalji Dorabji began initiating new priests in Bombay itself, much to the consternation of his opponents.

In this talk, I will examine the ways in which members of these families attempted to establish their own legitimacy over the community and to discredit their opponents, utilizing traditional networks of priestly hierarchy as well as exploiting channels made available through the colonial state. The tensions between the two families became so great that in 1869, after a friend of the Jamaspasa family had published a pamphlet accusing the brother of Dastur Peshotanji Behramji Sanjana of keeping a Hindu prostitute, the Sanjanas retaliated in British Court, accusing the Jamaspasas of libel in what became known as the “Parsee Priest Defamation Case.” Though the Sanjanas won the case, tensions continued to rise until finally a new Atash Behram was established in 1897, with the effect that Bombay would have two high priests. By re-examining this forgotten chapter of Parsi history, I will illustrate the ways in which these two families of priests for generations ingeniously exploited shifting networks of legitimacy to bolster their own religious authority, and how this process ultimately led to the establishment of Bombay as the de facto center of the Zoroastrian priesthood.
Sheikh, Samira

Cash, caste, land and rule in Eastern Gujarat, c.1700-1820

Farhat Hasan demonstrates how the Mughal fiscal system in Gujarat began to give way, by the mid 18th century, to ‘a vast market in the rights of revenue collection, or rather, of shares in imperial sovereignty’. (Hasan, 2006, 119). The Marathas, who came to control parts of eastern Gujarat by the 1720s, initially participated in acquiring such shares, and over time, came to claim revenues directly. Meanwhile, the East India Company was acquiring ever-greater control over port revenues. Local officials, argues Hasan, wielded unprecedented decision-making power. But what of small producers and landholders in Eastern Gujarat? How did they fare during this transition from Mughal to Maratha to Company rule? This paper will examine instances of ‘peasant’ and ‘religious’ revolts in eighteenth century Gujarat with a view to exploring how ‘decentralization’ actually worked. What categories did officials use to classify groups: caste, religion, land control, or occupation? How was taxation determined? And what legal systems were used to adjudicate disputes?
Shelat, Manisha

New Media in the Lifeworlds of Young People in India

The research, based on fieldwork in Gujarat, India explored the place of new media in the lifeworlds of young people in India (12 to 18 years). The new media (such as digital, computerized and networked) possess some unique characteristics that differentiate them markedly from conventional media and make them attractive to younger users, popularly known as the ‘digital natives’. They seamlessly combine information with entertainment, and simultaneously offer opportunities to consume and produce. The new media can be personalized easily and let young people experiment with multiple identities. Above all, minimal gate keeping enhances broader participation making new media use empowering for the users. There is meager research, however, studying whether the claims about participation, empowerment and identity are realized in the new media experience of young people from a developing country like India and what kind of lifeworlds play facilitating role in it. India has the biggest youth population in the world with approximately 600 million people under the age of 25. This makes India an important country to study with reference to new media participation and policy. However, India is also a country of contrasts and paradoxes. The multi-lingual, multi-cultural country refuses to characterize an ‘average Indian’. There are sharp divides in economic, educational and infrastructural levels, which contribute to a huge digital divide.

The study in Gujarat, India looks at the following specific research questions:
1. How do young people in India perceive new media as part of their lifeworlds?
2. In what different ways do they engage with new media and with what purposes?

The paper is based on the data collected through 120 one-day media diaries written by young people and a series of focus groups (12 focus groups consisting of 6-8 adolescents) in Gujarat. The participants in different urban and rural locations include adolescents from different classes, castes, gender, education levels and English proficiency levels. The paper discusses scenarios constructed from the data and analysis of patterns of participation. The paper also explores cultural and social dimensions of young people’s engagement with new media in the contexts of commercial forces and political economy of youth culture, media policy, infrastructure issues and changes in everyday environment of young people in India.
Loyalty and Legitimacy in Hyderabad’s Government Services after the Police Action, 1948-52

In the recent literature on the effects of partition and independence in the subcontinent, the northern Indian states of Bengal, Punjab and UP have received a good deal of scholarly attention in the past decade or more, but the transition to independence in India’s south has been neglected. This paper shifts the focus to the South and argues that when the Government of India invaded the princely state of Hyderabad in the ‘Police Action’ of September 1948, this move drew Hyderabad into all-India modes of governance and conceptions of citizenship that were dominated by the experience of partition. As such, political organisations claiming to represent Muslims tended to be viewed with suspicion and the loyalty of individual Muslims was easily cast into doubt. This paper explores the effects of this complicated transition to independence upon the composition of Hyderabad’s services and upon popular perceptions of the state.

Until September 1948, Hyderabad’s police and bureaucracy had employed a preponderance of Muslims in a state where Muslims made up twelve per cent of the population. When Major-General J.N. Chaudhuri arrived in the state to serve as Military Governor in September 1948, he came under pressure to ‘correct the communal imbalance’ in Hyderabad’s services. This demand arose, on the one hand, from amongst the newly imported government officers who had arrived after the invasion and who tended to distrust Muslims working in Hyderabad’s government services, and, on the other hand, from political parties within the state, such as the Hyderabad State Congress, that demanded that a greater proportion of government jobs go to non-Muslims. Responding to these pressures, Chaudhuri and his successor, M.K. Vellodi, undertook a programme to rapidly alter the composition of the government services, removing Muslims from the police, the civil services, and the teaching profession in large numbers, and replacing them with non-Muslim recruits, often from outside the state. Using newly opened government archives and Urdu-language newspapers, this paper explores the repercussions of these moves on public perceptions of the police and bureaucracy, on the expectations that Muslims had of their new rulers, and on relations between Hyderabadi and non-Hyderabadi in the state.
What early colonial surveys in Gujarat do to caste hierarchy in Gujarat

This paper compares the colonial narrative on caste from south India and Bengal in the nineteenth century to the one from Gujarat – especially as it emerges from early district surveys as well as legal surveys of Harry Borradaile. A preliminary analysis suggests the absence of the high Sanskrit discourse as seen in Bengal. It also suggests that the village discourse as seen in Madras was held to be irrelevant in Gujarat. Custom was seen as specific to caste and religious group rather than to villages. The way in which the narrative on caste intersects with the understanding of the trading castes (banias) is a specifically Gujarat phenomenon. In the categories set up in the early nineteenth century in Gujarat the trading castes were grouped with middle level Brahmin castes and the Kshatriya castes were grouped with Shudra castes. This grouping was based on the prevalence of remarriage of widows amongst the groups. The Kshatriyas in Gujarat were seen as permitting remarriage, along with other lower castes. This anomalous grouping of castes is said to be a result of the prevalence in Gujarat of a trading hegemony and the culture of Gujarat being formed by traders rather than other social groups, with money being the important determinant of all social transactions. My analysis will reflect on the wider question as to what extent this characterisation of caste and traders actually reflects social reality or constructs it.
Preserving the cultural heritage of South Asia: The issue of intangible dimensions

A majority of historic environments in South Asia presents a heritage preservation conundrum as they are imbued with complex religious ideologies and symbolism, which are enigmatic and in flux, yet closely intertwined with socio-political reality of the society. A simple physical restoration of a selected set of cultural monuments – what the conventional architectural preservation practices perform - does not necessarily help the sustenance of the heritage of these places and communities for posterity without a proper appreciation of these intangible dimensions of the cultural space and legacy both in the preservation thought and praxis. On the one hand, the contemporary preservation norms delineated by western frameworks do not provide the adequate parameters to deal with such complex scenarios, with the added problem of local preservation authorities faithfully following the international prescriptions without much critical reevaluation. On the other hand these resplendent geographies are contested territories of identity construction at the local level, with racial, religious, social, and political tensions, with an added dimension of threats posed by rapid globalization. As these cultural institutions are creations of certain historic socio-political systems, their preservation can stand in sharp contrast to the contemporary value systems and political ideologies. This paper explores this complex issue of preserving the intangible cultural heritage of South Asia, with a special focus on the historic sites in Nepal and Sri Lanka, which have received the World Heritage status given by UNESCO.
Simmons, Caleb

Ramayan in an American Vernacular

In my paper, I will discuss the appropriation of the Ramayana narrative by Virgin Comics. This paper will investigate the conscious construction of a new narrative for American consumption from the traditional Indian myth. I will argue that the transnational corporation, whose creative direction was in New York, funding from London, and with its artists in Bangalore, actively altered the myth to fit the palate of the desired consumer. In order to maximize profit margins, the creative direction and top business executives sought to translate the text and its imagery into a visual vocabulary that would settle with what A. K. Ramanujan has called the “native intuition” when put on display in a new cultural setting. The result of this process, however, reimagined the tradition to a point that one might (and some have) argue that it is an exploitative misappropriation of the tradition for profit.

However, I will approach the re-creation through A. K. Ramanujan’s “native intuition” and Freudian “primary process,” as read through Lacan, Obeyesekre, and Hiltebeitel. That provides an alternate understanding of the process of cultural translation. The creators of the comic series make consistent allusion to the universality of the myth of Ram and the need to tap into the part of the subconscious that recognizes the prototype. Since this is largely impossible, the creator must adapt the narrative to the cultural language of Americans. I will explore the aspects of the comic book that seek to transform the narrative into the vernacular of the audience, American youth via the comic medium.

Virgin Comics’ creation of the Ramayana 3392 AD series also provides scholars of religion with a unique opportunity to view the socio-historical and economic forces that shape religious and mythological change about which we, more often than not, can only speculate. In my paper, I will not only show the factors that led to the American vernacular rendering, but complicate that picture by highlighting aspects of active reconstruction, adaptation, and appropriation of the tradition for market capital. In doing so, I hope to provide possible theoretical orientations through which these issues can be fully articulated and scrutinized.
Sinha, Babli

Unlikely Anti-Imperial Networks: American Farmers, Mexican-American Women, and the Ghadar Movement

This paper proposes to consider the status of Sikhs on the West Coast of the United States in the 1930s, a time when the Ghadar movement was being organized, when the United States was passing anti-Asian legislation, and when imperial officials like the former chairman of the Calcutta police were deployed to the United States to observe the Ghadar members and to work with American officials to quell any subversive activities. In this social climate, many Sikh men formed alliances with Anglo landowners, lawyers, and bankers as well as with Mexican-American women in order to retain land they had acquired and worked. These relationships demonstrate that the history of Indian nationalism and diaspora is bound not only to Britain, but also to communities of Americans and Mexicans. The alliances of friendship, love, convenience, and commerce within the communities ran counter to the major forces of state, national, and imperial legislation being enacted in the United States and Britain in this period.

An understanding of these relationships can be clarified via theories of transnationalism, which can account for the multiplicity of historical exchanges, such as those between competing empires as well as friendships or affective communities. Transnationalism has been understood as referring to processes of border crossings, economic and cultural exchanges unmediated by the nation or empire, and the rise of corporations and NGOs acting on a global scale. The understanding of this term, often derived from the work of David Harvey, is linked to the era of post-Fordist or late capitalism, when changes in military, economic, and technological structures have challenged the autonomy of nation states. As a concept, transnationalism seems incongruous in the first half the twentieth century, when the nations of South Asia were not yet in existence and the dominant force of resistance to empire was nationalism. However, the story of the California Sikhs can tell us how transnational forces not completely mediated by either nationalist or imperial organizations existed, sometimes working in tandem with these major institutions and at other times undermining them.
Sinha, Amita

Cultural Landscapes of Govardhan in Braj, India: Imagined, Enacted, and Reclaimed

Cultural landscapes, unlike ancient monuments and archaeological sites, are not protected and conserved by any legislative and planning policy framework in South Asia. This excludes many sacred sites that have been continuously rebuilt over time and thus no longer possess historic structures and archaeological remains. Neither do they receive protection accorded to natural heritage sites since they are not pristine wilderness or habitats rich in bio-diversity. A conservation model for cultural landscapes is proposed with Govardhan Hill in Braj, India as a case study. I aim to study the intersections between ritual practice, folk beliefs, and place myths in the making of its cultural landscape and apply the understanding to reclaim, remediate and restore the Hill. The project done in collaboration with my graduate students and result of site workshops in Braj and in University of Illinois campus is a demonstration of how traditional beliefs and practices can be integrated with environmental planning and design efforts such that they are assets in the often difficult process of cultural landscape restoration and management. Govardhan Hill is an imagined landscape drawing upon age old imagery of the Hill as a protector of the people of Braj and subject of innumerable paintings and poems. It is an enacted landscape where veneration of the Hill is enacted in numerous rites and rituals of worship. This landscape is conceptualized, visualized, and inscribed in the body through circumambulating (parikrama) the Hill. It has been reclaimed time and again, most recently in the fifteenth century by medieval saints in the face of widespread destruction of Braj temples by Muslim iconoclasts. We propose reclamation of the Hill as an officially protected cultural landscape zone where sustainable management practices for cultural and natural heritage conservation can be carried out. Our design and management proposals aim at eco-restoration of kunds (water tanks) and vanas (groves) on the parikrama path that have traditionally been the locale for place narratives. Interpretive programs are designed for transcendental and aesthetic experiences, created through walking, sensory immersion in worship rituals, and participation in myth re-enactment of Krishna myths (lila) at specific sites. The existing but inadequate pilgrimage infrastructure is upgraded for cultural tourism and its requirements for rest facilities and interpretive signage thereby creating a legible and accessible landscape.
Tapasi Malik, a nineteen years old woman from Bajemelia village, Singur region of Hooghli district in West Bengal, India was raped and burnt to death on the night of 18th December 2006. Her charred body was found in a pit inside the land fenced off for the Indian corporate giant Tata Motors’ small-car project, near her village-home. Tapasi Malik’s death became a media and a political event because her death exposed the gruesome aspects of the dispute over land-acquisition for the Tata Motors’ project in Singur. The killing of Tapasi Malik exposes varied meanings constructed around gendered political violence. The emotional rhetoric, launched by the Singur protest movement, claimed her as a martyr underlining the equations between land and femininity where metaphors of rape reverberate with forced land-acquisition. The debate – whether she had been raped before being burnt to death – poses the question, once again, how convenient it is for the repressive mechanisms of state and society to mark the gendered body of a political activist with codes of honour and inscriptions of sexual violence? The discourse of neoliberal development and its discontents have signalled major shifts in the power-structures of West Bengal, of which the Singur movement remains a significant event. And yet this is a context where political rhetoric is often articulated in the same language by the state and its opposition. This paper intends to unravel the ways in which conflicting political ideologies recourse back to the stereotypes of gendered violence and common symbolic imageries in moments of crisis. It remains a question, worth asking, how far rural women’s political agency, so spectacularly displayed during the Singur movement, can become successful disruption to such generalisations? How does the palimpsest of marginality – rural/poor/women – politicise not only the neoliberal vision of development but also the resistance movements? How does the charred remains of Tapasi Malik haunt not only the government slogan ‘Agriculture is our base/Industry is our future’ but also the supporters of Change in the government?
Solanki, Gopika

Doing Caste, Making Family: Conjugality and Women's autonomy among Caste Groups in Mumbai

State-centred expositions on constructions of conjugality often highlight the role of state laws and policies in creating the conjugal family. In contrast, my paper pays attention to the role of societal political entrepreneurs such as caste groups in imagining, shaping and policing the conjugal family and gender relations from below. I compare ideologically diverse normative versions of conjugality and gender roles prevalent among two different caste groups in Mumbai and outline factors that explain variance across cases. Focusing on socio-political processes underlying caste-formation, I show how different caste groups in Mumbai constituted themselves through codification and reforms of marriage laws and practices. I explain how the conjugal family was reconfigured at key turning points in the trajectory of group-formation to match different versions of “doing caste”, and to realize these caste groups’ agendas of social differentiation, political competition, economic advancement, and adaptation to “modernity”. I also demonstrate how the question of women’s autonomy became central to social organization of the conjugal family and caste at these crucial junctures. My paper does not propose that the conjugal family is produced in a purified realm out of the reach of the state. I focus instead on the nature of state-society interactions to explain the agency of caste groups in both the creation of new versions of the family and gender in incorporation or subversion of state-conferred norms of conjugality.
Soneji, Davesh

Performing Untenable Pasts: Aesthetics and Selfhood in Kalavantula Communities of Coastal Andhra

In this paper I examine the persistent yet invisible performance practices of former courtesans (kalavantulu) in coastal Andhra who have witnessed drastic social and political transformations of their communities over the past eighty-five years or so. Narrations of selfhood and identity among these women emerge through encounters with their dance and music repertoire which they are careful to preserve “behind closed doors” in the relative privacy of their homes. These iterations of repertoire that take place with some regularity among kalavantula families are also the sites that produce personal and collective imaginations; identity and selfhood live through these mnemonic bodily practices. Outside the kalavantula community, “courtesan dance repertoire” is read as a vestige of feudal history, a sign of the “backward” and aesthetically unsophisticated past that cannot be accommodated by public taste. For some women in courtesan communities today, however, the repertoire is used as a mode of telling; it is mobilized to consolidate an otherwise untenable identity. Deliberations on lineage, the devalued nature of their cultural practices and their experiences of nonconjugal sexuality and institutionalized concubinage unfold through the performance of music and dance. If we are to envision feminist ethnography as a project of documenting shifting subjectivities that are affected and transformed by a range of diverse articulatory practices, then memory-work with kalavantulu presents a productive site for such a project.
Spyra, Ania

Torture and Limits of Cosmopolitanism in Salman Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses & The Moor’s Last Sigh

Throughout "The Moor’s Last Sigh" Salman Rushdie meditates on the possibility of the Enlightenment ideal of disembodied cosmopolitanism, represented in this novel with the image of a mind freed from its specific body and flayed out of its distinctive skin and thus one with the world. The meditation reaches its limits when the Moor, expelled from the paradise of familial belonging and imprisoned in the deprivations of the solitary confinement, feels his skin peel once again. This time he does not welcome the feeling, but sees his personality disintegrate and his body taking precedence with its pain, fear and fragility. His body becomes flesh, “a self without walls” (288). Jean Amery’s description of torture as “transformation of the person into flesh” finds further representation in Saladin Chamcha’s experience of torture in "The Satanic Verses": he metamorphoses into a goat while being beaten in the police van. Later, he finds a number of other immigrants transformed into a variety of animals in a Detention Center.

This paper argues that representations of torture as metamorphosis in Rushdie’s fiction show the limits of disembodied cosmopolitanism, because - as Amery asserts - when “trust in the world” dissipates, the body “can no longer feel at home in the world.”
Sreenivasan, Ramya

Kings, Devotees, Patrons: Constructions of monarchical sovereignty in early modern Rajasthan

In Rajasthan the period between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries was marked by the emergence of sustained claims to monarchical authority by the heads of several Rajput lineages. Kings in new and older lineages asserted such claims through multiple strategies, including service to the Mughal overlord, territorial expansion at the expense of agro-pastoralist and forest-dwelling groups within the region, and an expanding fiscal regime. In the same period, the region also saw intense sectarian activity, the growth of older cults and the emergence of new ones. This paper investigates how Rajput kings and the heads of religious groups both inserted the former into relationships of patronage as well as worship. Kings and ruling clans were claimed as devotees by particular sects, and in turn claimed the authority to rule on the basis of their patronage of the latter, their shrines and their practices. The paper thereby investigates the place of religion in processes of state formation within the chiefdoms of early modern Rajasthan.
Srinivasan, Janaki

The political life of information: Information and development in India

The Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Development domain has so far focused on how the "T" in ICTs shapes developmental change. While this is indeed an important aspect to study, it tends to assume that the "I" is relatively unproblematic. My ongoing research examines one of the premises on which ICTs have become popular in development circles: that access to information is empowering. My research problematises this universalistic notion and questions how information may or may not be empowering within a specific set of social relations. In my research, I study the different conceptions of information deployed by two development initiatives in India and ask what each has made possible, especially in the realm of state-citizen interactions. One initiative is the Right to Information movement launched by the Mazdoor Kissan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) in the late 1980s that eventually led to the central Right to Information law in 2005. The second is the Information Village Research Project (IVRP), an information kiosk project that was initiated by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in 1998. During a year of fieldwork in 2009, I spent time with the MKSS in Rajasthan, India, interviewing members about their involvement with the Right to Information movement and what they believe is the role of information in state-citizen interactions. I also spent a few months with the IVRP project personnel and users in Pondicherry, India examining similar questions. My fieldwork consisted of interviews, participant observation and secondary analysis of documents to understand how information has been conceptualized by each initiative and how it was used by citizens in their interaction with the state.

My research so far suggests that citizens and the state make sense of each other through an iterative process. The process of making sense and negotiations relies on documents, schemes and procedures all of which collectively constitute "information". Right from the creation of these documents to their accessibility, the process is intensely political. The possibilities offered by the availability of information, therefore, are hardly universal. They are decided rather by a citizen’s ability to leverage social and political connections in order to access and benefit from the available information.
Srivastava, Priyanka

Social Service, Civic Ethic and Labor Welfare in Early Twentieth Century Bombay

This paper examines the activities of various labor-oriented voluntary associations in early twentieth century Bombay. The abysmal living environment of industrial laborers came under severe scrutiny after the outbreak of bubonic plague in Bombay in 1896. The sheer scale of the epidemic stimulated the provincial and local governments of Bombay, and also the millowners, to extend basic civic amenities to working class neighborhoods. Simultaneously, the dismal conditions of deprived sections fuelled public debates over issues related to the well-being of the city’s working classes. Consequently, in the early 1900s, a variety of voluntary social service organizations emerged with the intent of ameliorating the abject moral and material lives of industrial workers.

The educated, middle class activists of voluntary groups such as the Bombay Sanitary Association, Social Service League, and the Young Men’s Christian Association of Bombay assumed the role of responsible citizens and devoted their energies to address the problems of industrial urbanization. Focusing on the damaging effects of insanitation and squalor on the broader civic life of Bombay, they consistently criticized the Municipal and provincial authorities for neglecting working class neighborhoods. However, rather than concentrating on policy level actions, their activities primarily focused on self-improvement of the poor. Therefore, these groups undertook a variety of initiatives to reform the perceived physically and morally unhealthy habits of mill workers and their families. They deployed informal pedagogy to diffuse knowledge of sanitation and healthy living habits among the ‘ignorant’ masses. Similarly, the associations attempted to wean away workers from ‘immoral’ habits such as alcoholism and gambling.

My paper delineates how such initiatives accorded prominence to hitherto marginalized labor issues and attempted to create a new, more inclusive civic ethic. I simultaneously explore the class biases inherent in these activities, which limited the inclusive thrust of labor-oriented voluntary activism.
Chamunda’s Corporeality: Death, Aging, and the Medieval Female Body in Northwestern India

This presentation examines the physical body of the emaciated goddess Chamunda at the turn of the first millennium. The focus is on sculptures from Southern Rajasthan and their placement in temple iconographic programs, independent of sets of popular Mother goddesses (saptamatrika) or tantric yoginis. Texts generally list Chamunda in lists of seven Mother goddesses (saptamatrika), and sixty-four or eighty-one yoginis, and art historical evidence corroborates her presence both in sculptural fragments and in-situ throughout North India at key Shaiva and goddess sites, such as the Khandariya Mahadeva Temple at Khajuraho and the yogini temple at Bheraghat. In the Paramara strongholds of Arthuna (near present-day Dungarpur) and Upamala (near present-day Chittor), Chamunda features prominently on Pashupata Shaiva temples as Shiva’s consort, whereas in the Guhila region of Medapata (near present-day Udaipur), key rare examples reveal goddess temples paired with Durga and/or Ksemankari. This presentation focuses on these rare examples where Chamunda is represented independent of Shiva, akin to her role in the Devimahatmya of the Markandeyapurana. We will analyze the art historical evidence to reveal how image corresponds—and at times supercedes—textual liturgy and our current assumptions about tantric practice. The specific iconography that can be seen in images of emaciated Chamunda in the second half of the tenth-century and the first half of the eleventh centuries suggests a connection with mantras, or the spoken word, as they are understood in Tantric contexts. Similarly, the placement of such Chamunda figures within specific architectural programs suggests that they may have functioned as material traces of that imagined speech activated through the juxtaposition of deities encountered during circumambulation.
Subramanian, Shreerekha

The Juridical in Popular Culture: Consuming Malayalam Reality Television

This paper examines critically how popular culture in its mediatized form is a site of staging of the juridical. I suggest that the dynamic of emergent popular culture in Kerala - in local and diasporic dissemination - is not innocuous linguistic nostalgia. Instead, reality television is analyzed herein as a spectacular and globalized exemplar of “discipline and punish” regimes that displace cultural memory, collective identity and secular nationalism to give valence to new forms of public sentiment. Idea Star Singer (ISS), by far Malayalam television’s most popular reality television series, modeled after American Idol, is broadcast worldwide to dozens of nations such as US, UK, China, Russia, Sri Lanka, and several nations in the Middle-East. The show concentrates on staging the diversity and talent of Malayalee youth and their ability to sing in perfect pitch, focusing on imitating the great library of songs generated primarily in Malayalam. The show, aiming at once at a regional and diasporic audience, tries to boast singing stars on its judging panel, and allows for a diversity of singing displayed through its range and variety of songs, some sung in Tamil, Hindi, and sometimes, even English. Also it reifies an authentic ‘kerala-ness’, cultural capital that can be consumed via global simulacra by Malayalees no longer tethered to the narrow coastal strip of the state of Kerala. With over 25% of its population qualified as NRI (non-resident Indian), ISS capitalizes on nostalgia for the nadu/homeland and refracts colonial and/or globalist prescriptions sutured into ideologies of “Keraleeyatham” – a regional identity much influenced by the end of communist dominance in politics, rise of Hindutva, and in the wake of Temple Devaswom Board controversies, nostalgia for religiously-coded normative historiography. Keraleeyatham, a cultural identifier that interpellates localized notions of authenticity with globalized implications, a term borrowed from Ritty Lukose, will be of import to this paper. The primary material treated in this paper consists of the scripted and unscripted narrative and dialogue of the performances staged on the show. I focus on power relations between the audience, the performers and the compere within the context of the hegemony of Indian cinema. I note how the song and the uniquely Indian legacy of “the playback singer” become the ur-text against which the starry-eyed acolyte performer is disciplined and punished.
Subramanian, Mathangi

The Aunty Effect: How The Internet Has Changed Gossip in the South Asian American Community

Across immigrant communities in the United States, women's bodies are policed in the name of protecting the honor and reputation of family and community. Girls' mobility, sexuality, and agency are restricted through formal and informal mechanisms. Gossip has long been used as a vehicle for reinforcing gendered, oppressive norm, and for "protecting" girls' modesty and, by extension, the community. Traditionally, authors tend to claim that gossip is perpetuated by older women in the community, and scholars operate under the paradigm of women being responsible for the oppression of other women. The findings from this study challenge this belief.

This paper will use document analysis, survey, and interview data from South Asian American young women reporting their experiences of gossip in their community, and the ways in which technology has changed the way gossip functions. The presentation will include the strategies girls use to work with their families (instead of against them) in combatting gossip; how Facebook has become a method for girls to surveill their peers; and how girls use commentary on youtube and Facebook to both challenge and reinforce gendered norms traditionally perpetuated through community gossip. The presentation will use a third world feminist framework to challenge the existing paradigm of South Asian American young women as victims of their families and cultures, and will instead reveal the ways in which girls and their families use technology to play with and shape existing norms.
A Politics of Contradiction: the Pakistan National Alliance of 1977

On January 7th 1977 the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto of the Pakistan People’s Party announced the much anticipated general elections to be held, ahead of schedule, in the March of that same year. Three days later, a political alliance of nine opposition parties united to form what would be known as the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), to contest the elections against the incumbent party. What is interesting is the constitution of the alliance, which was comprised of parties from the broadest possible spectrum within the Pakistani political scene. From the parties of the far right with predominantly theocratic inclinations such as Jamiat-e Ulema-e Islam (JUI) to the National Democratic Party (NDP) of socialist proclivities, and then, everything in between; what united the Alliance was, it has been stated, simply a base opposition to the incumbent party.

This paper delves deeper into the specific historical context and prevalent discourses under which grounds were laid in order for such an alliance to materialize. Moreover, through evidence gathered from partisan newspapers and interviews with the protagonists, some of whom remain active in Pakistani politics today; it traces trajectories of apparent resurgence on the right through the Nizam-e Mustafa movement, and stagnation on the left due to issues internal to it, to delineate a discursive space within which both of them are in constant conversation with each other, learning and teaching, as events unfold. The task then is to re-capture that paradoxical space in strictly historical terms, within which ostensibly antagonistic ideologies could persist.
Manly Music: The Hero in Hindi Film Song and Dance

Recent work on masculinity and cinema studies in India has given us such terms as the “psychotic” hero, the “tapori” (vagabond), and the “consumable hero” to describe common character types in 1990s Hindi cinema (Majumdar, Deshpande). But what do these iconic male figures and their cinematic predecessors sound like? While there never emerged a singular masculine corollary to the representation of Lata Mangeshkar as the voice of ideal Indian womanhood, different male playback singers have gained fame for specific kinds of performances and vocal personas (consider, for example, Kishore Kumar’s comedic vocal antics or, more recently, Sukhwinder Singh’s bardic voice). What might we learn from listening to such performances of masculinity? To what extent have the hegemonic and/or counter-normative functions of various male character-types been codified in song and dance sequences—not just in the lyrics of songs, but in the voices, dance performances, musical instrumentation and arrangements, and song picturization? In examining how cultural debates about gender and sexuality are manifest in the musical realm of Hindi cinema, this paper seeks to move studies of cinema beyond the overwhelming focus on plot and visuality, and to complicate our understanding of contemporary Hindi film heroes and their cinematic and cultural relevance. My argument will center on the sound of masculinity in films such as Swades (2004), Rang De Basanti (2006), and Dostana (2008).
Swami, Vandana

Seeds of Plenty, Fields of Sorrow: A Materialist Geography of Cotton and Railways in Colonial India

Cotton is a fiber inseparably linked to India’s development and valorized positioning during several historical periods. The reversal of India’s place as a leading location of cotton cloth manufacture during the British colonial period and its accompanying consignment as a supplier of raw cotton stands as a paradigmatic illustration of how modern colonialism operates as a socio-economic phenomena. Although influential, what remains overlooked in this paradigm is how the process of India’s global decline was actively scripted geographically and materially, and how these factors also shaped colonial spatial expansion.

Accordingly, in this paper, I focus on two relatively under researched aspects of colonialism. One, to reemphasize the signature importance of Indian cotton, especially from the Deccan region, in stabilizing Britain’s imperial-industrial ascendance, most especially during and after the years of the American Civil War (1861-1865) when its supplies from the US South dwindled. Two, to highlight the materialist cartography of railway network expansion that was designed in a way as to enable raw material extraction by linking cotton fields and cotton cultivators with highly exploitative networks of the 19th century world economy. I support this argument by using archival records, maps and documents of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway Company (GIPR) – India’s first railway. My research brings out how remarkably the spatial layout of railway lines and cotton-rich regions mirror and juxtapose each other in western India. I also describe how the seemingly ‘natural ease’ of the complementary relationship between a fecund geography and modern technology like the railway was attained by force of colonial law. For instance, the Cotton Frauds Act of 1863 prohibited cotton ‘adulteration’ - meaning intermixing of commercially and non-commercially valuable cotton seeds and their planting – because this was seen as something that would potentially reduce the volume and profitability of export harvests. Violation of this act was made punishable by law. Late 19th century famines in which a great number of people died of hunger and crop failure were, I argue, an inevitable outcome of a railway-led commercialization and marketization of cash crops at the expense of growing food crops, together with changing patterns of land-use favoring a cash-crop centered economy.

Through this narration, I hope to theoretically bring political economy oriented explanations of colonial capital accumulation in India into greater dialogue with materialist geographical perspectives on its history. Such a theoretical integration can provide new and multidimensional perspectives to study colonial India.
Parai without the Paraiyars: Musical Imaginaries & Contemporary Formations of Sovereignty in Batticaloa

Sri Lanka’s eastern province of Batticaloa suffered horribly during the country’s long civil war (1983-2009). Fighting between Sri Lanka’s government forces and the LTTE, infighting amongst Tamil rebel groups and rival Muslim factions, and violence between Tamils and Muslims caused a grim reality for Batticaloa’s population. For an entire generation, life in Batticaloa has been characterized by checkpoints, disappearances, assassinations, lack of economic opportunities, and a massive human exodus. On top of this humanitarian catastrophe, the tsunami of 2004 devastated the region.

In light of these circumstances, the musicology of Batticaloa may appear a trivial undertaking. Music, as a form of festivity and expression, may appear epiphenomenal to developments in politics, economics, and social relations. Yet recent work in South Asian Studies has begun to challenge our conceptual separation of politics and expressive culture. Sheldon Pollock’s (2006) study of the “Sanskrit Cosmopolis”, for example, shows that developments in vernacular literary cultures contributed to developments in polity in South Asia; similarly, Ritu Birla’s (2009) study of “vernacular capitalism” in colonial India shows that “the staging of the distinction between public and private as a distinction between economy and culture” was “a defining feature of India and its capitalist genealogy”.

In the spirit of these studies, this paper uses music ethnography to query conceptual conundrums about communal history and sovereignty that remain unresolved at this moment in Batticaloa’s history. Using the paradigm of sociocultural rupture, the paper uses musicians’ discourses on the musical past to highlight the bifurcation between languages on the arts in Sri Lanka – which have no problem marking a separation between communities – and the lives of musicians who migrate, borrow, and remember times when musical relations between communities were different. The paper, then, uses music ethnography to articulate the possibility of alternative discourses on cultural communities in Batticaloa. The paraiyars are a metonym for social rupture: a low caste drumming community, Batticaloa’s paraiyars now refuse to play, due to the stigma against them. For temple festivals, they are replaced by drummers from other regions. Yet some activists are reviving the parai, by playing the drum themselves at festivals; and some tsunami orphans have been handed the drum and told to play. Thus we have “parai without the paraiyars”, a metonym for the persistence of Batticaloan musical traditions in radically altered circumstances.
Talbot, Cynthia

Vernacular Nationalism in the Making of the “Last Hindu Emperor”

This paper will use a memorial park constructed in Ajmer in 1996 as an entry point into the question of how more popular or “vernacular” forms of nationalist historiography are constructed and propagated. Public memorials to medieval heroes, an increasingly ubiquitous feature of the Indian urban environment, promote distinct conceptions of the medieval past in the process of honoring historic figures. The heroic histories invoked by these monuments frequently contradict the consensus of professional scholars, and especially those scholars who publish in English. Vernacular-language publications, on the other hand, have hosted alternative historiographies with strong nationalist orientations since the late nineteenth century in the Hindi-speaking region. Because statues and other physical commemorations often exhibit similar historical imaginings, they too can be analyzed as manifestations of vernacular nationalism. Only by recognizing that vernacular historiographies have genealogies going back a century or more can we understand the prevalence and persistence of Hindu nationalism today.

I will begin with scrutiny of a public space commemorating Prithviraj Cauhan, the twelfth-century Indian ruler who was defeated in battle by the Afghan king Muhammad Ghuri. The centerpiece of the Ajmer memorial park is a bronze equestrian statue of Prithviraj. Also on the grounds are several structures that enclose paintings illustrating aspects of his life. Although the site highlights Prithviraj’s patriotic resistance to foreign power, in a very modern construction of his significance, it does so partly through appropriation of much older understandings. The label “last Hindu emperor” applied to Prithviraj on the statue’s plinth, for instance, was first coined by Colonel James Tod in the early nineteenth century. The famous episode from the Prithviraj Raso epic where the blinded Prithviraj aims at Muhammad Ghuri’s voice and kills him is also prominently referenced at the memorial. The deployment of Tod and the Raso – whose accounts have long been rejected as ahistorical in the world of English-language scholarship – can also be witnessed in other modern remembrances of Prithviraj. They include a stone statue erected ca. 1938 on the grounds of Delhi’s Lakshmi-Narayan temple, two posters printed by the Hem Chander Bhargava press of Delhi in the 1920s and 1930s, and several Hindi retellings of his biography from the same period. Hindu nationalist historiographies of the present time have thus been inspired by the vernacular nationalisms of the early twentieth century.
Tareen, SherAli

Competing Imaginaries of the ‘Public’ in the ‘Ulama Discourses of Colonial India

The late nineteenth century was a time of intense polemical activity for South Asian Islam. Under British colonialism, the anxiety of Muslim religious scholars (‘ulama) over preserving the normative model (sunna) of the Prophet assumed an unprecedented urgency. All major Muslim reformist ideologies that emerged in this era, mainly the Deobandis, Barelvis, and Ahl-i Hadith, engaged in bitter debates over issues ranging from the permissibility of commemorating the Prophet’s birthday, to seeking the intercession of deceased saints, to celebrating religious festivals that simulated “Hindu” customs and rituals. These bitter ideological rivalries were driven by a fundamental ethical question that has captured the imagination of Muslim thinkers for several centuries: what are the limits of innovation (bid’a) to the normative model of the Prophet and his Companions? Bid’a is at once one of the most controversial and among the most elusive and supple categories in Muslim thought. The intellectual genealogy of bid’a is traceable to two well-known prophetic sayings which read: “every innovation is a misguidance and every misguidance leads to hell” and “whoever innovates in this matter of ours that which is not a part of it is rejected.” At stake in how one imagines the parameters of bid’a are the very boundaries, and by extension the very content of Islam as a discursive tradition. Indeed, the question of “when innovation turns into heresy” equates to asking what defines Islam and its limits. This paper examines intra-Muslim polemics over this critical ethical question in 19th century North India. In Western scholarship on South Asian Islam, these contestations are too often explained in terms of an irresolvable tension between Islamic law and Sufism. In this paper I argue that such a conceptual framing is inadequate since the major rival 19th century Indian Muslim scholars; Deobandis and Barelvis for example, were at once legal scholars and accomplished Sufis. A more profitable theorization of these polemics would see them as part of a much larger struggle over competing imaginaries of ideal publics in a colonial milieu. I also argue that the very emergence and central visibility of these debates were authorized by specific material conditions, most significantly, the ascendancy of print culture in North India that not only enabled the South Asian ‘ulama to reach ever wider audiences but that also accorded an unprecedented immediacy to the project of differentiating their ideologies and programmatic of reform from those of their rivals.
Teitelbaum, Emmanuel & Rumela Sen

Mass Mobilization and the Success of India's Maoists
The National Charter for Children: Imagining the “Best Interest of Children”

This paper critically analyzes the notions of “the best interest of children” as enunciated and enshrined in the National Charter for Children, adopted by the Indian state in 2003-04. In doing so, it interrogates the construction and idealization of childhood implicit in the Charter, with a view to explicating the rhetorical forms that naturalize and normativize these constructions, and the local and global cultural ideologies that underpin its discourse.

Following in the critical language study tradition of Norman Fairclough (1989), it takes the National Charter for Children as the object of its analysis, exploring both the ‘global’ production contexts and the situated interpretation contexts of the discourse. Thus, the analysis offers an explanation of the Charter in terms of its linkages to a variety of globalizing imaginations (neoliberalism, child rights, vulnerability, development) and situated social contexts/orders (rural/urban, class, caste). It explores the (re)production of subject positions by the discourse of the Charter and the exercise of social control through state institutions implied in it. How are they experienced by vulnerable children and their families, such as the child workers I studied in Tamilnadu? Does their lived experience bear out the emancipatory possibilities claimed in the Charter?
Thangavelu, Kirtana

Oral Genesis of a Visual Narrative

This paper will analyze the visual narrative of the Madel Puranamu on a painted scroll from Telangana in South India. It will attend to the formal language of the painting, as well as to the wide array of pictorial devices that the artist employs in narrating this genealogical scroll. By situating the scroll back into the events that surround the ritual enactment of its narrative, the paper proposes an oral basis for the scroll and shows how the painting is used in fluid and performative ways by its storyteller owners.
Thobani, Sunera

Slumdogs and Superstars: Negotiating the ‘Culture of Terror

The War on Terror has transformed the cultural sphere as the U.S. led-coalition propagated Islamophobic narratives identifying Muslims as a global threat to the security of nations. This paper examines what the superhit film, Slumdog Millionaire, reveals about the politics of cultural production in the context of the War. Beginning with an examination of some key trans/national issues raised by the film's circuits of production and distribution, I analyze Slumdog’s representation of its two main Muslim characters. I argue that these representations intersect with the War's depiction of Islam as the source of violence and misogyny. The paper then moves to a discussion of how two Bollywood superstars associated with the film, A.R. Rahman and Shah Rukh Khan, have publicly negotiated their Indian/Muslim identities in relation to the film. The paper draws attention to the complexities of the ‘global’ in the ‘culture of terror’, highlighting the centrality of the ‘national’ in the articulation of identities.
Tonyot, Stanzin

Governmentality, the State and Buddhist-Muslim Politics in Ladakh, J&K, India

Sixty years after the birth of independent India and the partition of South Asia, election strategies continue to be formulated around vote bloc politics. Politicians like Mayawati seek to build innovative coalitions of low caste Hindus, Brahmins and Muslims; events such as mass violence in Gujarat in 2002 and the attacks in Mumbai in 2008 refuse to let us forget the 20th century bloodshed between religious communities. In the face of these events, we are forced to ask: why are religion, politics, and violence so often tied in the world’s largest democracy? My research addresses this question in one of South Asia’s most contested regions: Jammu and Kashmir State.

The events of September 11, the American led “war on terror” in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the subsequent global backlash against it has intensified debates about the role of religion, religious identity and violence. Despite this flurry of attention and research, the popular explanations typified by “The Clash of Civilizations” and “The Roots of Muslim Rage” have continued to haunt both popular media and scholarship. These oversimplified and determinist interpretations have been critiqued by poststructuralists’ contributions to the topic, which include highlighting the historical and colonial construction of identity and religion, and the instrumental use of religious identities by politicians and political groups in post-colonial countries.

Drawing on Foucault’s notion of governmentality and modern politics, in this paper, I examine the changes from colonial and monarchical to postcolonial governmentalities. Foucault defines governmentality as the political rationalities and methods of conducting the conduct of people – subjects, citizens or population and modern politics as comprised of the interplay of governmentalities. In Ladakh, the colonial era witnessed an overlapping of colonial state (British Raj) and monarchical governmentalities (the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir). The independence of India and Ladakh’s incorporation into the state of Jammu and Kashmir entailed the introduction of new and overlapping of socialist, liberal and democratic governmentalities. These governmentalities formed the conditions of possibility for the emergence of religious identity and Buddhist-Muslim politics in Ladakh. This paper is based on six months of fieldwork in Ladakh using a mixed method approach, which includes archival data, surveys, semi-structured key-informant interviews and oral histories.
Truschke, Audrey

A King like Manu: Political Advice to Akbar in the Razmnamah

In 1582 C.E., the Mughal Emperor Akbar began to patronize the translation of a series of Sanskrit texts into Persian, starting with the Mahabharata, called the Razmnamah (Book of War) in Persian. This seminal translation was a central imperial activity in Akbar’s court that had a series of political implications. While scholars have often drawn the text into legitimation theory few have actually read the translation as a way of analyzing the meaning of the work in the context of the Mughal Empire. I aim to begin to rectify this oversight by looking closely at Santi Parvan, the twelfth book of the translation, a section laden with political advice.

The Mughals paid particular attention to Book Twelve of the Mahabharata, which comprises around one quarter of the entire Persian rendering of the epic. Moreover, the translation is more fluid in this section than in the rest of the work. Drawing upon select passages where the Mughal translators seem to be speaking to specific needs of the Mughal court, I will argue that they reformulated parts of the Razmnamah in order to speak directly to Emperor Akbar. This emphasis on the king does not reduce the translation to being an emanation of Akbar’s personality, but rather it enhances the importance of the text as needing to speak to the central figure of the Mughal court. The type of advice that emerges also offers insight into the types of political values the Mughals sought to cultivate by translating what they saw as a Sanskrit martial epic into Persian.
A Special Kind of Sanskrit

No language is more willing than Classical Telugu to welcome into its works of poetry extended expressions composed entirely in Sanskrit, a fact that has allowed Velcheru Narayana Rao, in settings ranging from voluntary Skype sessions to regular classroom meetings, to introduce such poetry to students whose background is in Sanskrit rather than in modern Telugu.

For such students the initial delight at hearing the Sanskrit language used so beautiful in unfamiliar surroundings is always accompanied by surprise at the many ways in which this special kind of Sanskrit operates differently from the language they know from Sanskrit poetry, making different choices and enjoying different options without ever breaking the essential rules.

As a guest in Classical Telugu literature, poetic Sanskrit has a lively existence, honored to be sure but expected to do chores nonetheless. In this presentation some of the features of this special life of Sanskrit which have made their presence most vividly known in the teaching of Velcheru Narayana Rao will be examined, drawing on examples from the opening portions of the Manucaritramu of Allasani Peddana and the Srngaranaisadhamu of Srinathudu.
Umashankar, Rachana

Religious Syncretism and Communal Harmony: Constructing the “Good Muslim” in post-independence India

The project of national integration embraced by the Indian nation-state after independence in 1947 has resulted in particular constructions of what a “Good Muslim” is. The violent partition of India and the creation of Pakistan placed Muslims starkly as the Other within the Indian national imagining. If Pakistan was a nation created for South Asian Muslims, then Muslims who had remained in India had to be framed in ways that established them firmly as Indian.

Over the 60 years since independence, an image of what a good Indian Muslim looks like has emerged—an image of a fully “integrated” and “assimilated” Muslim who cannot be considered an outsider to the Indian nation. These terms are of course loaded with implications for India as a fundamentally Hindu nation, where the onus of assimilation (regardless of their presence in the subcontinent for nearly a millennium) falls squarely on Muslims. What kind of Muslim religious subjectivity is held-up as the ideal in this socio-political milieu?

I argue in this paper that in such an environment, the character of the “syncretized” and religiously-ambiguous Muslim emerges as the poster-child of communal harmony. Historic figures such as the emperor Akbar, the poet-saint Kabir, the reclusive monk Sai Baba and Sufi saints emerge as focal points in defining the “good Muslim”. Shared Muslim sacred spaces in contemporary India such as Sufi shrines, which are open to people of all faiths, are also celebrated.

This paper will trace the emergence of these constructions and their points of manifestation in the popular imagining. At a theoretical level the paper will examine the creation of this particular mode of religious subjectivity and the definitions of nationhood and citizenship implicit in it. This paper is based on a year of ethnographic research in India. Other than personal conversations and interviews, primary sources for this paper include Indian popular cinema, nationalist poetry and literature, and government-approved history textbooks, all of which are replete with the image of the non-threatening, “syncretized” Indian Muslim.
Strange bedfellows? Islam and the Self-Respect Movement in the Madras Presidency

Beginning in the 1920s, a social reform movement emerged in the Madras Presidency that claimed to fight for the self-respect of non-Brahmins and dalits. This movement, called the Self-Respect Movement (SRM), was started by Periyar, and later it evolved into a political party in the 1940s. Among its major goals, the Self-Respect Movement claimed to fight for the abolition of untouchability, and Periyar advocated conversion to Islam to dalits as an effective way to get rid of their untouchable status. Among Periyar’s contemporaries, Ambedkar had also hinted at conversion to Islam or Buddhism as a way to escape the stigma of untouchability. But Periyar’s advocacy of Islam presents a conundrum since he has often been portrayed as an atheist and a champion of Rationalist ideology. So, this research essay attempts to understand Periyar’s advocacy of Islam by examining Periyar’s idea of religion, and how Islam fit into his conceptualization of religion. The essay will argue that Periyar’s critique and interpretation of religion were more firmly grounded in the social and economic spheres than in a total rejection of God.

In addition to examining Periyar’s advocacy of Islam, the research paper will also examine Muslims’ responses to Periyar and their participation in the Self-Respect Movement. Periyar’s critique of religion, without rejecting God, allowed some Muslims to participate in the Self-respect Movement and propose reforms for their community. Some Muslims, however, rejected Periyar’s interpretation of religion and criticized Muslims for supporting Periyar. The historiography on the Self-Respect Movement has been dominated by Periyar’s anti-Brahmin rhetoric, campaign against the caste system, and advocacy of reforms within Hinduism. Some authors have examined Periyar’s support for Islam. But a detailed examination of Muslims’ response to Periyar has not been attempted so far. It is hoped that this essay will fill the gap by attempting to examine the “dialog” between Muslims and the Self-Respect Movement.

The essay will examine SRM journals 'Kudiarasu' (Republic) and 'Pakutharivu' (Rationality) for Periyar’s views on religion and Islam, as well as for information on Muslims’ response to Periyar. The essay will also examine the writings of a Muslim social reformer, Daud Shah, who published his reaction to Periyar’s ideas on Islam in his own journal, 'Dar ul-Islam' (World of Islam).
Vajpeyi, Ananya

‘The ever-active potency of the law’: National Symbols in Nehru’s New Republic

At the time of its founding between 1946 and 1950, the Indian republic adopted national symbols: the flag, the anthem, the state seal and the motto. These were supposed to signify the birth of a new nation-state. They also figured the rupture between India’s immediately prior identity as a mere colony under British rule, and its new identity as a country with a long and prestigious history of its own, quite apart from the humiliating episode of colonization.

The anthem was a poem originally written by the national poet Rabindranath Tagore (d. 1941) in 1912, but the flag, the state seal and the national credo, though newly designed, were based on ancient sources, 2000-2500 years old. The Indian flag and the state seal – also called the national emblem – drew on symbols of the Mauryan imperium, particularly the reign of the Emperor Asoka (273-232 BCE). Independent India’s credo was taken from the Mundaka Upanisad, a religio-philosophical treatise associated with one of the oldest Sanskrit texts, the Atharva Veda, of indeterminate antiquity.

The adoption of these symbols in the mid-20th century suggests a genealogy for the new nation that connects it to the earliest subcontinental polity, the empire of the Maurya dynasts (321-185 BCE). The invocation of this remote and regal political horizon shrinks and relativizes British power, rendering it a blip in India’s long history of sovereign self-rule.

The semiotics of India’s national symbols, taken together, marks a foundationalist moment, one that is not at all uncommon in the creation of modern democracies. Deep historical roots and prestigious political lineages are invoked at the time of the founding of a number of republics, from France and Italy, to Turkey and Israel. India too, has its foundationalist turn, as can be seen from the dhamma-cakra (wheel of law), the Asokan lion-capitol, and the Vedic vocabulary emblazoned on the nation’s repertoire of identity symbols.

I am interested in how and why Jawaharlal Nehru, free India’s first Prime Minister and a famous modernist, accepted, even embraced, these signs of an authentically Indic political tradition. Was the figure of Nehru himself supposed to strike us as a new Asoka? How did such archaic symbols come to be seen as appropriate for a republic that in fact had a fairly inventive and novel character, based partly on colonial continuity and partly on nationalist innovation?
Gendered Agency/Authority in Text and Ritual: Deconstructing a Popular Women’s Tradition in Nepal

What constitutes a ‘women’s tradition’? In Nepal, there is a popular textual-ritual tradition that locals describe as a women’s tradition. The divine patronness of the tradition is female. The main protagonists in the text are female. Female participants in the annual ritual observance far outnumber male participants. Closer examination of the tradition, however, illuminates the complex dynamics of gender, agency, and authority expressed within this text-ritual complex. For instance, the ritual observance that is performed in honor of the goddess in fact patronizes a prominent male deity, and forefronts the presence and authority of male participants as vessels of the god.

This paper seeks to disentangle the categorization of Nepal’s Svasthani vrat and vrat katha tradition as a women’s tradition. In doing so, it attempts to present a more nuanced understanding of the ways that the textual and ritual spaces and authority the Svasthani tradition employs and produces are gendered in contradictory ways. At the same time, this paper considers how these spaces in turn (re)produce and/or challenge gendered authority and ideologies. An initial survey of the Svasthani tradition suggests a working dichotomy between the text as private/female and the ritual as public/male. Further examination of both the text and ritual reveals tensions and contradictions that complicate this dichotomy. The gendered forms of agency(ies) and authority that emerge, therefore, are the product of the complex relationship between writing, performing and producing the text-ritual tradition.

The first part of this paper focuses on the complex interplay of gender, space, and textual authority within the SVK textual tradition. I argue that there is a constructive tension in the SVK that simultaneously constricts and empowers women – and, in doing so, concurrently reinforces and challenges traditional power positions of men. The second part of this paper examines the ways in which dynamics of gendered agency and authority shift when translated from the textual domain to the ritual domain in the gendered performance of the Svasthani vrat. Specifically, I discuss the ways that the ritual and the space in which it is performed become gendered according to both the gender of the performer and the location of the performance.
Venjara, Amin

Shari’a Protest: Reading Conceptions of Shari’a in an 18th century Punjab Town

While historical chronicles point to the fact that shari’a played a key role in the administration of justice in the Mughal empire, neither scholars of Islamic legal practice nor Mughal historiography have paid much attention to how this system worked at the local level. This is often due to a perceived lack of the necessary archival sources, such as court records and property deeds. Challenging this notion, this paper examines the uses and conceptions of shari’a in early 18th century Batala, a small town northeast of Lahore, by bringing together three sets of period documentary evidence from the town – a petition against the alleged corruption of a sitting judge, judicial appointment documents, and private property contracts and deeds from a Hindu (Bhandari khatri) family. I focus, in particular, on the struggle over the position of qazi as documented in the petition as the Muslim and non-Muslim signatories invoke the shari’a to make their protest. By engaging in a close reading of this petition, I seek to understand what the invocation of shari’a represents for the signatories and what this can tell us about broader understandings of shari’a in the everyday life of the town. In doing so, I demonstrate that shari’a, through the position of the qazi, served as a central framework for protecting the real property interests of both Muslims and non-Muslims. Thus, I argue that judicial corruption entailed a threat to the economic interests of the signatories, motivating them to petition for reinstating proper application of the shari’a.
Vevaina, Leilah

Excarnation and the City: The Tower of Silence Debates in Mumbai

For the Parsis (Indian Zoroastrians) of Mumbai, the 17th century Towers of Silence is ferociously protected as a sacred site for the practice of dokhmenashini. Parsis dispose of their dead through excarnation, leaving the corpse in large towers (dokhmas) to be eaten by carrion birds or left to desiccate in the sun. The practice reflects the Zoroastrian observance of not defiling natural elements with dead bodies. Although the Towers were once in secluded areas of the city, the urbanization process in Mumbai has led to increasing pressures on the property and to the questioning of the practice’s viability on grounds of hygiene, the scarcity of birds, and who exactly should be allowed access. The Towers are managed by the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, a religious trust that is also the main authority for the community, which is considered to be in demographic crisis due to emigration, intermarriage and low birthrate. Should the dokhmas receive Parsi women who have married out of the community? Is cremation a more “modern” way to dispose of the dead? Could a crematorium be placed on the same site? I argue that these debates reflect a growing anxiety about the boundaries of Parsi identity that are brought to the fore due to the twin pressures of urbanization and declining demography. The debates show the competing strategies of Parsi orthodox and reform groups, who each propose different solutions for this sacred space, that reflect their differing aspirations of assimilation into India and the urban fabric of Mumbai.
Viswanath, Rupa

A Movement of the Soul: “Pariahs,” Authentic Conversion and Indian Secularism

In 2002, the Indian state of Tamil Nadu passed a law banning conversions induced by what it called “material allurement,” and explicitly targeting conversion among Dalits, descendants of unfree labourers who now form India’s lowest castes. Implicit in this law are quintessentially modern definitions of true religion as a purely spiritual affair, and authentic conversion as the movement of an immaterial soul. This paper begins by locating the origins of the modern state’s preoccupation with the distinction between spiritual and material motives in the anxieties of Protestant missionaries, for whom this issue had become central in the 1870s in relation to mass conversions among “Pariahs” (as Dalits were then known): the Pariah’s extreme poverty and dire need of Christian charity rendered their conversions inherently suspect in missionaries’ eyes. Next, I follow the concrete effects conversion had on agrarian labour regimes: while missions indeed scrupulously sought to limit the provision of direct material aid to converts, their activities among Pariahs nevertheless threatened relations between these agrestic servants and their caste masters. The problems missionaries thus posed to village elites, and the fear that missionaries enjoyed state succour, began to figure in the Madras press in the 1890s, bringing in their wake novel ways of publicly talking about the religion of Pariahs and their conversion to Christianity. Tamil elites began to frame objections to missionary activity in language appropriated from missionaries themselves, impugning the allegedly material motivation of Pariah conversions while valorising the pure transformation of the spirit as the only form of conversion that ought to be condoned; the trope of the “authentically spiritual conversion” soon acquired the prominent place it enjoys today.

The concept of authentic conversion—and the spiritualized religiosity that it enforces—has since had a remarkable and varied career, finding voice in the polemics of anti-conversion Hindu-right politicos, but as well in the high-minded rhetoric of Gandhian reformers, and indeed, in the legislation of the postcolonial secular state. My paper argues, in short, that that crux of the modern governmental project of secularism, viz., the peculiar idea of a spiritual realm definitionally distinct from worldly affairs, found its place in the legislative and administrative codes of the modern Indian state, as well as in popular discourse, as a result of struggles over the management, definition and continued subordination of the Pariah.
Vivek Taneja, Anand

Sacred Histories, Uncanny Politics: Jinns and Justice in the Ruins of Delhi

This paper is concerned with the practice of petitioning jinns in the ruins of a fourteenth century palace, Firoz Shah Kotla, near the centre of modern Delhi. While the practices here belong to a older ritual vocabulary of sub-continental Sufism, they also invoke modern governmental techniques such as multiple photocopies; and their origin can be dated to a period shortly after the Emergency of 1975-77. In this paper I elaborate on the hypothesis that central to understanding these practices at Firoz Shah Kotla is the question of justice – a conception of justice different from the law followed by the post-colonial state; a conception of justice with historical links to the norms of ethical governance elaborated in “medieval” Islamic India. This is a history which (often literally) lies buried in modern Delhi, and emerges in an uncanny form amidst these ruins. I locate the origin of the practices here within a broader field of Muslim dispossession, and the resistance to it; such as the Masjid Bachao Movement of the early 1980's, which sought to pray in mosques protected by the Archaeological Survey of India. Through interviews, archival work and contemporary Urdu writings on the Islamic monuments of Delhi, this paper will trace the history of these dispossessions, their affective weight, and the picture of an all-but-vanished but still remembered cityscape that they provide.
Waghmore, Suryakant

Consociationalism from Below: Caste repertoires of BSP in Marathwada

Caste and civil society can be viewed as two conflicting structures if analysed through the heuristic dualism of tradition vs. modern. However a study in the dialectic intersections of caste and civil society can offer insights into the dynamic nature of caste and its vitality in constructing localised forms of civil society in India. In my research I comprehend the interface of caste and civil society specifically through study of Dalit socio-political movements. This ethnographic study focused on Manavi Hakk Abhiyan a grassroots social movement and Bahujan Samaj Party in the Marathwada region.

The present paper presents the mobilisation strategies of BSP in Marathwada region of Maharashtra. It particularly maps the use of caste repertoires in the creation of the modular consociation from below that is referred to as ‘Bahujan’. This performance of caste is contrasted with the ideal of ‘annihilation of caste’ that Bahujan discourses advocate. It is argued that the BSP, in its local praxis, participates in construction and reconstruction of caste and not in its annihilation. Such mobilisation around caste however is radically different from other consociational mobilisations (like Congress) in their imagination of nation, nationalism and democracy and also in changing stigmatised untouchable identities of caste into one with emancipatory potential for Bahujans.

I revisit the hierarchy verses difference debate in understanding of caste to empirically interrogate the intersections of caste and civil society. I argue that localised obstacles and possibilities of civility in India have strong socio-cultural dimensions. Caste thus constitutes an important axis of mobilisation for challenging discrete hierarchies of caste from the untouchable point of view.
Wagoner, Phillip B.

Medieval Monuments, Recent Replicas: Warangal’s Kirti-toranas as Contemporary Political Symbols

What relevance does the medieval past hold for the inhabitants of contemporary Andhra Pradesh? In particular, what cultural and political functions are served by medieval architectural monuments in Andhra today? I will address these broad questions through a detailed test case, focusing on the four kirti-toranas standing at the heart of medieval Warangal, once the capital of the Kakatiya kingdom (1163-1323). Standing over 30 feet high and 40 feet wide, these striking monuments once served as symbolic gateways into the now-vanished temple of Svayambhusiva, the state deity of the Kakatiya kingdom. Shortly after 1956, when Warangal and the rest of the Telangana region became part of the Telugu linguistic state of Andhra Pradesh, Warangal’s kirti-toranas began to loom large in the visual imagination of the Telugu people. The forms of these symbolic gateways were frequently reproduced and redeployed during the second half of the twentieth century, and they still remain a key fixture in public imagery today, where they function as the most frequently employed emblems of the Kakatiya past. Because the Kakatiyas were the first dynasty to have politically unified the various regions where Telugu was spoken, the kirti-toranas have served as convenient emblems of Telugu-Hindu identity and Andhra unity.

The analysis presented here is based primarily on the visual evidence, including full-scale architectural replicas of the Warangal toranas—erected in Warangal, Hyderabad, and New Delhi—as well as two-dimensional graphic images of the toranas used in both commercial and political contexts. Although many of these replicas appear strikingly like the originals they reference, even the most literal copies still depart substantially from their models in both form and meaning. My analysis examines both the formal transformations involved, and the capacity of these forms to generate different and even opposing messages. For example, in Hyderabad during the days of Telugu Desam Party rule, the kirti-torana emblem was used by immigrants from coastal Andhra as a means of asserting a new Telugu Hindu identity in the formerly “Muslim” city. But more recently, it has also been used by natives of the Telangana region as a rallying symbol for the creation of a separate Telangana state.
Walder, Heather

Edicts on the Edges: Inscription Technology as an Indicator of Administrative Authority in Karnataka

Writing, particularly the carving of inscriptions on stone or other durable material, was often an indicator of authority and legitimacy in the ancient world. During the Early Historic period in South Asia, imperial edicts appear inscribed on boulders and pillars. They are commonly attributed to the Mauryan ruler Ashoka, who reigned from 272 to 232 BC. This paper explores the carving of a particular group of Ashokan edicts in Karnataka, far from the central Mauryan capital at Pataliputra.

A close examination of these eight “Minor Rock Edicts” reveals that carving style of the inscriptions themselves can serve as an indicator of administrative authority over the texts. This is a critical indicator because extremely limited archaeological evidence and material culture occurs in context with most edicts, and most interpretations of their meanings remain epigraphically based. This is the first examination of these inscriptions that uses technological indicators to quantify the amount of administrative control and effort involved in creating the Ashokan edicts.

Method and style of carving differs both among geographically separate edicts and within the texts of single inscriptions. The way that the letters were carved on the rocks, including depth of carving, thickness of lines, regularity of distribution, and height and width of the letters demonstrates differing techniques of inscription carving. Close examination of the edicts suggests that it will be possible to create a scale of standardization from highly controlled edicts with regular letter forms, to more locally administered edicts carved by less skilled letter carvers, perhaps in emulation of other edicts. A comparison of the Karnataka group of edicts with those in other parts of South Asia demonstrates differing contexts of carving in the southern region. There are many ways that the region of Karnataka could have participated in the political system of the Mauryan polity, and the vernacular or local carving of edicts cannot be used as evidence of outright conquest or colonization by an imperial power. Technological examination of edict carving contributes to ongoing multidisciplinary work in this region. Furthermore, this study offers a broader understanding of relationships between areas located at the farthest extent of heterogeneous polities and the dominant centers of those polities.
Thus Have We Heard: Rhetorics of Seduction and Solidarity in Mahayana Sutra Literature

A common understanding of the scriptures (sutras) of the Buddhist Universal Way (Mahayana) is that they were vehicles for introducing new teachings to the Buddhist fold and that they aimed to legitimize these novel doctrines by attributing them to the Buddha. There is some truth in both assertions, certainly: new concepts and practices are introduced in the Mahayana scriptures, and indeed most are attributed to the Buddha insofar as this is implied by the conventional opening, “Thus have I heard.” However, this perspective overlooks what these scriptures did socially via their embedded narratives and obscures important evidence concerning the self-imagination of these Buddhist communities and their strategies for constructing and maintaining a corporate identity.

I contend that a central focus of certain Mahayana scriptures is the narrative incorporation of the reader: a rhetoric of seduction that invites the reader to imagine him/herself as a hero/ine in a romantic tale of the ultimate triumph of the ancient and honorable (if currently beleaguered) Mahayana. These narratives were calculated to attract followers of the Sravakayana to the emergent bodhisattvayana and to lend a sense of solidarity to members of the fragile Mahayana community by suggesting that they are not ordinary people, but members of a prophesied elite that has been working at this for æons. The social function these works play in providing appealing counter-narratives to those advanced by the mainstream sravaka traditions is of equal or greater centrality to their project than merely claiming authoritative sanction for new religious doctrines.

These narratives are found in early-middle period scriptures such as the Pratyutpannabuddhasamkhalavasthitamadhi, Suvarna[pra]bhasa, and some Prajnaparamita sutras (such as the Vajracchedika). It later appears highly developed in the Saddharmapundarika. In developing this rhetorical strategy, Mahayana authors developed new applications of narrative devices that were well established in previous Buddhist literature: the samodhana of the Jatakas (which connects past to present) and the vyakarana, or prophecy of buddhahood (which connects present to future). Similar strategies are still employed in contemporary Tibetan Mahayana and elsewhere.
Weidman, Amanda

Female Voices in the Public Sphere: Playback Singing and Ideologies of Gender in Tamil Cinema

Playback singing, a process in which the voices of professional singers are first recorded in the studio, and then “played back” on the set to be lip synched by actors, is foundational to the production of Indian popular cinema. Playback singing is a realm of vocality intricately encoded with meaning, as voices are explicitly and powerfully gendered, and then linked to class, caste, community, and regional identity through film song sequences and extratextual information about the singers themselves.

Based on research among female singers in Kollywood, Chennai’s Tamil film industry, this presentation will explore the shifts, between the 1950s and the present, in vocal sound and performing style cultivated by female playback singers. It will focus on the last fifteen years, a period which has ushered in new technological capacities for sound manipulation and a flood of female singers into a field previously dominated by only two or three. These years are more generally marked by India’s economic liberalization and the increasingly transnational orientation of Indian popular cinema, trends that are reflected in the entry of new female voices and new performed and performing subjects into the public sphere.
Wentworth, Blake

The Silences of Power

As Tamil literature renders it, procession was a dramatic spectacle of power. The hero, be he king or god, traverses the land he controls, and people and nature alike respond to him with adoring devotion. Yet the hero says nothing; very rarely is he depicted revealing any emotion at all. It is as if—and the gesture to temple processions is telling—he is a man of stone. His progress mirrors his indifference: he moves ever onward, never pausing to acknowledge anyone he has affected, rolling forward in ceaseless movement until the procession returns him to his sequestered abode. But there is much in these texts swept behind the curtain. Who pulls the chariots in these grand events? Why must the procession never stop? Why, when the hero enters the world, are women the only ones who behold him? Though silent, the hero in procession still holds the scepter, all the more potent when he never has to say a word. Through a discussion that ranges over Kamparamayanam, the ulas of Ottakkuttar and Antakakkavi Virarakava Mutaliyar, and Sundara Ramasamy's novel Oru Puliyattinn Katai, I will explore the silences in processional displays, seeking to pull the moments of friction and contest from the shadows.
Whitmore, Luke

A rakshasa’s daughter and the history of visual culture production in the Kedarnath valley

There is a photography studio in the north Indian town of Ukhimath, located in the state of Uttarakhand, called Citralekha (“writer of pictures”). Citralekha is a character in the local story of Usha and Aniruddh. Usha is the daughter of a Banasur, a demon devotee of Shiva. She dreams of a man she does not know and falls in love with him. She relates her dream to Citralekha, who possesses the talent of turning verbal descriptions into pictures. The figure is eventually identified as Aniruddh, the grandson of Krishna. Usha kidnaps Aniruddh, provoking the anger of Krishna. Krishna and Banasur fight, and eventually Shiva must make peace between them. Usha and Aniruddh marry, and in the oldest part of the Omkareshvar temple in Ukhimath one sees a block of stone referred to as their place of marriage (vivah-sthal). Across the valley in Lamgaundi, the region that belongs to Banasur, there is a shrine where Aniruddh is worshipped. The photographer of the Citralekha studio, whose work is at the forefront of local visual culture production in the Kedarnath valley, is from the village closest to Omkareshvar temple, a village that encourages its children to become artists and artisans. The town of Lamgaundi produces residents whose demeanor and personality are often explicitly linked to the figure of their putative ancestor and village deity Banasur, even as they serve as pilgrimage priests at the famous site of Kedarnath. I will argue that this story of Usha and Aniruddh may be read as the key to the complicated demographic and religious histories of the Kedarnath valley, the production of local visual culture, as well as a way in to understanding the relationships among narrative, place, and collective social memory in an Himalayan area of India that is at the same time both remote and demographically cosmopolitan.
Whitton, John

The Adaptation of Minority Islam in South India

The growing coastal town of Visakhapatnam is an example of syncretism and cooperation linking Hindus and a small sect of Muslims known as "Bohras." The paper presents a study of the Bohra community, and focuses on the creation of hybridized cultural formation and business relations. The model proposed can be adapted to the study of other minority Muslim groups in South Asia.
Willis, John

Between Empire and Anti-Empire: Indian Muslims and the Hajj in the Inter-War Period

This paper interrogates the relationship between Islamic internationalism, empire, and the annual Hajj pilgrimage in the period after the Saudi occupation of Mecca in 1924. Contrary to Sugata Bose’s formulation of a “modernizing colonial state and an ultra-orthodox Islamic one” causing “rifts in the expressions of religious universalism” in the inter-war period, this paper proposes a more complicated reading of the Indian Muslim engagement with the Saudi regime and the British Empire in Mecca.

The crisis of European state system and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire following the First World created a space of possibility in which Muslims could actively imagine new forms of political community beyond empire and the nation form. In the absence of an Ottoman caliphate, Muslims in both the Middle East and South Asia organized to defend or redefine the Islamic umma. Scholars and activists of the salafi reformist movement in the Middle East and those of the Khilafat movement in India found common ground in their programs to translate the universal message of Islam into an effective counter-empire in the face of a resurgent British empire. In particular, both movements shared a geographical imagination that placed the holy city of Mecca at the center of a unified Muslim community, independent of European rule and a sanctuary for the world’s believers.

The 1924 Saudi conquest of Mecca and the vigorous campaign against popular devotional practices brought to light the often conflicting visions of Islamic unity held by Arab and Indian activists: was it to be achieved through the salafi program of standardizing belief and practice according to the normative model of the Prophet or through an emphasis on religious universalism driven by personal ethics. The increasing harassment of Indian pilgrims by the Saudi authorities, suggested that at least at the level of the everyday, it was salafi reformism that mattered. It is ironic, then, that conditions for Indian pilgrims only improved once Britain asserted its duty to protect its imperial subjects in Mecca and the global depression forced the Saudi state to accommodate difference among a decreasing number of Muslim pilgrims, the state’s primary source of foreign revenue.
Wilson, Ian

Writing a Village History of Bharatpur’s Regal Sinsinwar Clan

During the late 20th century, a respected elder and celebrated performer in the village of the Sinsini wrote a history of his community. Hailing from Sinsini and belonging to the Sinsinwar gotra of the Jat community, G. Singh had much in common with the former kings of Bharatpur, one of two Jat-ruled states along the eastern fringe of what became Rajasthan. During research in 2008, after G. Singh’s passing, he was still widely remembered in the village and its vicinity for both his knowledge of local history and his recording of this history. Unpublished yet remembered, the manuscript of Sinsinā aur Sinsinwār Itihās, or Sinsina and Sinsinwar History, offers a glimpse of the wide-ranging collection of varied local material from written history and oral narrative and the subsequent presentation in a complex written account. The author addresses the pasts of Bharatpur state, the Jat caste community, the Sinsinwar gotra community, the Sinsinwar protective deity Sinsina-Baba, and the village of Sinsini, and he places these various foci in relation to vast horizons including Aryan ancestry and migration, Sinsinwar descent from Krishna, Mughal rule, British colonialism, and the postcolonial nation. Yet this account is striking as it frames the history in relation to the protective deity and the gotra community rather than in relation to the regal history of Bharatpur state. This text offers an example of the complexity arising from the continuity of oral tradition, the rise of both literacy and print media, and the growth of desire to engage one’s community as a public. In this paper, I will focus upon the author’s interaction within this text with horizons both temporally proximate and geographically local as well as ancient pasts and vast areas. I hope to show how the village and clan exist as phenomena both heavily local and yet engaged with much grander scales, both through the circulation of texts, materials, and ideas and through the imagination of vast geographies, long histories and great communities.
Winslow, Deborah

Farmer Values in a Potter World

This paper describes and analyzes the value shifts that have accompanied the unfolding of progressive change in a community of Sinhalese potters. Elsewhere (Winslow 2003), I have argued that the community’s economic trajectory is neither the outcome of top-down government imposition nor bottom-up potter resistance, but instead results from a dynamic and progressive interaction between the two. The potters have combined opportunities made available to them by others with opportunities that they have created for themselves to slowly craft an improved livelihood. Their new economic order is grounded in expanded pottery production and sales rather than the farming life to which they once aspired. Despite this critical change, I also have argued that the values of that old economy have proven suprisingly persistent in the new, underwriting a continued emphasis on communitarian ethics and practices (Winslow 2009).

In this paper, I will look more closely at the apparent resilience of the tank/temple/farm value system in these unlikely conditions of greater commercial enterprise and market engagement. I anticipate suggesting that the old values have persisted at least in part because they have been displaced from the economy to new community institutions. However, classical political economic theory would suggest that cultural and religious values no longer seamlessly integrated with the economy may not endure. This raises the question of whether what appears to be cultural persistence may actual be masking cultural tensions and transformation. This question will be at the heart of this presentation. My data come from fieldwork and archival research conducted intermittently over 35 years, most recently in 2008.
Wu, Pei

Tribals, Indo-Americans, and the Hindu Nation: Ekal Vidyalaya and Diasporic Hindu Nationalism

This paper examines the charitable tribal (indigenous) development work of two U.S.-based groups-- the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA and Ekal Vidyalaya Global Inc.-- as well as their affiliates, to explore the role that the figure of the Adivasi/indigenous person plays in forms of diasporic Hindu nationalism among Indo-American communities. Affiliated with the network of militant Hindu organizations known as the Sangh Parivar, the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundations' chapters have allocated, since 2002, more than $10 million to India-based groups, some of which have been linked to anti-minority and sexualized violence in the name of protecting or glorifying the Hindu rashtra (nation). Drawing on public documents, scholarly texts, websites, tax returns, news articles, human rights fact-findings and peoples' tribunals, U.S. State Department reports, statements from Ekal Vidyalaya leaders and scholars and activists critical of Hindu nationalist politics, this paper will discuss the dynamics of race, gender, religion and caste that organize the Ekal Vidyalaya organizations' cross-nation flows of finances, labor, and discourses that link Adivasi/indigenous persons, Indo-Americans, and the Hindu nation, in the context of Indo-American communities.
Zaidi, Yasmin

Where Karen meets Kiran: Negotiating Gender and Class through the Global Workplace

New employment opportunities, increasing consumption expenditures, and media images of a more confident, assertive woman challenges the existing perceptions of women’s work and place in Pakistani society. Women employees of international call centers in Pakistan, a vivid example of a global workplace, offer valuable insights of the mechanisms through which their “western” workplace imperatives—specifically American pseudonyms, work hours and work processes—interacts with local cultures to simultaneously challenge yet reinforce existing gender norms and identities.

Rooted in a social context that constrains their autonomy and mobility, and stigmatizes their work status, these worker-daughters negotiate the contested terrain between culture, family and a global workplace that appears to welcome them as autonomous workers, generating confidence, skill sets, and social networks.

In-depth interviews with sixty women and men, and participant observation at two sites reveals a nuanced and complex negotiation process, as the women do gender and perform class in ways that make their new identity (autonomous call-center /global workers) co-exist with the old (dutiful, virtuous daughter/woman). The paper also draws attention to the potential of transnational organizations to facilitate transformation of unequal gender relations.
Regional Politics and the Challenge of Party Organization in India

Why are regional political parties so successful in India? This paper argues that the answer lies not so much in understanding the appeal of regional parties per se as it does in the failure of would-be national parties to attract a national audience. The question is then: Why have parties with national aspirations so seldom realized their ambitions, thereby creating space for regional parties to succeed? This paper proposes an organizational rationale. The only realistic strategy for establishing national parties is to rely on a robust party organization, a strategy that parties have been reluctant to embrace. As a result, national parties have mostly failed to take root, and regional parties have thrived.

Often, parties with weak party organizations achieve national followings because of their ability to appeal to new or newly-salient policy issues of national relevance. But, India’s largely non-programmatic electoral politics precludes this option. For the most part, political parties fail to provide voters with clear, consistent policy-based messages, and for their part, voters seem to place little emphasis on programmatic issues when formulating their vote choice. In this context, would-be parties face the challenge of uniting a coalition of leaders and factions across the country under a common party label.

The solution to this problem is party organization. A strong party organization provides the logistical resources needed to recruit and coordinate politicians across the country as well as campaign resources that serve as inducements for politicians to join and remain in the party. The problem for parties, however, is that strong party organization is a costly investment, particularly for the top leadership. Furthermore, India has few mass-based organizations that might serve as the basis for national parties, and the constant cycle of elections affords parties little opportunity to engage in party-building before facing fresh elections. In these unfavourable circumstances, few parties elect to meet the organizational challenge that might allow them to establish themselves as national parties.

As evidence, this paper draws not only on historical accounts of the post-independence period but also on over 150 interviews with state-level politicians in Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal.