

SUMMER FELLOWSHIP PROJECTS

SOUND PROJECTS

Project 1: Oral Epics and Narratives of India

ARCE has several collections of oral epics from various parts of India. The project would involve choosing **one** of the oral epics or narrative traditions from the list below to create a digital exhibition or publication.

Oral epics or narratives that are performed have long and elaborate stories, including mythology, local beliefs, heroes or deities, and describe episodes of war and valour, as well as ordinary people. The performances of these texts can vary from a few hours and all-night performances, or those that even go on over a number of days.

We are offering a selection of epics and narrative traditions of which we have recording collections deposited by scholars who have written books on the particular genres. The resource thus consists of unpublished field recordings of such oral epics as well as the scholarly publications based on the fieldwork. The recordings are accompanied by documentation provided by the scholar who has deposited the collection as well as metadata created by ARCE. In some cases, there are textual transcriptions and translations. The ARCE library has, in most cases, other publications that could be used as a resource.

The aim of the project is to create a digital exhibition or publication that provides an introduction and illustrates the oral epic, by focusing on a chosen extract in detail to provide the flavour and expose the richness of such narrative forms, using any or all of the following – illustrations, texts, voice, and narration, along with the recordings. The aim will be to provide an introduction to a general audience that could include children. This project would be of special interest to those with an interest in language, and graphic and/or visual expression.

Familiarity with the language of the oral epic or narrative would be a major asset, though ARCE staff will be able to assist to some extent on the languages involved. The ARCE library has many publications that could also be referred to in addition to the book that is recommended. Online resources can also be used.

The oral epics, and the related publications offered for the project are:

Dhola. (Hindi), Uttar Pradesh, (Susan Wadley Collection)

Wadley, Susan. 2004. *Raja Nal and the Goddess: The North Indian Epic in Performance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Raja Bharthari and Gopi Chand, (Marwari), Rajasthan, (Ann Gold Collection).

Gold, Ann. 1993. *A Carnival of parting: The Tales of King Bharthari and King Gopi Chand as sung and told by Madhunath of Ghatiyali, Rajasthan*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

Villupattu, (Tamil), Tamil Nadu (Stuart Blackburn Collection)

Blackburn, Stuart.H. 1988. *Singing of Birth and Death: Texts in Performance*. 1988. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Annamar Katai, (Tamil), Tamil Nadu. (Brenda Beck Collection.).

Beck, Brenda E.F. 1982. *The Three Twins: The Telling of a South Indian Folk Epic*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

Methodology

Study the recommended book that is related to the collection, and go through the collection, using the existing field notes, archival metadata, transcriptions and translations to gain familiarity and some understanding of the story line. A portion of the collection should then be chosen to work on for the digital project. The fellow would have the freedom of choosing the approach towards the creation of a digital exhibition or publication.

Part of the project would also entail adding and supplementing existing metadata to the archival records to the extent possible.

Deliverable

A digital exhibition or publication which introduces and illustrates a portion of the chosen oral epic, aimed at a general audience, including children.

Project Supervisor

Shubha Chaudhuri Director Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, AIIS

Project 2: The Song Lines of Arnold Bake

This project focuses on the extensive collection of recordings of the Dutch ethnomusicologist Arnold Bake, who travelled all over India making recordings of music in the 1930s. The recordings are in a great variety of languages and genres. The collection consists of largely audio recordings but supplemented by some silent films which have also been digitised. Recent additions include photographs and digitized images of Arnold Bake's fieldnotes.

The collection at ARCE was deposited by Nazir Jairazbhoy and the British Library. Professors Nazir Jairazbhoy and Amy Catlin conducted a Bake Restudy Project from 1983 onwards, following some of the routes taken by Bake and recording the same communities after the passage of 50 years. Their findings are also digitized and catalogued and can be incorporated into the project.

These materials are all fully digitized and catalogued and thus do not require any particular language proficiency. ARCE has created two CDs (on lullabies and work songs) for which liner notes are available.

The goal of the project is to create an **offline exhibition** using specially designed software at ARCE which has templates in the backend to create themes and subthemes, a mapping interface, as well as a timeline. The interface is configured to enable incorporating audio and video recordings, documents and images in all the interfaces. Creating this exhibition will result in an interactive interface to this rich and varied collection.

Methodology

The first step would be to read about Arnold Bake, and then go through the files, metadata and recording at ARCE. The next would be to gain familiarity with the software, using an existing exhibition, Jazz in India, as a model.

Next, an interface should be designed: planning the themes, sub-themes, identifying recordings, images and documents, if possible, for each theme and sub-theme. Materials should also be chosen for the mapping interface and the timeline, in a manner that makes the entire collection more accessible, and allows users to interact and listen to and view the recordings and other visual materials. The aim is to bring the entire collection into the exhibition.

Part of the project also would entail adding to and supplementing existing metadata to the archival records to the extent possible.

Deliverable

Create an offline exhibition, Song Lines of Arnold Bake, (or an alternate title), which provides an interactive interface to the entire collections of Arnold Bake at ARCE.

Project Supervisor

Shubha Chaudhuri Director Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, AIIS

Project 3: Bauls of Bengal: An Introduction

Bauls are traditionally wandering minstrels who sing of spiritual themes and constitute a syncretic religious as well as musical sect.

The ARCE archive has an extensive collection of video recordings of the Bauls of Bengal deposited by Sally Grossman on behalf of the Baul Archive. The recordings include performances and interviews, some arranged, and many conducted at the fairs or melas where Bauls routinely perform. The collection is fully digitized and catalogued, and includes a large number of translations that accompany the recordings.

This project involves creating an online introductory exhibition on the Google Arts and Culture website. The ARCE archive also has historic recordings Baul performances from the 1930s, made by the Dutch ethnomusicologist Arnold Bake that could also be used in conjunction with the Baul Archive Collection of videos. This project would yield the first of a set of future exhibitions on the Bauls – one on the fairs or melas, the family of Nabani Das Baul, and so forth.

Knowledge or familiarity with Bangla would be an asset, though not required.

Methodology

The first step is to do some background reading on Bauls, after which the existing collections can be reviewed and a rough selection of materials chosen for an introductory exhibition. ARCE has other collections of recordings of Bauls which can be referred to as part of the background study, but the final exhibition will use the Baul Archive collection.

The staff of Google Arts and Culture will be available to provide guidance and introduce the digital tools that are available.

Part of the project also would entail adding and supplementing existing metadata to archival records to the extent possible.

Deliverables

An exhibition on the Bauls of Bengal (title to be chosen) on the Google Arts and Culture website. The staff of the Baul Archives team will also be available to consult.

Project Supervisor

Shubha Chaudhuri Director Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, AIIS

VISUAL ARTS PROJECTS

Project 1: Stepping into the Waters of Western India

The landscape of Gujarat and Rajasthan is dotted with unique monuments unlike those seen elsewhere in the world. They are reservoirs of water, or stepped wells, that is, subterranean structures accessed from the ground level via a long flight of steps. Stepwells served as reservoirs for replenishable and rechargeable groundwater and played a key role in India's traditional water management system. These water bodies were excavated within palaces and pleasure gardens and along highways over a period extending from the 1st century CE to the present.

CA&A has documented over a hundred stepwells from Western India and has created a large repertoire of photographs and architectural drawings of these structures. Through this project, CA&A seeks to raise awareness about the practical and aesthetic value of the stepwell-reservoirs of Western India which are being destroyed due to rapid urbanization. The project's goal is to develop a virtual exhibition drawing upon the Center's online collection of photographs, drawings, and publications. The exhibition will illustrate the artistic, technological, and historical details of select stepwell-reservoirs, demonstrate their relationship to people through highlighting their use over time, their significance in maintaining the ecological balance, and the role they play in traditional water management systems.

Methodology

In the initial phase, the Fellow will collect information including images and published materials from online and offline archives and the CA&A library. The Fellow will refer to videos, 360-degree virtual walkthroughs, and the catalogue of CA&A's travelling exhibition on stepwells of Western India. The Fellow will consult conservation architects on contemporary restoration efforts. A list of stepwells for the virtual exhibition will be prepared. In the second phase, the exhibition will be designed on WordPress and launched on the Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds ([VMIS](#)).

Deliverable

The Fellow will curate a digital exhibition on the subject for the VMIS website. The Fellow will also share research information collected on the project with the Center to enhance the existing CA&A metadata relating to the collection selected for this exhibition.

Project Supervisor

Vandana Sinha, Director, Center for Art and Archaeology, AIIS

Project 2: People's Art: Clay Modelling in Ancient India

Among the earliest surviving examples of Indian art are terracotta objects. As a material, the plasticity of clay has ensured its popularity in all ages. Terracotta (low-fired earthenware) sculpture has been produced in India since antiquity, in vernacular and elite styles. The CA&A photo archive includes many images of terracotta sculpture from museum collections and monument documentation projects.

This project will focus on terracotta sculpture executed from the 3rd century BCE to the 3rd century CE, a fertile period of Indian art history marked by exchanges of aesthetic ideas with the western world, exemplified in the similarities between the so-called Pompeii *yakshi* in ivory and similar works in terracotta from Sanchi and various other sites in India. The abundance and variety of terracotta sculpture from the period can be developed to yield insights into links among art practices across a huge swath of territory connected by a complex trade network.

This project will culminate in a curated virtual exhibition that makes the findings accessible to a wider public. Information generated in the research will be added to the metadata, enhancing the archive's holdings on terracotta sculpture and on an important early period of Indian art history.

Methodology

During the initial phase, the Fellow will review the CA&A's collection and publications on terracotta sculpture. The Fellow will develop a concept note for the exhibition and prepare a checklist of materials from the collection to be included in the virtual exhibition. In the second phase, the exhibition will be designed on WordPress and launched on the Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds ([VMIS](#)).

Deliverable

The Fellow will share research information collected on the project with the CA&A to enhance existing metadata and will create a virtual exhibition on the subject for the VMIS website.

Project Supervisor

Vandana Sinha, Director, Center for Art and Archaeology, AIIS

Project 3: Jewel-Studded Art of India

The art of jewelry in India is a living tradition ongoing for millennia. Jewelry is omnipresent in the wide-ranging collections of sculptures and paintings in CA&A's photo archive. Several periods and regions are especially well represented, including jewels that adorn figures and architectural elements in the Ajanta Cave paintings (2nd century BCE- late 5th century CE), ornaments that reveal interconnections between the Hellenistic west and early Gandharan art (1st BCE-1st century CE), and the jewelry adorning South Indian sculptures of gods, demigods, door guardians, and royal couples of the Hoysala period (13th-14th century). The Fellow will select an area of focus, such as cross-regional transmission of design and form, regional characteristics in jewelry fashions, or meanings and uses of a range of gems and ornaments. The research will enhance materials in the CA&A archive, emphasizing the abundant resources on jewelry and adornment, and making these a more accessible and useful resource.

Methodology

During the initial phase, the Fellow will review the archival materials on jewelry and consult relevant sources online and in print. The Fellow will select a topic to focus on, develop a concept note for a virtual exhibition, and prepare a checklist of archival materials to be included. In the second phase, the exhibition will be designed on WordPress and launched on the Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds ([VMIS](#)).

Deliverable

The Fellow will share research information collected on the project with the CA&A to enhance existing metadata and curate a virtual exhibition for the VMIS website.

Project Supervisor

Vandana Sinha, Director, Center for Art and Archaeology, AIIS

Project 4: Raising the Game Artfully

Games and sports have long been sources of entertainment and tools for instruction in India. Board games are mentioned in Vedic literature. A game of *pachisi* (parcheesi) lies at the heart of the epic *Mahabharata*. The CA&A photo archive contains many images that depict games and athletic events in paintings, sculpture and architecture, including *ganjifa* cards from Odisha ornamented with illustrations of the avatars of Vishnu, and court paintings with scenes of kite flying, elephant competitions, royal hunting parties, gymnastic bouts, performing acrobats and courtiers playing board games such as *gyan chaupar* (the precursor of modern snakes and ladders). Documentary photographs of monuments include depictions of cock fights, wrestling matches, and of Parvati and Shiva playing dice. The Fellow will select a topic that can be developed from archival resources, focusing on particular games and sports, such as dice, parcheesi, snakes and ladders, and wrestling, to consider the roles of such games in stories of the gods, in courtship, and in competitions for social precedence.

The objective of this project is to create a collection of images from the photo archive that can be enhanced with further research to enrich the archival collection and to develop a virtual exhibition conveying the significances of sports and games in Indian art and life to an international audience.

Methodology

During the initial phase, the Fellow will review archival materials pertaining to games and sports and consult relevant collections available online and published resources. The Fellow will develop a concept note for the exhibition and prepare a checklist of the materials from the collection to include in a virtual exhibition. In the second phase, the exhibition will be designed on WordPress and launched on the Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds ([VMIS](#)).

Deliverable

The Fellow will share research information collected on the project with the CA&A to enhance existing metadata and create a virtual exhibition for the VMIS website.

Project Supervisor

Vandana Sinha, Director, Center for Art and Archaeology, AIIS

Project 5: Situating the Great Monastery of Nalanda Through the Asher Archive

In 2017 the late Frederick M. Asher, former AIIS President and a leading historian of Indian art history, donated a private archive comprising 25,000 digital images to the CA&A, including photography of historical sites across India. Professor Asher specialized in Buddhist pilgrimage sites and the visual culture of the Indian Ocean. The CA&A has recently launched materials from the Asher archive on two major Buddhist sites, Bodh Gaya and Sarnath. These are now available on the Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds ([VMIS](#)).

The current project aims to develop Asher materials from another major Buddhist site—the ancient monastery and university of Nalanda (Bihar), recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. Images from the Asher archive visually record the remains of a great monastic settlement including dwellings, temples, and sculptures in stucco and stone, which may have extended to twice the excavated area.

The Fellow will review relevant primary and secondary academic sources to gather information that would locate structures photographed and provide basic metadata for the images to be recorded in a template. The completed project will be published on VMIS making it available to scholars and others interested in early Buddhism in South Asia.

Methodology

After reviewing the Asher materials on Nalanda to undertake a preliminary organization by location, the Fellow will consult online and available sources in the CA&A archive and library, to compile relevant information about structures, iconography, materials, etc. The Fellow will write captions for each image including, wherever possible, subject, patron, architectural style, construction material and date. The Fellow will also prepare a bibliography and write an introduction to the site and the relationship between the site and the CA&A Asher image archive. The metadata for each record will be recorded using the CA&A template in an Excel format with guidance from research and technical staff. The prepared Asher materials will be uploaded on VMIS.

Deliverable

The Fellow will prepare an image catalogue of the Asher images of Nalanda for publication on VMIS. The Fellow will also submit an introduction to the site, the archived materials, and the prepared bibliography. The project calls for strong art historical research and data organization skills and working proficiency with Microsoft Excel.

Project Supervisor

Vandana Sinha, Director, Center for Art and Archaeology, AIIS