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The Newsletter of the American Institute of Indian Studies

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Rohit Gupta Trio Performs at the Jazz in India Exhibition

AIIS Holds Jazz in India Exhibit in Delhi

The AIIS Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology organized a “Jazz in India” exhibit at the India International Centre in November 2014. The exhibition, curated by the well-known Jazz scholar Naresh Fernandes, included a wealth of visual material held by ARCE including photographs, posters, drawings by Mario Miranda, album covers and more. It traced the history of Jazz in India from the 1930s and included material from ARCE’s major Niranjan Jhaveri Jazz Collection of the Jazz Yatras from 1978

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The American Institute of Indian Studies is pleased to announce that the following scholars and artists have been awarded fellowships to carry out their projects in India in 2015-2016:

Catherine Adcock, an associate professor in the Department of History at Washington University, St. Louis, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, "Cattle Wealth and Cow Protection: Dharma, Development and the Secular State in India." Professor Adcock's fellowship is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Amy Allocco, an assistant professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Elon University, was awarded a senior fellowship to carry out her project, "Domesticating the Dead: Invitation and Installation Rituals in Tamil South India." Professor Allocco's fellowship is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Jonathan Shapiro Anjaria, an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at Brandeis University, was awarded a senior fellowship to carry out his project, "The City in Motion: Everyday Mobility in Mumbai." Professor Anjaria's fellowship is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Jennifer Campbell, an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at SUNY Potsdam, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, "Caravanserai Architecture: Survey and 3-D Modeling from Amritsar to Agra."

Syantani Chatterjee, a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project "Caste in a New Mold: Commercial Surrogacy and the Rematerializing of Caste."

Catherine Dalton, a graduate student in the Department of Buddhist Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "The Agency of No-Self: Innovation and Tradition in the Works of Buddhajnanapada." Ms Dalton is the recipient of the Ludo and Rosane Rocher Research Fellowship in Sanskrit Studies. Ms Dalton's fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Vidya Dehejia, a professor in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University,

was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, "Chola Bronzes in Context: A Reassessment." Professor Dehejia's fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Cheryl Deutsch, a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "The Future in Transit: Middle Class Mobility and Environmental Sustainability in Delhi's Transportation Planning." Ms Deutsch is the recipient of the Joe Elder College Year in India Junior Fellowship. Ms Deutsch's fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Natalia Di Pietrantonio, a graduate student in the Department of History of Art and Visual Studies at Cornell University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Visions of Desire: The Art of Awadh's Court, 1754-1857. Ms Di Pietrantonio is the recipient of the Asher Family Fellowship. Ms Di Pietrantonio's fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Vinay Gidwani, an associate professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Minnesota, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out his project, "The Country and the City: For a Poetics of Informal Economies in Contemporary India."

Julie Hanlon, a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Archaeological Survey of Early Historic Jain Caves in Tamil Nadu." Ms Hanlon is the recipient of the Daniel H. H. Ingalls Memorial Fellowship. Ms Hanlon's fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Jacob Hustedt, a graduate student in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at the University of

Texas, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out his project, "Mapping Queer Pune: Conflict and Belonging in New Queer India." Mr. Hustedt's fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Sunila Kale, an assistant professor in the Department of International Studies at the University of Washington, was awarded a senior fellowship to carry out her project, "Industrial Firms, the State, and Rural Change in an Extractive Economy: Anugul, Odisha." Professor Kale's fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Aparna Kumar, a graduate student in the Department of Art History at the University of California, Los Angeles, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Partition and the Historiography of Art in South Asia." Ms. Kumar's fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Katherine Lieder, a graduate student in the Department of Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies at the University of Wisconsin, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Representing Nirbhaya: Politicizing and Aestheticizing Violence Against Women in Modern India." Ms. Lieder's fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Amrapali Maitra, a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Domestic Violence, Caste and the Family in Kolkata." Ms. Maitra is the recipient of the Rachel F. and Scott McDermott Fellowship. Ms. Maitra's fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Murad Mumtaz, a graduate student in the Department of Art and Architectural History at the University of Virginia, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out his project, "Reconstructing the Dispersed 1730 Baohli Gita Govinda: An In-

depth Stylistic Analysis."

Naveena Naqvi, a graduate student in the History Department at the University of California, Los Angeles, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Contesting Hindustan: Persian and Marathi Writing and the Making of a Post-Mughal Political Culture in Northern India." Ms. Naqvi is the recipient of the Metcalf Fellowship in Indian History.

Padini Nirmal, a graduate student in the Department of Geography at Clark University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "When Different Land Ontologies Meet: The FRA in Adivasi Lands in Attappady, Kerala."

Diya Paul, a graduate student in the Department of Geography at Rutgers University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Unintended Conservation Spaces in Forests Outside Protected Areas in India." Ms. Paul is the recipient of the Thomas W. Simons Fellowship.

Indira Peterson, a professor in the Department of Asian Studies at Mount Holyoke College, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, "Reading Eighteenth Century Thanjavur Marathi Language Court Drama." Professor Peterson's fellowship is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Sarah Pinto, an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology at Tufts University, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, "Hysteria in India: The Transnational History of a Medical Idea." Professor Pinto's fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Natasha Raheja, a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at New York University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "From Minority to Majority: Pakistani Hindu Claims to Indian Citizenship." Ms. Raheja's fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Priti Ramamurthy, a professor in the Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies at the University of Washington, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, "The

Country and the City: For a Poetics of Informal Economies in Contemporary India.” Professor Ramamurthy’s fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Rahul Sarwate, a graduate student in the Department of History at Columbia University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out his project, “The Making of Maharashtra: An Intellectual and Cultural History, 1848-1960.” Mr. Sarwate is the recipient of the Thomas R. Trautmann Fellowship.

Sudev Sheth, a graduate student in the Department of South Asia Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out his project, “A Historical Ethnography of Statecraft and Governance in Baroda, c. 1700-1949.” Mr. Sheth’s fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Matthew Shutzer, a graduate student in the Department of History at New York University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out his project, “Geological India: Science, Law and the Making of India’s Coal Region, 1870s-1950s.” Mr. Shutzer’s fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Hilary Silver, a professor in the Department of Sociology at Brown University, was awarded a senior scholarly development fellowship to carry out her project, “The Inequality of Muslims in India.” Professor Silver’s fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Bhriqupati Singh, an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at Brown University, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out his project, “Transformations of Sadness in Contemporary India: Explorations within Cinema,

Psychiatry and the Everyday Life of Urban Poverty.”

Veena Sriram, a graduate student in the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, “The Evolution of Emergency Medicine as an Academic Specialty in India: A Policy Analysis.” Ms Sriram’s fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

William Stafford, Jr., a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out his project, “The Measure of Measure: Regulating as Labour.” Mr. Stafford’s fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Cecilia Van Hollen, an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology at Syracuse University, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, “Socio-Cultural Perspectives and Responses to Cervical and Breast Cancer Screening and Treatment in Tamil Nadu.” Professor Van Hollen’s fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Vineet Vyas, a musician, was awarded a performing and creative arts fellowship to carry out his project, “Benares Gharana Revisited.”

Rina Williams, an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Cincinnati, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, “Excluded, Mobilized, Visible: Women in Hindu Nationalist Politics in India.” Professor Williams’ fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

to 2003. In addition to the panels created from archival material, there were interactive touch-based kiosks equipped with headphones for listening and viewing, with a timeline and a thematic display that supported the panels. There were over 600 tracks available on these kiosks.

The exhibit was complemented by special programs. The exhibit opened on 25 November with a presentation by Soli Sorabji who, together with Niranjan Jhaveri and Jehangir Dalal, organized Jazz Yatra concerts across India. Naresh Fernandes, the author of *The Taj Mahal Foxtrot: The story of Bombay's Jazz Age*, gave a lecture entitled, "A Short History of How Jazz Became an Indian Music" on 26 November. In his talk he noted that from the accounts of most standard jazz histories, it took the genius of American saxophonist, John Coltrane to demonstrate in the 1960s how jazz could enrich itself by seeking inspiration in Hindustani classical music. But the reality is more complex. From the 1940s, a passionate group of Indian jazz musicians had been attempting to find an Indian way to play jazz, both in art music and in popular music. Mr. Fernandes used audio clips and photographs to trace the journey of jazz from New Orleans to New Delhi, exploring how an American transplant became a vibrant Indian hybrid in the fertile soil of the subcontinent. The following evening, attendees at the exhibit were treated to a performance of Jazz in the Swing Era the Rohit Gupta Trio. The trio included Kartikeya Srivastava on drums, Abhinav Khokar on upright & electric bass and Rohit Gupta on piano/keyboard.



The project was supported by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India as a part of the Virtual Museum of Image and Sound Project. The Jazz in India program and was covered by NDTV in December and received a positive review in *The Indian Express* newspaper, in a piece called "Something Borrowed, Something Blues" by Suanshu Khurana.



Tarun Mitra Lectures

After the death of Tarun Mitra, the chief officer at the AIIS Kolkata Center from 1965 until his retirement in 1991 (a piece on Tarun Mitra appeared in *DAK* 23), some of Tarun Da's friends in Kolkata and former AIIS fellows organized a fund to support an annual lecture in his memory.

The 2014 Tarun Mitra Memorial Lecture was delivered by former AIIS Treasurer Professor Geraldine Forbes (Department of History, SUNY Oswego) on 17 December 2014. Her presentation was called "Beyond Queens and Rebels: How Women's History Changes the Historical Perspective." Her lecture focused on how research on women and gender conducted since the 1970s has begun to change the way we look at history. In an earlier period, women were the subjects of history but only a select few heroines and rebels made it into history books. A broader look at the role of gender in history and women's participation in a wide range of activities has made historians aware of the limitations of masculinist frames. Examples from colonial history suggest ways in which women's and gender history have changed fundamental practices in the field. The lecture was held at the Birla Academy in Kolkata. The inaugural lecture had been held in November 2013, in the Brahmananda Hall of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture in Gol Park, Kolkata. Professor Ralph W. Nicholas, former AIIS President and current Chair of the Board of Trustees, delivered a talk asking "Does Comparative Religion Have a Future?" After retiring from the AIIS Tarun collaborated with Professor Arun Mookerjee in establishing the Academy for Comparative Religion with the objective of reestablishing the field in Kolkata. Professor Nicholas discussed both myths and rituals, and concluded that comparative religion has a bright future if religion in practice rather than mythology and belief is the focus of study.

Crafting Abodes: The Forms and Meanings of Svaminarayana Temples
by Ankur Desai



Ankur Desai peeks out from a minaret in Champaner, Gujarat

Founded in Gujarat at the turn of the nineteenth century by the religious leader Sahajananda Svami, the Vaisnava-rooted Svaminarayana sect was responsible for the creation of large temple complexes that perpetuated established modes of Indian temple construction. While maintaining genres of temple styles that had prevailed in western India since the eleventh century, the initial sacred constructions of the sect were also characterized by distinctive architectural and iconographic forms, dually shaped by an emergent Svaminarayana philosophy and the artistic context of colonial Gujarat. This culture of temple construction has been maintained up to the present by the sub-sect Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) which was founded in 1907. In the past three decades, the BAPS temples exhibit a resurgence of architectural and iconographic elaboration that not only increasingly recalls pre-modern temple modes fostered in western India, but also reveals sectarian specificity in its complex forms.

My doctoral dissertation project investigates the history, forms, and meanings of BAPS Svaminarayana temples in Gujarat in the context of aesthetic, art historical, and architectural theory. This project will also participate in a ranging dialogue that examines notions of tradition, authenticity, revival, and the experiential aspect of sacred spaces from the perspective of Svaminarayana philosophy and phenomenological theory. In studying the continued proliferation of Indic temples through this specific sectarian case study, we can obtain new insights into the larger culture of sacred architecture that employs and negotiates visual banks from the past, and yet engages in discourses that speak to contemporary ideologies and emergent aesthetic priorities, thus defining and ultimately breaching the barriers between past and present, old and new.

During my fellowship period from December 2014 to June 2015, I documented seventeen Svaminarayana temples built between 1907 and 2014. The sites ranged from Jamnagar in northern Gujarat to Junagadh in southern Saurashtra, to Atladra in eastern Gujarat. I took about 40,000 photographs of the Swaminarayan temples and about 10,000 photos of non-Swaminarayan temples and sites dating from the twelfth century onwards. I witnessed renovations such as at the nineteenth century temple at Vadtal, where interior paintings, illustrating scenes from the life of Sahajananda Swami, were undergoing restoration. I was able to ask those in charge of restoration how and why the changes were being carried out.

I was also able to locate and access several texts relevant to my historical mapping of the temples, made accessible to me at the library of the Sarangpur temple through the permission of Swaminarayan sadhus and a few temple administrators. The texts contained passages that relate to and shed light on the production, meaning and overall culture of temple making and temple iconography in the Swaminarayan sect to the present day.

I also spent time with the artisan community in Pindwara, Rajasthan to witness the process of contemporary temple construction. I spoke with craftsmen, Mistry overseers and Sompura architects responsible for designing and executing stone temples and discussed with them the creative process in order to gain insight into how types of architectural ornament are chosen and what the intention is behind certain iconographic schemes. In addition, I also spent time in the archives at the Fine Arts Department at Maharaja Sayajirao University in Baroda. I was able to locate references to the construction and inauguration of the five early temples of BAPS between 1907 and 1951 in a collection of letters written by the founder of BAPS, Shastri Yagnapurushdasji. Additional information about the history of the temples' construction was found in back issues of the sect's monthly publication, the Swaminarayan Prakash, which were made available to me at the Swaminarayan research center at Gandhinagar Gujarat.

Ankur Desai, a graduate student in the Department of Art History at Ohio State University, carried out his AIIS junior fellowship between December 2014 and June 2015.



AIIS Showcase on New Research at the March 2015 AAS Meetings in Chicago

AIIS sponsored two panels—AIIS Showcase on New Research-- at the Association for Asian Studies meeting in Chicago on March 27, 2015. These panels were intended to be an opportunity for young scholars—mostly former AIIS junior fellows-- to share their dissertation research with the scholarly community and to highlight the AIIS fellowship program. AIIS sponsored a similar panel at the 2014 Association for Asian Studies meeting. The panels were funded by a grant from the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

One panel was called “Corruption, State Violence, and Ethics in South Asia.” Corruption – provisionally defined as the misuse of public power for private benefit – a perennial theme in popular discourses about governance and political culture in South Asia, was the focus of the panel. Yet for scholars of India, corruption presents a paradox: at once ubiquitous in claim and deed, while functioning through obfuscation and frequently operating in spaces beyond public view. The papers drew on diverse geographical locations (urban metros, rural hinterlands) and time periods (contemporary struggles, colonial debates) to explore how officials and ordinary citizens have redrawn and contested notions of corrupt dealings and virtuous conduct. The presenters in this panel, all former AIIS junior fellows, were Hayden Kantor (“Preferential Obligations: Rethinking Corruption, Family Life, and Ethics in Bihar”); Megha Sehdev (“The 2005 Indian Domestic Violence Act”); Rumela Sen (“Corruption and Violence in the Rural Hinterlands of India”); and Debjani Bhattacharyya (“Speculation and Profiteering: What is Economic about the Economy”). The other panel was called “The Gendered Self and the Social: The Making and Unmaking of Love, Family and Community in South Asia” and addressed the historical co-constitution of the gendered individual and the collective in India, through processes that formulated and regulated conceptions of love and family. The panelists engaged in a dialogue across the early modern and modern periods as well as across regional, cultural and religious boundaries, suggesting that the contested histories of love, family and community are central to an understanding of modernity in India. They traced the regulation of sexuality and affect, the formulation of new familial norms and the constitution of a collective identity through conceptions of political love arguing that the gendered self, sexuality and kinship relations are foundational to the constitution of both the modern state and the modern community. The presenters in this panel included two former junior fellows: Darakhshan Khan (“In Good Company: Piety and Conjuality in Colonial North India”) and Divya Cherian (“Governing Bodies: Abortion, Non-Marital Sex and Collective Interests in Eighteenth Century Western India”) and were joined by Madhavi Murty (“Mayawati’s Public Femaleness: Love and the Making of Dalit Iconicity”) and Rochisha Narayan (“What’s Love Got to Do with It? Colonial Agrarian Policies and the Regulation of Women in Eighteenth Century Northern India”). The discussant was Megan Moodie.

AIIS 2015 Book Prizes Awarded to Walter Hakala and Bhriqupati Singh

The Edward Cameron Dimock, Jr. Prize in the Indian Humanities was awarded to Walter Hakala for *Negotiating Terms: Urdu Dictionaries and the Definition of Modern South Asia*

The Joseph W. Elder Prize in the Indian Social Sciences was awarded to Bhriqupati Singh for *Poverty and the Quest for Life: Spiritual and Material Striving in Rural India*



Negotiating Terms: Urdu Dictionaries and the Definition of Modern South Asia documents the role played by lexicographers from the late 17th century to the present in shaping the Urdu language from just one of many dialects of northern India to the national language of Pakistan. Prior to the 19th century, South Asian lexicographers arranged their texts in ways that reflected widely shared beliefs about the hierarchical organization of nature and human society. These works supplemented literature, assisting authors and connoisseurs in the composition and appreciation of poetry. Dictionaries, glossaries, and vocabularies functioned as guides to the acquisition of a courtly culture: as portable objects, these texts could offer those on the geographical and social peripheries of the Mughal Empire a glimpse into the linguistic and literary habits of the residents of its cultural center. By the turn of the 20th century, however, this generic diversity gives

way to a single dominant genre, the modern comprehensive dictionary. Its arrangement of terms by orthographic form signaled both a flattening of the lexical universe and an expansion of the social domains of language to be defined. In this period reformers began to use dictionaries to shape language into a central marker capable of motivating political movements. New nations were thought to require their own languages, and various competing South Asian political movements of the period regarded the “modern” comprehensive dictionary, compiled “scientifically” on “historical principles,” as a concrete expression of a nation’s arrival on the world stage.

Each of the three sections of *Negotiating Terms* focuses on a key work and author by uncovering the sources of that lexicographical work, the relation of its author to contemporary political, economic, and social developments, and its critical reception and reformulation in subsequent lexicographical projects. The first reconstructs the career of the 17th-century schoolteacher ‘Abdul Wase’ Hansawi, whose *Ghara’ib al-Lughat* has been called the first dictionary of Urdu. The second examines the *Shams al-Bayan fi Mustalihat al-Hindustan*, a dictionary compiled in the last decade of the 18th century by the poet Mirza Jan Tapish. A Mughal nobleman exiled from Delhi, Tapish sought refuge in Bengal and would later be arrested for conspiring to overthrow East India Company rule. The final section charts the very different legacies of two Indian lexicographers, Sayyid Ahmad Dihlawi (a Muslim) and Chiranji Lal (a Hindu), both former assistants to S.W. Fallon, a 19th-century colonial official and scholar whose monumental dictionaries are important studies of northern Indian folk culture. The life of Sayyid Ahmad illustrates how the Muslim elite of Delhi adapted in the aftermath of 1857 to changing forms of patronage and commercial publishing. Chiranji Lal’s *Makhzan al-Muhawarat*, in contrast, is largely forgotten today, despite anticipating the rise of a national language by addressing itself to fellow Indians for whom Urdu was not a “mother tongue.” By privileging texts produced by less celebrated—and even widely denigrated—authors whose work straddles such modern disciplinary divides as literature, linguistics, history, and ethnography, *Negotiating Terms* provides insights into the historical development of broader South Asian society. Although previously little studied, these texts were not mere lists of words and definitions but powerful political tools with fateful political consequences for one fifth of the world’s population.

Walter Hakala is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University at Buffalo, SUNY. He teaches courses on South Asian literature and culture, translation studies, and linguistic approaches to literature in conjunction with the Asian Studies Program. He completed his Ph.D. in South Asian Regional Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, an M.A. in Urdu literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University, and a B.A. in Asian Studies from the University of Virginia. He grew up in New Delhi, Peshawar, and Rabat, Morocco, before settling in the United States. He has published work on Afghan sociolinguistics, 18th-century coffee connoisseurs in Delhi, medieval and early modern children’s vocabularies, and the First Anglo-Afghan War (1837-42).



Poverty and the Quest for Life: Spiritual and Material Striving in Rural India asks how we conceive of the quality of life not only in an economic sense, but in terms of a more encompassing sense of vitality and loss, in ways that include human and non-human forces, as well as forms of spiritual striving. Through an ethnographic exploration of the Sahariyas, former bonded laborers, officially classified as Rajasthan's only "primitive tribe," this book asks how aspiration and the quality of life is imagined in spiritual and material terms by a lower status group in a resource-scarce environment at a time of widening global inequalities.

The answers this book offers are organized around two themes, power and ethics, through which we enter a diverse terrain of forces that compose this milieu; authority remains contested, whether in divine or human forms; the state is both despised and desired; high and low castes negotiate new ways of living together, in conflict but also cooperation; new gods move across rival social groups; animals and plants leave their tracks on human subjectivity and religiosity; and the potential for vitality persists even as natural resources steadily disappear. Inhabiting this milieu, *Poverty and the Quest for Life* offers new ways of thinking beyond the religion-secularism and nature-culture dichotomies, juxtaposing questions about quality of life with political theologies of sovereignty, neighborliness, and ethics, in the process painting a rich portrait of perseverance and fragility in contemporary rural India.

Excerpt from the Prologue [...] "A theologico-political aim of this book is that it can be summarized in entirely secular terms, as a study of power, inequality, the state, environmental crisis, aspiration, and relations of conflict and cohabitation between neighboring groups, and at the same time in entirely religious terms, as a study of popular religion, and of saints, shrines, erotic songs, warrior gods, ascetic ideals, sacred epics, and spirit possession."

Bhrigupati Singh is an assistant professor in the Anthropology Department at Brown University. He grew up in Delhi and studied at Delhi University, SOAS (London), and at Johns Hopkins University, where he received his PhD in Anthropology in 2010. He has also worked at Sarai-CSDS (Delhi), where he helped start a research project titled 'Publics and Practices in the History of the Present', and taught at the King's India Institute (King's College, London). His articles on religion, politics, media and popular culture have appeared in journals such as *Cultural Anthropology*, *American Ethnologist*, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, and *Critical Asian Studies*. In 2014 he published an edited volume titled *The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy* (Duke University Press). He is currently beginning a new research project on urban poverty and mental health in north India, focusing on religious and secular forms of healing, and the historical emergence of the category of "common mental health disorders", including depression and anxiety as a window into contemporary India. He is also working on a book of essays tentatively titled *What Comes After Postcolonial Theory?* He was awarded an AIIS senior short-term fellowship for 2015-2016.



AIIS Supports Reconsidering Craft as Pedagogy from Below Conference in Jaipur

On March 16-17, 2015, AIIS organized the logistical support for a conference called "Reconsidering Craft as Pedagogy from Below." The conference was organized by the Leiden-based International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS) and held in Jaipur, India as part of a larger project called Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This program aims to reshape the field of Asian Studies by fostering new humanities-focused research. Partner organizations included Ambedkar University Delhi and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Participants came from the Netherlands, France, Thailand, the U.S., UK, India, and Taiwan.

The goal of the conference was to address issues such as: is there a way to recover the salience of the tacit and the tactical in pedagogy for "catching the implicit knowing of the [craft] profession"?; can we think of new, and also highlight existing, 'subaltern' forms of mind-body concatenations that surpass and confound the naturalness of bodily 'skill' and inform what has been called 'pedagogy from below'? The conference organizers note that there

are many formal and non-formal arrangements that can be identified as discursive spaces of craft pedagogy at various levels in Asia. They include workshops, industrial and vocational training institutes, peripatetic masters/designers/teachers, artisan households and communities, alternative spaces for communitarian living, state and non-state centers for local-cultural preservation; ashrams/monasteries/temples; and visionary schools and universities. The binaries of a modern education - teacher vs. student; mind vs. body; public vs. private; work vs. leisure; conformity vs. creativity; credentialism and consumerism vs. human (soul) fulfilment; must be resisted and overcome if one is to consider a pedagogy that is through the body and with other bodies.

Bringing together people who have been engaged in practices of ‘pedagogy from below’, ‘pedagogy through bodily practice and experience’, or ‘vernacular pedagogy’, the Jaipur roundtable sought to renew the conversation on:

- Craft work as the site of ‘embodied learning.’ Resisting conventional distinctions between mind and body, here ‘imitation’ and ‘repetition’ take on meanings far removed from those attributed under Taylorism.
- Sites of innovation and change, not as spurts of individual genius but as a shared practice and collective ideal.
- Gender, class and caste hierarchies in the reproduction of craft work.
- Artisanship as a challenge to the capitalist logic of obsolescence, consumerism and private ownership.
- The on-going dialogue between craft work and newer forms of technologies and changing local ecologies.
- Envisioning an e-University facilitating craft work as a legitimate and viable option in the contemporary world.



AIIS 2015 Junior Fellows Conference by Philip Lutgendorf

The 2015 AIIS Junior Fellows Conference, held at the Institute’s Gurgaon campus on January 9th and 10th, brought together sixteen pre-doctoral fellows currently pursuing their research in India with Institute funding. In two days of sessions, all gave brief presentations highlighting their progress in field or archival work, and sometimes citing challenges, both personal and professional, that they had encountered. Lively follow-up discussion was mentored by three senior scholars who also serve as AIIS officers: Vijay Pinch (Wesleyan University; Treasurer), Rebecca Manning (Indiana University; Chair, Language Committee), Tony Seeger (emeritus professor at UCLA, and Chair, ARCE Committee), and Philip Lutgendorf (University of Iowa; President). In addition, the second day’s session included, to the other participants’ delight, four special guests: historians Barbara and Tom Metcalf (recently retired from the University of Michigan and UC Berkeley, respectively) and art historians Cathy and Rick Asher (University of Minnesota)—scholar-couples who are not only renowned in their fields, but who have also generously supported AIIS Junior researchers through named gifts via the “Scholars Challenge” initiative.

Featured projects were typically diverse, ranging through and across disciplines from anthropology to urban history, and all were groundbreaking either in subject matter (e.g., LGBTQ activism in Tamil Nadu, the surreal architecture of contemporary Swaminarayan sectarian temples, dance contests as markers of identity among youth in the Northeastern “tribal” states, and the plight and politics of sewage workers in the national capital), or methodology (e.g., the application of GPS technology to the mapping of historic temples in Kanchipuram, the study of ancient Tibetan tantric texts against the lived experience of contemporary nuns, or the discovery of a Persian-language autobiography from Mughal times that reveals—among other things—Emperor Aurangzeb telling a dirty joke), or both. As at any good academic meeting, some of the liveliest exchanges occurred away from the conference table, during tea breaks and lavish lunches (catered by an excellent South Indian café), or the festive first-night dinner at a local tandoori joint. Synergies were discovered, mobile numbers and e-addresses exchanged, and ideas floated for future collaborations and thematic symposia—such as the “AIIS Highlights Recent Research” panels that AIIS has regularly been organizing at the annual meetings of the Association for Asian Studies. When it ended, the junior fellows departed with fresh energy and ideas, and their senior “mentors” with the delighted conviction—shared by all who participate in the AIIS fellowship selection process—that the future of scholarship on South Asia, at least in terms of the young scholars pursuing it, is secure and bright.

Newest AIIS Member Institutions

AIIS welcomed three new member institutions since the publication of Dak number 26—Davidson College, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Cincinnati—bringing the total number of consortium members to 81.

Davidson College, located in Davidson, NC, has a burgeoning South Asian Studies Program, which offers an interdisciplinary minor composed of an historical Introduction to Modern South Asia plus five other courses (from at least three different departments). The minor includes an international experience in South Asia, particularly through Davidson's Semester-in-India Program. This study abroad program was founded in 1981 and now features a cultural and historical introduction, and study of public health, contemporary environmental issues, and psychology. The College has also been expanding its academic courses about or including India located in various departments including: Art History, Economics, Environmental Studies, History, Music, and Religion. A distinctive strength of South Asian Studies at Davidson College is its emphasis on a semester of study in India. The Semester-in-India features lectures and discussions in courses based at Madras Christian College (MCC) in Chennai as well as other institutions in South India, combined with course modules in the form of guided travels throughout India. Over the years, the program has extended its guided travels to include Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Andaman Islands making it a truly South Asia related program. Among the courses offered are: India Past and Present; Indian Environment and Ecology; Cognition of the Performing Arts; India; and Psychology Goes to the Movies in India.

The University of Cincinnati offers an interdisciplinary Asian Studies Major, Minor, and a substantial list of courses on India. The College of Arts and Sciences has been expanding its academic courses about or including India located in various departments including: Communication, Geography, Geology, History, and Political Science. Course offerings include: Media and Identity: The Globalization of Indian Films; Music, Media and Religion in South Asia; Natural and Unnatural Disasters in the Global South; Changing Landscapes, Dynamic Environments and Geohazards in the Himalaya; and Indian Nationalism and Anti-Colonialism. The University of Cincinnati's faculty-led study abroad programs in India include Environmental Journalism with the Sadguru Water Development Foundation in Gujarat, Himalayan Landscapes, MBA Service Industries in Mumbai and New Delhi, Service Learning, Transforming Lives (in Bangalore, Mumbai, Mysore, Goa and Delhi) and

Sociology, Service Learning and Indian Cultural Studies, in Bangalore. The University of Cincinnati and its humanities center, the Charles Phelps Taft Research Center, regularly sponsor lectures and India-related cultural events such as film screenings and discussions. The University also hosts events organized by the Association for India's Development chapter, such as a performance by visually impaired dancers. Professor Stephan Fiol, a former AIIS junior fellow, also organizes Indian music concerts at the university's College Conservatory of Music.

The Johns Hopkins University has a well-established South Asia program housed in the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, currently under the Direction of Walter K. Andersen. This Program offers an interdisciplinary regional concentration within an international affairs MA degree. This concentration requires at least four courses in the study of South Asia, one of which must be Comparative Political and Economic Development in South Asia. The South Asia Studies Program offers public seminars, an annual South Asia Retreat, and Study Trips to South Asia for students. In addition, JHU doctoral students in a range of departments, including Anthropology, Art, Economics, Political Science, and Sociology can incorporate or focus on the study of South Asia. The School of Advanced International Studies established a South Asia Studies Program several years ago, which offers a number of courses such as The Politics of Infrastructure in India, the Comparative Rise of China and India, and Comparative Political and Economic Development of South Asia. The program also sponsors study trips to India for students. In December 2013 the program hosted an all-day conference on India's 2014 parliamentary elections, which brought India scholars and members of the policy community together. Faculty members include Professor Rebecca Brown, the Chair of the Advanced Academic Program in Museum Studies, who is a specialist in modern and contemporary South Asian art. Sociologist Rina Agarwala, who has served on the AIIS selection committee, focuses on labor, gender and social movements in India. Anthropologist Anand Pandian held both AIIS junior and senior fellowships. He has published widely on the subject of Indian film and teaches courses including Anthropology of Media and Cinema and Ethnography.



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