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## The Newsletter of the American Institute of Indian Studies

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*A Deer Dancer cutting up a demonic effigy, photo credit: Rohit Singh*

### **A Comparative Study of Public Ceremonies in Ladakh** by Rohit Singh

My doctoral dissertation project examines religion in Ladakh through the lens of annual public ceremonies. Ladakh, the largest territory of Jammu and Kashmir, is populated by a quarter million inhabitants evenly divided between Muslims (predominantly Shia) and Tibetan Buddhists. Using historical, ethnographic, and comparative methods, I explore how Ladakhi Muslims and Buddhists use public ceremonies to create, sustain, and redefine Ladakhi self-identity in response to modernity.

continued on page six

## AIIS Sponsors Panels to Showcase Research by Recent Junior Fellows at AAS Meetings

AIIS organized a double panel called “AIIS Showcases New Research on Adivasi and Labor Politics in India: Cultural History Meets Political Economy” on Saturday March 29, 2014 at the Association for Asian Studies meetings in Philadelphia. The panel, which was organized by Professor Priti Ramamurthy (University of Washington), brought together several recent AIIS junior fellows, presenting the results of their dissertation research in India, and was chaired by Professor Christian Novetzke (University of Washington).

This double panel sought to transcend the nature-culture binary by putting "cultural studies" into conversation with "political economy." It did so by taking exemplars of each approach in South Asian studies and cross-fertilizing them. In this panel, the politics and history of “tribal” peoples, frequently taken to be the exclusive domain of cultural studies, met labor politics and history, typically seen as the sole preserve of political economists. For the panelists working on adivasis and labor alike, the effort here was to begin a conversation that cuts across the dichotomies between the material and the discursive, and ultimately, between nature and culture.

The agenda was as follows:

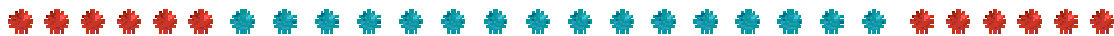
Session Organizers: Uday Chandra (Max Planck Institute) and Pankhuree Dube (Emory University)

### Part I:

Kol, Coolie, Colonial Subject: A Hidden History of Caste and the Making of Modern Bengal (Uday Chandra)  
From Vagrant to Industrious Settled Laborer: Adivasi Labor in the Central Provinces, 1871-1911 (Pankhuree Dube)  
Demand the Possible? Trade Unionism and Left Politics in Colonial Bombay (Ninad Pandit)  
Discussant: Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay (Centre for Studies in the Social Sciences)

### Part II:

Reordering Histories: Tana Readings of Their Past (Sangeeta Dasgupta)  
The Traces of Masculinity? Reading Material Practices of Gender-Making in Kolkata (Saikat Maitra)  
Ethnic Other: Crisis of Citizenship and Belonging in Northeast India (Urmitapa Dutta)  
Discussant: Saurabh Dube (El Colegio de México)



## AIIS 2014 Book Prizes Awarded to Lisa Bjorkman and Jessica Falcone

The Joseph W. Elder Prize in the Indian Social Sciences has been awarded to Lisa Bjorkman for her manuscript, *Pipe Politics: Mumbai's Contested Waters*.

The Edward C. Dimock Prize in the Indian Humanities has been awarded to Jessica Marie Falcone for her manuscript, *Battling the Buddha of Love: A Cultural Biography of the Greatest Statue Never Built*.



**Lisa Bjorkman's** *Pipe Politics: Mumbai's Contested Waters* is a political ethnography about the encounter in Mumbai between liberalizing market reforms and the materially-dense politics of urban infrastructure. Taking water both as a material instantiation of power and authority, as well as a resource whose distribution is worthy of attention in its own right, the book explores the political, social, and infrastructural practices that produce and inhibit flows of water through the growing and globalizing city. In contemporary Mumbai, water is made to flow by means of intimate forms of knowledge and ongoing interventions into the city's complex and dynamic hydraulic landscape. The everyday work of getting water animates and inhabits a penumbra of infrastructural activity – of business, brokerage, secondary markets, and socio-political networks – whose workings are reconfiguring and rescaling political authority in the city.

Mumbai's increasingly-illegible and volatile hydrologies, the book argues, are lending infrastructures increasing political salience just as actual control over pipes and flows becomes contingent upon dispersed and intimate assemblages of knowledge, power, and material authority. 'Pipe politics' refers to the new arenas of contestation that Mumbai's water infrastructures animate – contestations that reveal the illusory and precarious nature of an elite-driven project to remake Mumbai in the image Shanghai or Singapore, and gesture instead towards the highly-contested futures and possibilities of the actually-existing city.

*Pipe Politics* provides deep insight into the Mumbai elite's dream to create a "world class city" by deliberately ignoring the structural flaws in this dream. Water is one commodity that richly illustrates this most visibly in the public sphere. This book is at the forefront in drawing scholarly attention to the increasing disconnect between urban necessity like water and the expansion of buildings in urban India.

Lisa Björkman is a political ethnographer currently based at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, Germany. Her research sits at the intersection of three broad themes: India's urban transformations and the material politics of city-making; the production of socio-cultural, spatial, and political-economic inclusions and exclusions; and new arenas of political mobilization, contestation and brokerage. Her current project builds on her earlier research on Mumbai's water infrastructures to explore the multiple and contesting iterations and imaginations of urban 'development' operative in contemporary urban India. Lisa received a Ph.D. in Politics from the New School for Social Research in 2011. Lisa Bjorkman was an AIIS junior fellow in India in 2008-2009.



*Battling the Buddha of Love: A Cultural Biography of the Greatest Statue Never Built* by **Jessica Marie Falcone** examines the controversial plans and practices of the Maitreya Project, which has long endeavored to offer a multi-million dollar "gift" of the world's biggest statue to India. Due to the Maitreya Project's effort to forcibly acquire 750-acres of occupied land for their statue park in the Kushinagar area of Uttar Pradesh, the Buddhist statue planners have run into obstacle after obstacle, including a full-scale grassroots resistance movement working to "Save the Land." In telling the "life story" of the proposed statue, Professor Falcone sheds light on the aspirations, values and practices of both the Buddhists working to construct the statue, as well as the Indian farmer-

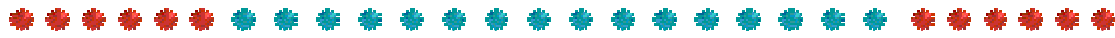
activists who tirelessly protested against the Maitreya Project.

Since the majority of the supporters of the Maitreya Project are non-heritage converts to Tibetan Buddhism, the book narrates the spectacular collision of cultural values between small agriculturalists in rural India and transnational Buddhists hailing from Portland to Pretoria. Thus, an ethnography of a future statue of the Maitreya Buddha (himself the "future Buddha") quite unexpectedly becomes a story about divergent, competing visions of Kushinagar's potential futures. *Battling the Buddha of Love* traces power, faith and hope through the axes of globalization, transnational religion, and rural grassroots activism in South Asia.

The topic explored in *Battling the Buddha of Love* is timely insofar as it engages with a distinctive phenomenon that has emerged of late with immense political and emotional charge as gigantic devotional figures begin to dot India's urban highways and mountaintops. The polished narrative will move and disarm readers with the author's own shifting perceptions and the unfolding of her personal investment and involvement in the project.

Jessica Marie Falcone is currently an assistant professor of Anthropology at Kansas State University, where she teaches anthropology courses about South Asia, religion, futurity, the arts and expressive cultures. Having obtained an undergraduate degree from New College of Florida and an MA in development anthropology from George Washington University, she received her doctorate in Anthropology from Cornell University in 2010. She has published ethnographic research about various dimensions of South Asian cultural experience: grassroots activism in

India; notions of cultural citizenship in the Tibetan Diaspora in India; collegiate Gujarati-American dance competitions; Hindutva summer camps in the United States; and Sikh-American activism in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. She is currently conducting research about Buddhist religious practice in virtual worlds, such as Second Life. Professor Falcone was an AIIS junior fellow in India in 2005-2006.



### AIIS Welcomes Three New Member Institutions

The AIIS Board of Trustees admitted three new member institutions since the last edition of DAK appeared in the summer of 2013: Bucknell University, the University of Houston and the University of Kansas. There are now 79 member institutions in the consortium.

**Bucknell University** seeks to foster in its students an understanding of different cultures and diverse perspectives, including through courses and programs centering on India. Bucknell offers undergraduate courses dealing with India specifically and in a comparative framework taught by faculty in the Departments of Religion, International Relations, Women's and Gender Studies, Anthropology, Political Science, Philosophy and Comparative Humanities. Bucknell has been especially active in sending students to India through short and long-term study abroad programs. Bucknell anticipates that membership in AIIS will facilitate its efforts to enhance faculty development, increase academic offerings on India, promote faculty research, and advance student and faculty research and study in India. Faculty include: former AIIS fellow Karline McLain who specializes in South Asian religions. Her first book, *India's Immortal Comic Books: Gods, Kings, & Other Heroes* (Indiana University Press 2009), for which she won the AIIS Book Prize in 2007, examined India's most beloved comic book series, Amar Chitra Katha; former AIIS Bengali language student Jason Cons, who teaches in the International Relations Department. He specializes in the study of borders and state formation in South Asia (Bangladesh and India), international development, humanitarianism, ethnography, agrarian change, and contemporary and classical social theory. His research centers on impoverished and landless rural populations in a near-constant state of flux between the borders of Bangladesh and India; and Susan Reed, who has appointments in both the Women's and Gender Studies and the Anthropology Departments. She specializes in the study of dance and performance, gender, ethnicity and nationalism, and religion and ritual in South Asia.

The India Studies Program at the **University of Houston** was established in September 2011 and is situated in the Comparative Cultural Studies Department in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. It offers an interdisciplinary minor that

promotes teaching and scholarship in the history, politics, economics, languages, religions, and cultures of India. Through its cross-disciplinary approach, students can craft a program of coursework that aligns with their personal and professional interests. Courses for Spring 2014 include: Cultures of India, Global Hinduism, Introduction to Asian American Studies, Asian American Cultures, Transnational Migration and Global Trends, Literatures of the Non-Western World, Modern India since 1900: Society, Culture, Religion, Politics, Introduction to the Government and Politics of India, Introduction to Buddhism, Introduction to Asian Religions, Sociology of India, and Indian Cinema: Bollywood and Beyond. In October 2014, former AIIS junior fellow Jon Keune, who holds a two-year appointment at the University of Houston, is organizing a one-day on-campus symposium on the *Ramayana*. This symposium will invite academics in India Studies to examine the text through the lens of Houston's diasporic Indo-American community; participants can observe Houston's 8,000+ person festival and performance during their stay. The India Studies Program is also partnering with the Menil Collection's upcoming fall 2014 exhibition "Experiments with Truth: Gandhi and Images of Nonviolence." Other collaborations are in planning stages with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and Blaffer Art Museum. In addition to academic and curricular activities, The university will offer a study abroad program during the December 2014 - January 2015 Winter term, through which University of Houston students will visit Mumbai, New Delhi, Varanasi, Khajuraho, Jodhpur, and other important cultural and historic sites.

**The University of Kansas** has an active and growing South Asian Studies Program. The University's faculty do research and offer undergraduate and graduate courses that concentrate on the study of India, or have substantial components about India, in the fields of Anthropology, Art History, Dance, Religion, and in the School of Architecture, Design



& Planning, the School of Business, the School of Engineering, and the School of Social Welfare. Course offerings include three levels of courses in Hindi from Beginning through Advanced, Popular Cultures of India, Art & Politics in South Asia, Topics in Religious Studies: Hindu Epics, Past and Present. In addition, the University also has a K-12 outreach program. It also operates several study abroad programs in India such as: Study Abroad to South India, Summer Hindi Language and Culture of India, Winter Study Abroad to India in Social

Welfare, Winter Study Abroad to South India in Business Marketing, and a new program, a Winter Study Abroad in Cultural Heritage of India is also being planned. The University's Center for Global and International Studies also hosts programs such as a Global Food for Thought Lecture Series where former AIIS junior fellow and current University of Kansas assistant professor Hamsa Stainton presented a paper on "The Mahābhārata Today: Insights from the Great War of Ancient India."



*Current and former AIIS presidents line up at event to honor Rick Asher in Chicago in February 2014 (from left Joe Elder, Ralph Nicholas, Rick Asher and Philip Lutgendorf) Photo credit: Rebecca Brown*



### **AIIS Issues a Revised Manual on Ways to Combat and Address Sexual Harassment and Assault**

In the spring of 2013, AIIS established a task force to update its Manual on Sexual Harassment and Assault as well as the AIIS Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy. The task force consisted of Amrita Basu (Amherst College), Chair, Rebecca Manring (Indiana University), Purnima Mehta (AIIS-India), Elise Auerbach (AIIS-USA), Lalita Du Perron (University of Wisconsin) and Neelima Shukla-Bhatt (Wellesley College). The task force solicited comments from former AIIS fellows and language students, examined the policies of organizations like the Peace Corps, and also examined new laws being put into place and considered in India to address a number of serious recent incidents of sexual assault. Additionally, it collected information about Indian NGOs that can provide assistance to those who have experienced harassment or assault. During the spring and summer, the task force finalized the revised Manual and Policy. The first section of the manual discusses precautionary measures that students and fellows can take to familiarize themselves with social conventions and to appreciate the challenges that confront any scholar who is working in a foreign country, while the second section provides information about the policies AIIS has developed to provide redress for those who experience sexual harassment and assault. The manual was sent to all AIIS trustees and South Asia Centers, was posted on the H-Asia web site, and is available on the AIIS web site [www.indiastudies.org](http://www.indiastudies.org). It will be provided to all AIIS fellows and language students and to all the U.S. study abroad programs which it assists. The AIIS Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy is an endeavor to implement the provisions of India's Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013.

(continued from page one)

The main focal points of my study are festivals associated with Muharram and Losar/Dosmoche, which mark the beginning of the liturgical calendars for Ladakh's Muslim and Buddhist communities respectively. Four central premises inform my approach to these ceremonies: 1) religious festivals transform public arenas into sacred spaces in which performers and observers renew their collective identities; 2) modernity has altered the dynamics of Ladakh's public religious performances; 3) annual ceremonies create contact zones where the region's mixed religious populations can publicly foster religious pluralism; and 4) worldviews constructed during Muharram commemorations and the Buddhist New Year's celebrations place local Ladakhi practices and perspectives in dialogue with broader pan-Islamic or pan-Buddhist discourses. Through exploring the above themes, this project aims to inform scholarship on public religion in South Asia by providing a specific case study of religious performances in Ladakh that illuminates broader issues of religion and state, religious pluralism, religion and modernity, and the global dimensions of religious experiences.

In the later stage of my project, I set out to accomplish three primary goals: 1) collect and gather oral histories related to religious festivals in Ladakh; 2) document and analyze monastic rituals in Ladakh with a special emphasis on cham dances; and 3) collect audiovisual data from these ceremonies to be archived at my affiliate institution, the AIIS Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology.

I collected several dozen oral history interviews relating to religious ceremonies such as the traditional Buddhist New Year (Losar), Muharram, and various cham dances. From these oral history interviews, I have gained insights into the history of public ceremonies in Ladakh, changes which have taken place within their performances, and key theological debates surrounding them. For example, many Losar ceremonies are connected with monarchy in Ladakh. Now that the political and symbolic power of the king has ended, many Losar ceremonies connected to the royal courts have also disappeared. Modern Buddhist reform movements, moreover, have been critiquing some of the perceived non-Buddhist elements of Losar such as the worship of clan gods.



*Skeleton dancers from Hemis Monastery surrounding a clay effigy Photo credit Rohit Singh*

My main focus has been on monastic rituals in general, and on cham dances in particular. I have filmed and photographed a total of three cham performances in this research quarter from the monasteries of Phyang, Hemis, and Taktok. I also interviewed several dozen monks about the

purpose of these dances, the mechanics of performance, and the perceived basis of their ritual efficacy. I have collected and begun to translate from Tibetan into English textual materials on cham dances written by local Ladakhi scholars. The standard explanation that I

received for cham dances is that they invoke the power of monastic protector deities (dharmapalas) and have three main purposes: 1) to familiarize practitioners with monastic deities; 2) to eliminate the ego; and 3) to remove malevolent entities endeavoring to serve as obstacles and hindrances to the dharma. During the performance, a series of cham characters work to destroy a demonic effigy thought to embody spirits who oppose Buddhism. The effigy is brought out by the skeleton dancers, bound and subdued by the black hat dancer, and finally cut to pieces by the deer dancer. Throughout this process, these malevolent spirits are purified of negative karma and released into a higher rebirth.

As result of discourses on “authentic” religion, monastic rituals in Ladakh are undergoing some degree of disenchantment. According to some scholars, authentic Buddhism equals Buddhist philosophy. At a recent long-life empowerment

in Leh, the Dalai Lama faulted Ladakhi monks for mechanically performing rituals without having any philosophical understanding of Buddhism. Many monks I have spoken with also complain that monks are uneducated and do not comprehend the meaning of rituals. Some have even described rituals as obstacles to the study of dharma because of the time and energy they necessitate. If performed without proper understanding, rituals such as chams, according to some local scholars, become simply spectacles devoid of any spiritual merit. Such modern discourses denigrate the traditional role that monks have played as ritual actors as well as indirectly call into question the efficacy of public ceremonies like cham dances.

Rohit Singh is a graduate student in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. In April 2013 he was interviewed by All India Radio, Leh about this project.



#### **AIIS Treasurer John Echeverri-Gent's Talk on Indian Elections Covered by Major Indian Media**

On January 6, 2014, John Echeverri-Gent, the AIIS treasurer and professor of Political Science at the University of Virginia, gave a lecture at the India International Centre in New Delhi entitled, “The Economy, Business, and India’s 2014 Parliamentary Elections.” The presentation, which was very topical in the lead-up to the Indian elections, assessed the implications of increased business influence for India’s elections and its economic policy. Professor Echeverri-Gent contended that the problem of growing business power is less a matter of its growth and more a matter of how it is exercised – in particular the manner in which illegal contributions have financed the continued viability of India’s dynastic political parties. He began by exploring India’s current economic challenges and then examined the manner in which business has exercised its influence through India’s elections. Finally, he speculated about the likely consequences of the 2014 parliamentary elections for business’s political influence and India’s economic policy. The lecture was covered by several prominent Indian media outlets including *The Hindustan Times*, the *Times of India*, and *India Today*.



#### **AIIS President Made Presentations at International Regional Hindi Conference**

AIIS President Philip Lutgendorf participated in two round-table sessions at the International Regional Hindi Conference in late April. The conference was called “The Hindi Language in the 21st Century Global World” and was held at the Consulate General of India in New York and at New York University. The conference featured an inaugural address by Shri Dnyaneshwar Mulay, the Consul General. Professor Lutgendorf described the longstanding AIIS Hindi Program in Jaipur in a session called “Study Abroad Programs: Growth and Opportunities” and also participated in a round table called “Status of Hindi Literature: Desh Aur Pardesh” in which he discussed his new translation of the *Rāmcaritmānas*. Other participants also have had close ties to AIIS. The keynote address, “American Vision for Building a Multi-lingual Nation: A Golden Period for Hindi” was delivered by Professor Surendra Gambhir of the University of Pennsylvania, who was chair of the AIIS language committee from 1998 to 2007. Professor Gambhir’s immediate predecessor, Professor Herman Van Olphen of the University of Texas, also participated in the conference.



## AIIS Performing/Creative Arts Fellow Makes a Splash in India



Aakash Mittal recently completed his AIIS performing/creative arts fellowship, working on his project, “Nocturne: A New Work of Music based on Hindustani Evening/Night Ragas, for the Saxophone.” He set out four main goals to achieve during his fellowship: 1) Studying Hindustani night ragas and applying this sound to western composition; 2) Developing Indian ornamentation techniques for the saxophone; 3) Performing and collaborating with musicians in India; 4) Expanding his ability as a music educator through the study of Indian pedagogy. To achieve these goals he has employed traditional methods such as individual practice, private lessons, and rehearsal alongside melodic experimentation, kinesthetic rhythms, and graphic notation.

A few months into Mr. Mittal’s fellowship, a piece he had composed during the first phase of his fellowship, *Far From Home*, was premiered by the Playground Ensemble in Denver, Colorado on October 6th, 2013. In this piece he used dyad and interval concepts to create melodies and harmonies within a mixed jazz/classical nonet. He also completed *Motion*, the second movement of a work for saxophone harp duo, *Pictures on Silence*, which utilized raga-based triad combinations and is inspired by the jhor/jhalla movement of a Hindustani performance, and *Gestures and Moments*, which uses the tabla both as a rhythmic and melodic instrument. In these pieces the tonal pitches of *dayan* tabla contributed to chords, unisons, and harmonic texture.

Mr. Mittal plunged into Kolkata’s dynamic music scene upon his arrival in the city, performing original music with *Kendraka* at the Princeton Club Friday night series. This led to an extensive collaboration with guitarist Nishad Pandey. They met regularly for improvisation sessions and had wonderful artist-to-artist dialogues on developing interaction, listening, and simultaneous improvisation within different musical spaces. This informal “jamming” led to incorporating vocalist Jayanthi Bunyan and creating the *InsideOut* trio. The trio gave its debut performance at Seagull Bookstore to a full house. Mr. Mittal and two other musicians gave a performance at the Habitat Centre in New Delhi in January 2014, in conjunction with the third AIIS 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference. His piece “Gestures and Moments” premiered at this concert, which was beautifully recorded by Umashankar of the AIIS Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology (ARCE) using a quadraphonic microphone of his own invention. With the musicians’ permission, AIIS/ARCE is pleased to offer a portion of this concert for the enjoyment of the public. The full recording will be archived at ARCE on AIIS’s Gurgaon campus, where it appropriately joins two remarkable collections devoted to the history of jazz in India that were recently presented to AIIS.

Mr. Mittal also led a quintet at the Congo Square Jazz Festival in Kolkata in November 2013. This was a monumental opportunity to collaborate with local musicians, bring his music to an international audience, and apply many of the concepts he was practicing. The band consisted of Nishad Pandey (guitar), Chandra Mouli (bass), Gaurab Chatterjee (drums), Jayanthi Bunyan (vocal), and Fulbright Scholar Payton MacDonald (vibraphone). They performed the music from Mr. Mittal’s latest album *Ocean*. The band received a tremendous amount of press including articles in *The Telegraph*, *Business Economics Magazine*, *Kindle Magazine*, and *The Times of India*. As a result the group had the largest audience at the jazz festival.



## AIIS Holds its Third Affiliating Institutions Conference in January 2014

AIIS held its third and final 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary affiliating institutions conference, called “Political Imaginaries: Rethinking India’s Twentieth Century” in New Delhi on January 10-11, 2014. The three two-day conferences were intended to provide an

opportunity for U.S.-based scholars to interact with scholars at some of the Indian institutions which provide AIIS fellows with affiliations. The purpose of the initiative is to showcase, in India, AIIS’s deep commitment to India-focused research and to provide



an opportunity for dialogue between U.S.-based and India-based scholars. The third conference, which was supported by a grant from the U.S. State Department via the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, was held at the India International Centre and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, and was organized by Manu Goswami of the Department of History at New York University and Mrinalini Sinha of the Department of History at the University of Michigan.

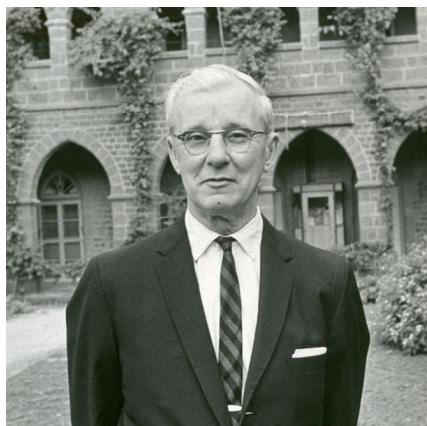
The keynote address on Friday January 10, 2014 was given by eminent scholar Partha Chatterjee. The first day was devoted to papers addressing “Genealogies of the Political” and was divided into two sessions. The first session, called “Empire and Nation: Conjunctures and Contexts” was chaired by Vinay Gidwani and included papers by Manu Goswami (“Between Empire and Nation: An Explosion of the Political”); Leela Gandhi (“Postcolonial Ethics and the Practice of Democracy”); and Mrinalini Sinha (“A Politics of the Impossible? Abolitionism in India’s 20<sup>th</sup> Century”). The second session was called “Debating Equality: Citizens and Subjects” and was chaired by Mary John. Presenters included Karuna Mantena (“Satyagrahi as Citizen? Gandhian Action and its Contested Legacies”); Gopal Guru (“Lanes and By-Lanes of Indian Democracy: The

Conception from the Bahishkrut”); and Flavia Agnes (“Gendered Notions of Citizenship: Mapping the Margins”). Saturday’s panels dealt with the theme “Postcolonial Forms of Democracy.”

The first session for Saturday January 11 was called “Political Ecologies” and was chaired by Leela Gandhi. The papers were by Nandini Sundar (“Insurgency, Counterinsurgency and Democracy”); Mary John (“Reading the Emergency: Some Reflections on the Legibility of the Political”) and Ajantha Subramaniam (“Meritocracy and Democracy: The Social Life of Caste in India”). The second session was called “Community and Capital” and was chaired by Gopal Guru. Panelists were Amita Baviskar (“The Consuming Republic: Citizenship and Contemporary Food Practices”); Vinay Gidwani (“A ‘Minor’ Politics of Twentieth Century India”); and Suchitra Balasubrahmanyam (“Imagining the New Republic: Design and the Search for a Standard Living for Indians”). The afternoon included a second keynote address by Zoya Hasan, professor of political science and dean of the School of Social Sciences at Jawaharlal Nehru University, called “Democratic Politics, Social Mobilization and Policy Change in India.” followed by a lively discussion.



### The Thomas W. Simons Fellowship



Thomas W. Simons had two passions: India and the United States. And he was fortunate to spend his career fostering relationships and understanding between the two. Born in Minnesota, he received his PhD in history from the University of Colorado, and married his sweetheart and companion, Mary Jo. They moved back to Minnesota where he became a college dean, and then during World War II moved on to Washington DC, where he joined the U.S. State Department for a posting to India in 1945.

They arrived in Calcutta by sea that December, and their love affair with the subcontinent began. Assigned as an Economic Officer, he was thoroughly engaged in the turbulence at the time, and after a spell in Washington as a research officer on South Asia his next postings were in Karachi, the capital of new Pakistan, and then in the South Asia Division in the State Department as Pakistan Desk Officer. It was there that he met

Norman Brown, the first president of AIIS, and established a friendship that lasted the rest of their lives. In 1957, now a career Foreign Service Officer, Thomas W. Simons was posted to Madras (now Chennai) as Consul General, and served there for six years. During that time, working with government officials, academics, and politicians too, he fostered Indo-US relations throughout South India: Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka.

In 1963 he retired from the Foreign Service to establish a South Asia Studies program at Michigan State University in East Lansing. Two years later, at the urging of Dr. Brown (and Mary Jo), he agreed to serve as Resident Director of AIIS in Poona. Working with young scholars was his delight; his responsibility was strengthening the position of

still-fledgling AIIS by leveraging his experience working with the Government of India and the Ministry of Education. That led him to recognize the need to move AIIS headquarters to New Delhi and to get the process underway before he retired to Washington in 1969.

In retirement he pursued his research on early Indian nationalism in South India, unfortunately without conclusion, and indulged his passion for the Subcontinent as an active member of the Asia Society, the Friends of Pakistan, and the Association for Asian Studies. That passion warmed him until he died in 1990 at the age of 87. His daughter Sara, who shared his passion, and his Foreign Service son Tom Jr., who admired it, have contributed the funds for this Fellowship to extend its warmth to others in our new century.



*CAORC Executive Director Mary Ellen Lane, retiring after 28 years, recognized for her extraordinary support for AIIS at AIIS annual reception Philadelphia March 2014*



#### **AIIS and Other American Overseas Research Centers Organizing Workshop on Sufi Shrines in August 2014**

The AIIS, together with the American Institute for Sri Lanka Studies, the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies and the American Institute of Pakistan Studies and with the additional cooperation of the American Institute for Maghrib Studies and the West African Research Association, will be holding a workshop called “Practice and Performance of Sufi Shrines” to be held near Aurangabad, India on August 1-4, 2014. The conference organizers are Professors Carl Ernst (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), Scott Kugle (Emory University) and Dennis McGilvray (University of Colorado). The workshop is being funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, as well as a grant from the Cultural Affairs Office of the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi. The purpose of the workshop is to draw on the resources of six American Overseas Research Centers to explore the rich and varied historical and contemporary role that Sufi shrines play in the countries of South Asia. In addition, scholars from Muslim-majority countries in North and West Africa will provide a comparative perspective. The Sufi shrines, ranging from huge complexes to informal roadside structures, often serve hundreds of thousands of pilgrims at annual festivals, frequently with the participation of Sikhs, Hindus, Christians and others. Throughout history, governments have tried to control these religious sites for their own purposes, while Muslim reformist movements have questioned their legitimacy and opposed many of the rituals performed at the tombs of Sufi masters. Topics to be addressed at the workshop will include: what are the major issues concerning Sufi shrines in South Asia and North and West Africa today?; what roles do gender, language and religious identity play in shrine practice?; what factors have led to attacks on and destruction of Sufi shrines?; How do Sufi shrines connect to transnational audiences through print media, music recordings and the Internet? Look for a report on the conference in the next issue of DAK!

### **AIIS Assists New University of Texas Textiles and Apparel Product Development Program in India**

AIIS is working with and providing organizational and logistical support to a new four-week study abroad program undertaken by the University of Texas, Austin's College of Natural Science in the summer of 2014. The program is called "Textiles and Apparel Product Development in India." According to the program's web site, the program "allows students an unparalleled opportunity to get hands-on textile and garment experience in New Delhi, a global hub for apparel manufacturing. By attending classroom lectures, trips to cutting-edge manufacturing facilities, detailed tours of dynamic historical and cultural hotspots, and thorough interactions with Indian scholars, the local business community and students, participants in the program will be wowed by the history and wonders of New Delhi." AIIS has arranged for in-country transportation, housing and a tour of important sites for the group and is providing an orientation including information on health, safety and culture. Students will be in Delhi, Jaipur and Agra. During the course of the program students and accompanying faculty will spend time at the National Institute of Fashion Technology in Delhi, which is hosting the program, where participants will learn about the Indian garment industry, fabrics, processing, textile dyeing and finishing, quality control, merchandising, and traditional textiles. They will also visit local factories where they can observe block printing, a buying house, stores, the Crafts Museum, and State emporia.



### **AIIS Collaboration with HBCU Consortium Program in its Third Year**

For the third year AIIS welcomed a group of students from the Mid-Atlantic Consortium-Center for Academic Excellence for an eight-week study program in the summer of 2014. The consortium, led by Professor Arlene Maclin of Morgan State University, consists of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. In summer of 2012 and 2013, the MAC-CAE students were based in Jaipur, where they studied intensive Hindi, participated in weekend field trips, and engaged in community service learning projects. This year, some of the fourteen students, who are majoring in subjects ranging from accounting to electrical engineering, to criminal justice, are based in Kolkata as well, where they are studying Bengali with AIIS teachers.



*MAC-CAE students on a field trip summer 2013 photo credit: Susan Wasem*

Summer 2013 student Ama Agyapong of Elizabeth City State University reported that on her birthday, "I went to Chokhi Dhani, a mock Rajasthan village that served traditional cuisine...I went on a camel and elephant ride, got a free henna tattoo, saw a magic show and a puppet show, and learned many traditional Rajasthan dances." The MAC-CAE held its third colloquium at consortium member Norfolk State University in October 2013. Two summer 2013 participants from Bowie State University, Berthel Tate and Jaye Nias, gave a presentation about their experiences, noting that "embracing different cultures is a must in order to experience a new world within the world around you."





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