International Workshop on Women’s Autobiography in Islamic Societies

Authors and Patrons: Social Contexts of Legal Texts in Ancient India

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Science and Technology Studies in South Asia

Hindi Urdu Flagship Program Report
This will be the last “Director’s Letter” I will have the pleasure of writing. At the end of June 2010, I hand over leadership of the South Asia Institute to Prof. Kamran Ali of the Department of Anthropology. I have no doubt that the Institute will thrive under his open and collegial style and high intellectual standards.

It’s not really true of course, but it feels as if all of 2009-2010 was consumed first by data collection, planning, and coordinating, then writing and finally proof reading -- endlessly -- the federal Title VI NRC grant proposal. Normally, we would have completed the proposal during the summer of 2009, but with various branches of the federal government in non-corresponding states of bureaucratic stasis, the deadline kept getting moved back. Finally, we submitted the grant in March 2010, and we hope to hear the results by the end of the summer. Grant writing is perhaps the least exciting aspect of this job, but there are some -- as the economists say -- positive externalities. One is that the octopus called SAI finally becomes a lot more legible than it was four years ago. The usual irony follows: namely, that you only really understand the system when it’s time to step down. Also, it became clear that the Institute needs a much better record-keeping system. This summer, we are working to create such a system using the latest in database technology, with the help of a particularly computer-literate graduate student.

On to more exciting things: our long-running fall and spring semester seminar series, conferences, workshops, and outreach teacher training events. The fall series was organized by Janice Leoshko (Art History) and Patrick Olivelle (Asian Studies) and concentrated on recent work in the South Asian humanities and classics. The series was book-ended by UT scholars Martha Selby speaking about a fourth-century Tamil anthology and Joel Brereton discussing his translation of the Rg Veda. The spring series was devoted to new media, communications and visual technologies, organized by Shanti Kumar (Radio, Television, Film). This series included presentations by scholars from India; Ravi Sundaram of SARAI/CSDS in Delhi and S. V. Srinivas of the Bangalore-based CSCS spent a few days in Austin meeting with faculty and students and discussing their work. The outreach program conducted two well-attended workshops for K-12 teachers, taking advantage of the energy of new SAI faculty Heather Hindman (Asian Studies), Ipsita Chatterjee (Geography), and Snehal Shingavi (English). SAI sponsored a number of specialized workshops and conferences in this last year, including on legal texts in ancient and medieval India, new research in South Asian science and technology studies, and women’s autobiographical writing in the Muslim world. There are longer reports on these conferences and workshops in the newsletter. As always, SAI staff did huge amounts of work behind the scenes to permit these events to come off as smoothly as they did. Many thanks to Don, Jeff, Rachel, and Rita.

The Institute has done a lot in the last four years, from writing reports on second language needs in Texas to hosting music concerts and film series to showcasing our strengths in ancient and modern South Asia through specialized workshops and conferences on a wide range of topics. We have not restricted ourselves to the presentation of academic work alone by also conducting extremely popular teach-ins and topical roundtables on, for example, the military in Pakistan and the Maoist movement in India. This kind of activity should be seen as an extension of our outreach work to K-12 schools as, increasingly, South Asia is becoming of interest to non-academic audiences as a result of the region’s new visibility (for reasons both good and bad). Helping new constituencies understand South Asia beyond the shorthand of news headlines is something that the Institute must continue to be sensitive to and find adequate ways of addressing.

In closing, let me say that of all the activities that I conducted as director, the most rewarding were those that helped advance the careers of graduate students. At the end of the day, the UT South Asia program will be known by the quality of the graduate students it produces. As we are increasingly aware, the intensity of competition fresh PhDs will face is steadily rising, even as the quantum of resources available to graduate students is likely to decline. This worrisome trend is everyone’s concern and everyone’s responsibility, and is, to my mind, the issue that should be elevated to the highest level of attention for the SAI community in coming years. We need to work harder to make sure that our students apply for and receive the most prestigious national and international fellowships, submit articles to scholarly journals even while in graduate school, and get jobs in the best departments in the country. We need to make sure the quality of the student-run journal Sagar remains as high as ever, as also the biennial student-organized conference. Without our concerted effort, the future is going to be tough on our students, which, by extension, will have a considerable impact on the quality of UT’s South Asia program.

With my best wishes for the coming year and my qualified thanks for four years of constant change,

Itty Abraham
Kamran Asdar Ali, newly appointed Director of the South Asia Institute:
Kamran Asdar Ali is Associate Professor of Anthropology, Middle East Studies and Asian Studies at the University of Texas, Austin. He previously taught at the University of Rochester (1995-2001). His more recent work has been on ethnic, class and gender issues in Pakistan and is currently finishing a manuscript on the cultural history of the political Left during Pakistan's early years. He will be on leave in 2010-2011 as a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin and will take over Institute duties full time in the fall of 2011.

Kathryn Hansen, Interim Director of the South Asia Institute:
Kathryn Hansen is Professor of Asian Studies with a Ph.D. from the University of California-Berkeley. She was previously Director of the Center for Asian Studies at UT-Austin (2000-04). She will be with the Institute through the summer of 2011. Her research interests include the history of theatrical practices in South Asia, gender and performance, South Asian literary and cultural studies (modern period), and South Asian languages (Hindi, Urdu).

Retirement of Herman van Olphen:
HUF's Director, Herman van Olphen, will retire from UT in August 2010 after a long career in Hindi pedagogy. He will be succeeded as Director by Rupert Snell. 'Hindi in Texas and Beyond,' a symposium in honor of Herman's career, was organized by HUF and the Department of Asian Studies on April 10, 2010, following a reception the evening before. Papers on various aspects of Hindi language and literature were presented by guest speakers Michael Shapiro (University of Washington) and Laura Brueck (UT alumna; University of Colorado), and by Sarah Green, Kathryn Hansen, Jishnu Shankar and Rupert Snell from UT.
Faculty

Itty Abraham (Government and Asian Studies) spent much of the last year getting the Institute’s Title VI proposal together with the help of the SAI staff. He also organized a conference on South Asian science and technology studies at the end of the spring semester. He served on the selection committee for the Early Career Fellowship Program of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). He published “Segurança/Security in the United States and Brazil,” in Words in Motion: Toward a Global Lexicon edited by Carol Gluck and Anna Tsing, and has an essay on the history of Travancore forthcoming in Entangled Geographies, edited by Gabrielle Hecht. His co-edited volume, Political Violence in South and Southeast Asia: Critical Perspectives will be published in fall 2010. He will be on leave during 2010-11 academic year when he hopes to get lots of writing done.

Kamran Asdar Ali (Anthropology) was elected the Vice President of the American Institute of Pakistan Studies (2010-2013). He was also recently elected the Secretary for the Middle East Section of the American Anthropological Society for three years. He received the Faculty Research Assignment Fellowship (UT) for the year 2010-2011, which he will use in conjunction with his one year residential fellowship at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin. He wrote the Foreword for the book Muhajirs and Nation: Bihar in the 1940s by Papiya Ghosh. He has three forthcoming publications, “Voicing Difference: Gender and Civic Engagement among Karachi’s Poor” in Current Anthropology; “Communists in a Muslim Land: Cultural Debates in Pakistan’s Early Years” in Modern Asian Studies and “Structural Adjustment, Impotence and Family Planning: Men’s Voices in Egypt” in Markets and Malthus: Gender, Health and Population in neoliberal Times (Sage) edited by Sarah Sexton and Mohan Rao.

Sarfraz Khurshid (Electrical and Computer Engineering) has become the fifth ECE faculty member to win the most prestigious prize the National Science Foundation offers this year. The CAREER award supports the early career-development activities of the country’s most promising researchers. Khurshid’s project, “Scalable and Systematic Test Authoring and Maintenance,” addresses the primary problems of testing software, namely, the high cost and frequent failure to identify crucial bugs. Khurshid proposes a new test automation framework based on test summaries: abstract properties of desired tests written by developers.

Judith Kroll (English) spent the summer of 2009 in India. She worked on various projects with Indian content: she writes poems and lyric essays, and has done collaborative translations from Kannada, including Devanura Mahadeva’s novel Kasumabale. She is the 2010 winner of the $1,000 nonfiction prize from Gulf Coast Magazine. Her prize-winning essay, “Happy Families,” will be published in October.

Kathryn Hansen (Asian Studies) has a new book, Stages of Life: Autobiographies from the Parsi Theatre, forthcoming from Permanent Black in Delhi in late 2010. Her article “Who Wants To Be a Cosmopolitan? Readings from the Composite Culture” is forthcoming in Indian Economic and Social History Review. She presented guest lectures at the AJK Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia; at SARAI at the Center for the Study of Developing Societies; and at a workshop organized by the Hindi Urdu Flagship in honor of retiring Prof. Herman van Olphen.

Patrick Olivelle (Asian Studies), along with several colleagues including Janice Leoshko (Asian Studies and Art History) and Himanshu Ray (JNU), organized a major international conference “Ashoka and the Making of Modern India” at the India International Center, Delhi, August 5-7, 2009. The conference was co-sponsored by the University of Texas at Austin, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Council for Historical Research, American Institute of Indian Studies, and India International Centre. Participants included 24 scholars from America, India, Europe, and Asia. Olivelle’s edition and translation of Vishnu’s Code of Law (Vishnu-smriti) was published in the Harvard Oriental Series. His edited volume, Dharma: Studies in its Semantic, Cultural, and Religious History was published by Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi. Two volumes of Olivelle’s Collected Papers were published by the University of Florence Press. In the summer of 2010 Olivelle will be a visiting scholar in Australia, giving talks at universities in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, and Canberra. He will also deliver the keynote address at the Australian Sanskrit Conference in July, 2010.

Martha Ann Selby (Asian Studies) will be a fellow at the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina for the 2010-2011 academic year. She has been named NEH Fellow, and was granted this award to finish her book manuscript, “The Semiotics of Gender and Femininity in Early Sanskrit Medical Literature.” Selby is also working on a translation of the Tamil writer D. Dilip Kumar’s short fiction.

Rupert Snell (Asian Studies) will take over as director, Hindi-Urdu Flagship program, succeeding Herman van Olphen. He has been putting old wine in new bottles, preparing new editions of his five Hindi textbooks in the Hodder “Teach Yourself” series. They will appear in 2010 under
the new titles Complete Hindi, Get Started in Hindi, Speak Hindi with Confidence, Essential Hindi Dictionary, and Read and Write Hindi Script. He has also been developing new materials for the study of classical Braj Bhasha literature; this and other online resources are mentioned in the Hindi Urdu Flagship report elsewhere in this newsletter.


Graduate Students

Amber Abbas spent 2009 in India (Aligarh, Lucknow, New Delhi) on Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship conducting field research for her History Ph.D. currently entitled “Community Memories/Muslim Voices: Oral Histories of Post-Partition South Asia.” She conducted dozens of interviews, and worked in the Aligarh Muslim University archives and in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. She received support from the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies for research in Dhaka. She was also invited to give the keynote speech at the Annual Meeting of the Aligarh Muslim University Old Boys’ Association- Bangladesh. Now concluding her fieldwork in Pakistan, Amber will spend 2010-2011 in Austin writing the dissertation.

Abdul Haque Chang is a Fulbright scholar from Pakistan and graduate student in the department of Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin. He has just been awarded a master’s degree for his thesis titled “The Issue of Hur Representation in the Historiography of Sindh”. During the summer 2009, he delivered a series of lectures at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro and Quaid-I Azam University, Islamabad. He delivered a lecture on “Malamati Sufis of Sindh” at the Khankhah of Hur Ali Fakir in Kotri, Sindh arranged by the Fakirs of Janan Chan and presented “The Hurs of Sindh: A Historiography of a Rebellion from a Subaltern Perspective” at the 38th Annual Conference on South Asia at University of Wisconsin Madison. During 2009-10 he published four articles in The News. He received the UT Liberal Arts Graduate Research Fellowship in 2009 and has been awarded the Dean's Prestigious Fellowship Award from College of Liberal Arts for year 2010-11.

Natasha Raheja presented papers at the Graduate Comparative Literature Conference (2009) and the Association for Asian-American Studies Conference (2009). She was also awarded a FLAS summer fellowship (2009) to continue her study of Sindhi.

Jolie Wood has accepted a position as assistant professor at the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Chittagong, Bangladesh. AUW is an international, independent, liberal arts institution established in 2008.

Undergraduate Students

Dhawal Doshi received the JR Roach Scholarship in American Foreign Relations from the Department of Government to attend the First Sino-Indian University Student Forum at Peking University, China in May 2009. About 50 students from Indian and Chinese universities were invited to participate in this prestigious event which provided a platform to exchange views on politics, economics, and culture in both countries. Dhawal was the only student participant representing a university outside of India and China, and was voted the best student delegate in the politics discussion group.
An international workshop on “Women’s Autobiography in Islamic Societies” took place in Austin, January 28-30, 2010, co-sponsored by the Arts & Humanities Research Council of the United Kingdom and the South Asia Institute of the University of Texas. Dr. Siobhan Lambert-Hurley of Loughborough University and Dr. Gail Minault of the University of Texas were the co-chairs of the workshop, which included panels on Arabic, Persian, Turkish and South Asian Muslim women’s self-expression, and papers by an international group of distinguished feminist scholars of literature, languages, and history. This workshop is the first in a series of three that will be held on the subject of women’s autobiography in the Islamic world, and the South Asia Institute is especially honored to have had a part in bringing this inaugural event to the University of Texas campus. Subsequent workshops will be held in New Delhi in December 2010, and in Sharjah, UAE in late 2011.

The keynote address: “Prisoners Awaiting Liberation: On Captivity and Flight in Iranian Women’s Life Narratives” was given by Farzaneh Milani of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, who was introduced by Michael Hillman of the University of Texas. A panel on South Asian Women’s writing included papers by Siobhan Lambert-Hurley of Loughborough University, England; Anshu Malhotra of Delhi University, India; and Sylvia Vatuk of the University of Illinois at Chicago, and was chaired by Gail Minault of the University of Texas. A panel on Arab women’s writings featured papers by Margot Badran of Georgetown University, Washington, DC; Marilyn Booth of Edinburgh University, Scotland; and Nawar Al-Hassan Golley of the American University of Sharjah, UAE, and was chaired by Tariq El-Ariss, from the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas.

Subsequent panels included papers by Kathryn Babayan of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Ruby Lal of Emory University, Atlanta, GA; and Ashan Bokhari of Suffolk University, Boston, MA; chaired by Cynthia Talbot of the History and Asian Studies Departments, University of Texas. A panel on “nationalism and feminism in Turkish and Arabic writings” featured papers by Roberta Micallef of Boston University; Miriam Cooke of Duke University, Durham, NC; and Hulya Adak of Sabanci University, Istanbul, Turkey; it was chaired by Faegheh Shirazi of the University of Texas. Finally, a panel compared contemporary voices from Egypt, Algeria, and Bangladesh with papers by Ellen McLarney of Duke University, Durham, NC; Sonia Nishat Amin from Dhaka University, Bangladesh; and Mildred Mortimer of the University of Colorado at Boulder; chaired by Kamran Ali and Rasha Diab, both of the University of Texas at Austin.

Gail Minault is a Professor of History at UT.

Authors and Patrons: Social Contexts of Legal Texts in Ancient India

The workshop “Authors and Patrons: Social Contexts of Legal Texts in Ancient India” held on February 19, 2010 brought together five scholars from institutions in the USA and Italy, as well as local scholars, to address issues relating to the production and consumption of legal texts in ancient and medieval India. The participants included Donald Davis of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Mark McClish of Rippon College, David Brick of Yale University, Ethan Kroll of Stanford University, Federico Squarcini of the University of Florence, Timothy Lubin of Washington and Lee University, and Patrick Olivelle of the University of Texas at Austin.

The seven speakers addressed a variety of texts, situating them as far as possible in their historical and geographic locations and exploring the authors and their possible patrons within their social, economic, and political contexts. In the past work
on Indian legal texts have been focused primarily on the texts themselves from a strictly philological context. This symposium attempted to look at these texts as products of specific social and historical contexts.

Many faculty and graduate students attended the symposium and participated in the discussions, especially in the final session that was devoted completely to discussing the papers. The symposium also led to the establishment of an international group of scholars working on Indian legal texts.

Patrick Olivelle is a Professor of Asian Studies at UT.

National Workshop to Draw Common Strategies in Tamil Curriculum

Sankaran Radhakrishnan organized a workshop on spoken Tamil from 12-13 March 2010, with support from the Department of Education. The workshop attracted Tamil instructors from across the US. Most of the papers on the first day mainly focused on teaching methodologies, and materials used in teaching spoken Tamil. On the second day, participants actively engaged to work out strategies to teach spoken Tamil in US.

A major issue of concern in teaching spoken Tamil is the issue of authentic or what it is called “standard” spoken Tamil. The group recognized communication as the core element while considering the “authentic” nature of spoken Tamil, the literary language cannot serve this function because it tends to be stilted, highly complex, and used mainly in oration or to work with classical Tamil or classical literatures. In recent years, it has become common to state that spoken Tamil language taught should have examples that are “authentic” rather than the kind of “stilted” and “artificial” language that sometimes have been used in the past.

Tamil has a continuous history of spoken-written differences from the fifth century CE onward. The problem for teaching spoken Tamil is that (1) there are different dialects of spoken Tamil; (2) some of those dialects are stigmatized as being vulgar, coarse, non-standard or sub-standard; (3) dialects are associated with certain social groups. Further, in spoken Tamil a number of phonological processes (v-deletion, palatalization, short-vowel deletion, nasal-cluster simplification, diphthong monophthongization, and nasalization), often pose challenges for teachers of spoken Tamil to stick to one “authentic” pronunciation. Therefore the workshop suggested narrowing down the range of ‘authentic’ speeches to a form that avoids such problems.

Schiffman (U Penn) asserts that there is a fixed definition of linguistic authenticity, and people can measure it exactly. Language variations are not so colloquial as to be “non-standard” or felt to be even “sub-standard” only because they evoke issues of ‘peculiarity’ (What variationists call ‘basilectal.’). It was agreed that the forms taught must be midway between stilted and artificial on one end of the spectrum, and colloquial, peculiar on the other end. In discussing the teaching materials, especially at the Intermediate and Advanced levels of spoken Tamil, the issue of a Tamil database came up. Suggestions were made to create more materials through a project to transcribe the sound tracks of Tamil ‘social’ movies, Tamil radio plays and TV sitcoms, with the caveat that some of the material in these corpora would be problematic for their depiction of certain social stereotypes through language usage. Schiffman also pointed out that there are also sound files recently digitized from Grierson’s Linguistic Survey of India that have some interesting material on them.

Keeping all these as strategies in mind, the group discussed materials to be used from the beginning to advanced levels. The group also discussed tasks that Tamil instructors wish to work on in a future series of Tamil workshops. The goal is the development of a task-based textbook along with audio/video materials that would be good for all levels, but particularly for Intermediate and Advanced levels of spoken Tamil.

Sankaran Radhakrishnan is a senior lecturer in Tamil with the Dept. of Asian Studies at UT.
Science and Technology Studies in South Asia

At the end of the Spring 2010 semester, the South Asia Institute (SAI) of the University of Texas at Austin sponsored a two day conference on the state of Science and Technology Studies (STS) in South Asia. The conference included chaired panels on topics ranging from the largest of cities to the smallest of particles.

Recognizing the significant time elapsed since the last STS in South Asia meeting (held at MIT in 2005), the organizers sought to bring together the expanding number of scholars interested in this topic. With an increasing number of scholars pursuing STS-South Asia related issues, including a number of ongoing PhD projects, Director Itty Abraham and his co-organizers assembled this conference to build connections between the new and established members of this field. Together with Kavita Philip (University of California at Irvine), Amit Prasad (University of Missouri at Columbia), and Banu Subramaniam (University of Massachusetts at Amherst), SAI was excited to organize this conference and contribute to the development of the field.

Prior to the start of the panels, the conference held a graduate student workshop allowing emerging scholars an opportunity to discuss their work with established members of the field. Of particular interest was a paper on the India Space Program chronicling a NASA-sponsored satellite used to broadcast educational programming to rural Indian villages in the 1970’s.

Other topics included white cataract surgery in India and Nepal and the peripheral nature of Satyendra Nath Bose’s relationship to Albert Einstein.

The conference began Friday morning with a panel on “Colonial and Postcolonial Histories of Technology and Medicine” chaired by David Arnold (University of Warwick). The papers presented in this panel were: “Negotiating Rare Earths in India: post-colonial expectations around thorium, beryl, and uranium 1947-55” [Robert S. Anderson]; “From Economic Biology to
Ethnobiology: E. K. Janaki Ammal and the re-ordering of the South Asian Environment, 1897-1984” [Savithri Preetha Nair]; and, “Global Science and Colonial Science in a Princely State: The Travancore Magnetic Observatory” [Jessica Ratcliff]. The discussion following the presentations raised important critiques of the term ‘Colonial Science.’

The following panel, chaired by Elizabeth Mueller (UT School of Architecture), focused on “Cities and Landscapes in South Asia”. Papers presented in this panel were: “The ‘Happy’ City: Techniques of security and the emergence of gated residential communities in Bangalore” [Simanti Dasgupta]; “Investigating Infrastructure Congestion in India: Shahri Navikaran, Infrastructure Policy, and Politics” [Govind Gopakumar]; “Delhi’s Postcolonial Development Machine” [Leon Morenas]; “Technologies of Consumption: Commercial Architecture in 20th and 21st century western India” [Arafaat Valiani]. Much of the discussion revolved around gated communities; hidden behind the neo-liberal veil of ‘happiness’ it was proposed that these communities reproduce traditional social divisions such as caste, income, etc. Comments aimed also to unpack the idea of congestion to better understand the motivations behind different interest groups.

The final panel on Friday, “Beyond IT” chaired by Robert Oppenheim (Asian Studies, UT) dealt with the importance of information technology within South Asia and to South Asian migrants. Papers presented in this panel were: “Migrant Programming” [Sareeta Amrute]; “The Globalization of Nocturnal Labor” [Aneesh Aneesh]; “Computers and Geeks as Icons in South Indian Cinema” [Joyojeet Pal]; “Emotion Detectors, Answering Machines, and e-Unions: Multi-Surveillance in the Indian Call Center Industry” [Winifred Poster]. Joyojeet Pal made a fascinating presentation on the representation of computers and geeks as icons in South Indian cinema. Comments from the audience highlighted special meanings for “night work” in South Asia.

Friday’s events closed with the keynote address by David Arnold on “Situating Technology: Reflections on the Rise of Techno-modernity in 19th and 20th century South Asia”. Dr. Arnold began by inviting a fresh interdisciplinary approach to the study of technology. He explored everyday technologies as a window into the different approaches and discoveries in the history of technology and STS at large. The origins and influence of everyday technologies provide exceptional support to the reframing of the “colonial science” debate from one about technology diffusion or transfer to one about ‘indigenization.’ Arnold beautifully illustrated his point through his discussion of the introduction and the subsequent appropriation of the sewing machine, the typewriter, the bicycle, and the rice mill in colonial India.

Events on Saturday began with a panel on “Biopolitics, Gender, and the Environment” chaired by Barbara Harlow (Louann and Larry Temple Centennial Professor of English Literatures, UT). Papers presented in this panel were: “Biological Citizens: Risk and Radiation in Southwest India” [Itty Abraham], “India’s House Crow: The environmental history of a diasporic species” [Paul Greenough], “New Materialism and the Practices of Colonialism: Technologies of surrogacy in India” [Banu Subramaniam and Deboleena Roy], “Illusions and Erasures in Science Studies” [Abha Sur]. The final panel of the conference focused on “Science and the (Neo-liberal) State”, chaired by Kavita Philip (University of California at Irvine). Papers presented in this panel were: “Into the Light: Markets, Technology and the Social Good in India” [Jamie Cross]; “Crafting capital in India’s margins: Watershed development and state formation in an era of economic reform” [Dolly Daftary]; “India’s New Gene Wars: Cotton to Eggplant” [Ron Herring]; “An Urban Political Ecology of the Green Building Industry in India” [Aman Luthra].

The conference closed with a roundtable discussion on specific issues raised during the conference and on the need for such a conference on Science and Technology Studies in South Asia. Dr. Amit Prasad raised the issue of the archive, one that came up in discussions throughout the conference. Dr. Kavita Philip spoke on the desire (and opposition) to the development of STS as a field in its own right, recommending that STS be concerned less with disciplinary development and continue to privilege a multi-disciplinary approach to these issues. A number of the younger scholars mentioned the pragmatic need for STS as a discipline when seeking funding, employment, and students. The conference as a whole raised many questions and sparked many new lines of inquiry for the participants. The oft spoken phrase “I’m not an STS person, but…” both emphasized the wonders of this powerful interdisciplinary field at attracting new scholarly attention and the lack of disciplinary identity that prevented many participants from discovering STS before this conference.

Konrad Posch will begin graduate work at the University of Chicago in the fall.
The Hindi Urdu Flagship (HUF), part of the national Language Flagship initiative, is a four-year undergraduate program whose aim is to bring students to a ‘Superior’ level of linguistic proficiency while they major in any field of study offered at UT. HUF first opened its doors in 2007 and will admit its fourth cohort of students in the fall of 2010. Hindi and Urdu are taught in parallel throughout the program. The first two years lay a strong foundation in grammar, literature and culture, preparing the students for the third year, which is spent studying in India. HUF’s overseas program is special collaboration with the Lucknow center of the American Institute of India Studies. HUF students have intensive tuition in Hindi and Urdu with the AIIS teachers, and also pursue internships in Lucknow-based organizations operating in the Hindi/Urdu medium. The culmination of the program is a fourth-year ‘capstone’ project back at UT, based on research conducted in India during the previous year. HUF has inaugurated the Overseas segment of the program, with the first cohort spending the 2009 academic year ‘immersed’ in the Hindi- and Urdu-speaking environment of two Indian state capitals – Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh). Among a number of trips to other cities in India during the year, the most extended was a period of nearly three weeks spent in Hyderabad (Andhra) under the guidance of Dr. Akbar Hyder, HUF’s Associate Director for Urdu; this pilgrimage to one of the major centers of Urdu literary culture yielded numerous encounters with writers and poets, allowing our students a close-up view of culture and adab — the refinement, decorum and humaneness that is such an important focus within the literature. While in India our students also took a range of other courses relevant to their majors, taught locally but for UT credit, a notable example being Sanjay Gulati’s pursuit of a course at the prestigious (and normally post-graduate-only) Indian Institute of Management. HUF students in India interned with such organizations as the BETI Foundation (‘Better Education Through Innovation’), the King George Medical College (Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj Medical University), the Aastha Hospice, and the Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan. HUF is particularly indebted to Drs Akbar Hyder and Sarah Green for their unstinting efforts in establishing an Overseas experience of such great pedagogical value.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, HUF continued to work towards its mandate of developing materials for those teaching and studying our two languages at all levels across the US. A particular focus has been the development of new modes of assessment, aimed at indexing the achievement levels of students in uniform ways that reflect such national standards as those published by ACTFL, the American Council for the
Teaching of Foreign Languages. A workshop on assessment was organized jointly by HUF and the South Asia Institute on the 7th and 8th of May, 2010. Four specialists – Susham Bedi and Rakesh Ranjan from Columbia University, Gabriela Nik Ilieva from New York University, and Gyanam Mahajan from University of California at Berkeley – were the invited speakers. Schoolteachers from New Jersey and Alabama, together with South Asia language instructors from UT, participated in exceptionally lively discussions and training sessions. Online Teaching/Learning Materials available on HUF’s website at www.hindiurduflagship.org is maintained by our Media Coordinator Jonathan Seefeldt, whose own background in Hindi gives him hands-on expertise in the development of numerous teaching and learning applications, freely available online to all comers. The Hindi Thesaurus, with a still-growing number of episodes, has become popular both through HUF’s website and in podcast format — the latter proving also to be a useful route through which learners come to hear of HUF and to benefit from its broader range of online facilities. The same Thesaurus recording team of Rupert Snell and Neha Ladha has recently added another innovative online feature, Glossaries Alive, which helps novice learners develop their active vocabulary. Future plans for web-based materials include a Hindi-Urdu pronunciation guide and Drilling for Fluency, a set of drills designed to help learners develop an instinctive command over essential verb patterns and conversational phrases. Rupert Snell’s introduction to literary Braj Bhasha — the paramount dialect of pre-modern Hindi, will join the website soon.

One of HUF’s ongoing projects is ‘Language for Health’, a collaboration with colleagues at New York University and Columbia University. The aim of Language for Health is to develop a comprehensive set of pedagogical materials and guidelines to teach advanced Hindi Urdu specifically for the healthcare context. The team leader for this project is our very own Jishnu Shankar, who writes: “The Language for Health project is progressing on schedule. We have finished the crucial first phase of filming in India, interviewing Ayurvedic practitioners, Yunani doctors, and conventional doctors in urban, semi-urban and rural settings. With the transcription and translation of these video interviews finished, we are well on our way to planning the instructional units that will be presented on the Language for Health website. This website is being developed in collaboration with the UT Liberal Arts Digital Archive Services (DASE) and the Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment (DIIA). Instructional units will cover lessons based on the language used while talking about Ayurvedic, Yunani and conventional medicine by its practitioners, and should be useful to our Hindi students as well as medical practitioners in the US.”

Awards in the Fall of 2009:
The Asrar-al-Haque Majaz Award for Urdu Literature was presented at a mushaira (poetic symposium) in Houston to two members of the HUF community, recognizing their excellence in the scholarly appreciation of Urdu poetry. HUF student Shan Khan received his award in absentia, as he was on the Overseas program in India at the time of the ceremony; but PhD student Max Bruce, mentioned above as one of the Urdu-teaching team within HUF, was not only present but also contributed his hallmark creativity to the mushaira.

Rupert Snell is the newly appointed director of HUF.
This fall the University of Texas welcomed three new South Asia faculty—Ipsita Chatterjee (Geography), Heather Hindman (Asian Studies) and Snehal Shingavi (English). Before they even had a chance to set up offices on campus, I started plotting a strategy to win them over to the cause of K-12 outreach. Their collective expertise (urban geography, global labor markets, contemporary literature of South Asia) had great potential for SAI’s teacher training program. I was correct: thanks to them, two exciting workshops materialized and drew in teachers from a wider range of disciplines and larger number of school districts than SAI has seen to date.

The fall workshop, “Global Flows and Local Impacts: Stories from South Asia”, opened with Ipsita Chatterjee’s introduction to globalization as major force that reshapes social life in the region. Examples from Chatterjee’s research in Ahmedabad, further highlighted how global interactions shape social outcomes. Chatterjee provided workshop participants with lucid understandings of complex concepts and concrete teaching strategies. In the words of one Geography teacher, “Chatterjee gave me great ideas for how to present and define globalization in the broad sense and the particular case study is a great example and model for either presenting my own.”

The workshop also highlighted the work of Heather Hindman. In the midst of teaching a course on Global Markets and Local Cultures, Hindman brought expertise that aligned perfectly with the day. She shared insights into how Nepal links into global labor markets and identified common misconceptions of globalization that the teachers might confront with their own students. In the words of a teacher from Northside ISD in San Antonio, “Hindman’s anecdotes and current examples will definitely find a way into my own lessons and classroom discussions and will make this complex concept more clear, when I try to show students both the positive and negative sides of globalization and cultural change.” In drawing connections between global processes and the local impacts, teachers came to understand some of the unexpected and unintended consequences of globalization.

The day spotlighted additional presentations by Waquar Ahmed, from the Department of Geography at Mount Holyoke College, who examined “globalizing from below” through a discussion of class and caste power in India’s economic liberalization; and SAI Director Itty Abraham, who presented on “nuclear South Asia” and the prospects for global disarmament.

SAI outreach continued to highlight new South Asia faculty in the spring by partnering with Snehal Shingavi in the English Department. The Empire Writes Back: Teaching Postcolonial Literature from South Asia served Social Studies and English teachers who were interested in incorporating literature from South Asia into their curriculum. Snehal opened the event with an introduction to key concepts in postcolonial theory. Later in the day, he examined Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist. His presentation on the short novel delivered an effective, ready-to-use unit of study for educators were looking for new and accessible ways to present the material to middle and high school students. In response to Shingavi’s presentations, one World Literature teacher said, “textbooks rarely represent South Asia and teachers have few resources to approach South Asia. Building a context
“textbooks rarely represent South Asia and teachers have few resources to approach South Asia. Building a context like Shingavi did in his introduction show[s] how studying South Asian Literature is critical to understanding our world and also ourselves.”

The direct relevance of the topic to teachers was deeply felt in a later discussion that flowed from a presentation by Nandini Bhattacharya, who joined the workshop from the Department of English at Texas A&M University. Bhattacharya assigned excerpts of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Palace of Illusions: A Novel*, which recasts the epic tale of the Mahabharata from a woman’s perspective. The personal relevance of the story emerged unexpectedly when a 7th grade English teacher related deeply to Panchaali’s point of view, as both a wife and mother during wartime. The teacher saw in the protagonist’s feelings of ambivalence, sacrifice and frustration shades of her own experience as a military wife during the Vietnam War and the mother of a serviceman currently stationed in Afghanistan. Recalling the exchange, Bhattacharya seemed equally impacted, saying that the conversation highlighted a social dimension to the novel that better informed her how College Station students might also understand the novel in the contemporary US context.

The deep engagement of the teachers emerged again during Brain Doherty’s presentation, when one teacher revealed that she had already assigned “The Road to Salvation” to her students, with the aim of continuing an examination of the story armed with insights gained from Doherty during the workshop. “I am teaching about South Asia and have already incorporated Premchand’s story into my classroom—my students are loving it. How would I ever know about these gems left with additional ready-to-use lessons that were transferable to literature and geography courses alike.

Feedback from the teachers indicates that SAI workshops continue to fill an important need in world studies. In the words of one educator, “These workshops are so important to us as members of an ever-changing world. These sessions teach on an adult level rather than the usual pedantic, condescending ‘red teacher’s apple’ [thing] we’re normally subjected to. The workshops are refreshing for the academics and educators in us all.” A comprehensive and independent evaluation of SAI’s K-12 Outreach program, conducted in the spring, was similarly positive, echoing and expanding on these responses. According to the report, written by Elaine Phillips, several educators surveyed mentioned that what they learned could be used in many content areas and was extremely relevant to current issues. The workshops provided “new insight about a part of the world the [U.S.] news doesn’t report on that much,” claimed one teacher who was surveyed; another appreciated an “insightful view [beyond] the nightly news on social and economic situations in other countries.”

Rachel Meyer has a PhD in anthropology and directs the SAI outreach program.
Travel Report

Kaushik-da came to Manipur!

Every year in the summer, I usually make it a point to go back to Kakching, my hometown, a small town in the south east corner of Manipur. And in those few weeks of summer that I get to spend time at home, I would usually travel all over Manipur. For a state of such small size Manipur is full of surprises in terms of its cultural and natural diversities. So that, every summer I really look forward to coming back home, and explore its secrets. However, last summer (2009) was especially exciting for me as well as my family. The reason was my supervisor at UT – Dr. Kaushik Ghosh. He was visiting me in Manipur for a couple of days. At that time I had difficulty addressing him simply with his first name “Kaushik”, which is the norm (between the graduate students and faculties) at the Anthropology Department at UT. After this trip my initial hesitation gradually wore off and I started addressing him fondly as “Kaushik-da” (da is an honorific term for elder brother in Bengali and Manipuri).

Kaushik-da was of course excited; it was his first visit to Manipur. For many outside of the North East, visiting Manipur for any reason is quite intimidating, I believe. The name “Manipur” conjures up images of military brutality, violent protests, attacks on non-Manipuris, strikes, shoot outs, insurgencies etc. But not Kaushik-da, he was too eager to come and see the place. After all he is an anthropologist! My parents were quite anxious and eager to meet this brave professor. Since Kaushik-da had only a couple of days, we could not plan to visit as many places as we wanted to. Besides, just a couple of days before he arrived, the sensational pictures of the Khwairamban shoot-out had come out in Tehelka. What was claimed initially, by the state police, as a shoot-out between the police commandos and the “militant” (who was shot dead) turned out to be a case of custodial murder by the commandos in broad daylight. Right after the pictures came out in Tehelka, a popular protest literally seized the city of Imphal. State forces were employed and curfew was declared in certain parts of the city to bring the situation under control. Kaushik-da arrives at the Imphal airport in the midst of all these. Thus our movement was more restricted than usual. Nonetheless we tried to make as many visits as possible.

So, right from the airport we whisked him away to a World War II memorial, built by the Japanese for the Japanese soldiers who died in the Battle of Imphal. The Battle of Imphal is considered by many historians as the turning point of the Burma Campaign of the Allied Forces. Many Japanese lost their lives during the WW II in Manipur. For many years the Japanese have been exhuming the remains of their fallen ancestors.

The defeat of the Japanese forces was a fatal blow to the aspirations of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and his INA (Indian National Army). INA had briefly “liberated” this part of India before the eventual defeat. The INA had set up its headquarters...
in a place called Moirang, roughly 50 kms south east of Imphal. Moirang had to be our next stop. The INA museum at Moirang has preserved relics and documents on INA from the WW II. Some interesting and rare documents, currencies of INA, and photographs are on display in the museum.

Apart from the INA connection, Moirang is famous for its rich cultural heritage rooted in the pre-Vaishnavite traditions of Manipur. Thangijing Lai is one of the most revered deities of the Manipuris. People of all religions come here to pay respect to the deity. Another major attraction of Moirang is the beautiful Loktak Lake, the largest fresh water lake in the entire north-east region. With a maximum expanse of 287 sq kms, Loktak is the inspiration of innumerable folklores, folk songs, myths, life styles etc. Naturally endowed with such incredible diversity of flora and fauna, the Loktak is indeed a gift from god. Roughly 40 sq km of the total expanse is covered by a floating bio-mass, locally called phoom-dhis. And this floating grassland is the haven for various endangered species, including the famous “brow-antlered deer” or Sangai. A unique lifestyle had emerged around the phoom-dhis and the lake. People live on patches of phoom-dhis. Small patches of phoom-dhis have been arranged into huge “rings” for farming fishes. Right in the middle of the Loktak is a twin hill – Thanga and Karang. The view of the Loktak from the top of the Thanga hill is simply breathtaking!

The Thanga hill is now currently occupied by the Indian Army, therefore it may not always be accessible all the time. The jawan at the checkpoint (to the hill) was very curious about the fact that Kaushik-da was a teacher in America. A typical north Indian with a huge mustache, the jawan was an inquisitive fellow. However, he was satisfied enough, with his queries about Kaushik-da’s salary (in Indian rupees), and my future prospects in the US, to let us go up the top of Thanga Hill. The view from the top was worth all the trouble. Spectacular! If you are flying into Manipur, you may be sometimes lucky to see the spectacular view of Loktak and its characteristic phoom-dhi “rings” from the window of the plane.

Food and drink are one of the most exciting parts of visiting Manipur. At least Kaushik-da seemed to agree. Before leaving Manipur last summer, he remarked something like all the health conscious Americans just have to come and eat in Manipur, and all their problems would be solved. Well, there is a lot of variety in the food. Very little oil and spices. So it’s not your typical “Indian” cuisine. But definitely as tasty and exciting. And for the pork fans, it is a definite visit. Kaushik-da still swears by my aunt’s pork curry.

Kaushik-da’s trip ended even before it started. There is so much more to explore in Manipur. But as they say, all the good things go to the few brave ones who dare to come to Manipur.

Jogendro Kshetrimayum is a graduate student in Anthropology.
Itty Abraham, Ed.
South Asian Cultures of the Bomb: Atomic Publics and the State in India and Pakistan
Indiana University Press, 2009

Itty Abraham’s edited volume, South Asian Cultures of the Bomb, seeks to fill a crucial gap in our understanding of the relationship between nuclear arms and civil society. As Abraham notes, the book’s ultimate goal is to undo “the conceptual and empirical boundaries segregating nuclear power from the everyday exercise of state power.” Incorporating approaches from diverse fields such as history, sociology, anthropology, and media studies, its nine essays seek to explain how and why India and Pakistan developed nuclear weapons and the effects that such developments had on the general public.

The contributors of the collection ask crucial questions regarding the development of nuclear weapons in South Asia and stress that nuclear weapons should be seen as both local and global phenomena.

Sankaran Krishna asks why India, one of the poorest and most populous countries, wishes to join the small group of nations “that have the capability of annihilating this planet.” He notes the Indian middle class’s profound desire for global recognition. “The bomb” confirms India’s advancement and equality with Western countries and needs to be understood as a symbol of modernity and scientific progress. M. V. Ramana addresses some of the obstacles that elites faced in the pursuit of nuclear weapons. He analyzes the role of secrecy in India’s nuclear program and explains the “pressure of legitimating” nuclear arms in a democratic society. Srirupa Roy asks why a strong anti-nuclear social movement has not developed in India. She argues that people have interpreted mass death from nuclear warfare as a natural disaster, which is “sudden, unforeseen, aberrant.” Roy maintains that this depoliticized vision of “mass death” inhibits the rise of a strong anti-nuclear social movement in India.

In more humanistic-oriented essays, Raminder Kaur and Iftikhar Dadi focus on the effect of nuclear developments on popular cultures in India and Pakistan. Kaur looks at the evidence of India’s nuclear tests in Mumbai’s popular culture through an anthropological lens. Similarly, Dadi analyzes the role of nuclear arms on Pakistani public culture, looking at artifacts, monuments, and media images produced after the 1998 tests. In a more traditional manner, but equally as informative, Haider Nizamani discusses a countrywide survey about popular opinion on nuclear weapons in Pakistan and notes how perceptions of nuclear arms vary across regions and linguistic groups. His findings show that there is much more skepticism regarding nuclear weapons than the Pakistani government would like to admit.

South Asian Cultures of the Bomb is an informative volume that will interest scholars in both the humanities and social sciences as well as scholars of nuclear developments without any specific regional interest. Furthermore, it covers the issues in both Pakistan and India and helps create dialogue across a contested border. We can also read this collection as a direct critique of security studies, a field which, in the editor’s as well as contributors’ opinions, is inherently limited because it segregates nuclear power from social and cultural analysis. South Asian Cultures of the Bomb is not an exhaustive study, but rather a pioneering work that will spur an important conversation. The collection convincingly argues that nuclear weapons are a vital component of Indian and Pakistani “political, socio-cultural, and technological histories,” and demonstrates the value of understanding the relationship between nuclear arms and social and political developments in contemporary South Asia.

Isabel Huacuja is working on her Ph.D. in History at UT.
The essays have been written over the long span of more than 30 years and edited by Minault herself, published by Permanent Black (November, 2009). One of the most significant features of Minault’s work, and of this volume too, is that she has resisted sensational grand narratives about ‘Islam’ and ‘modernity,’ a popular trend among emerging scholars today.

Her insights are drawn exclusively from the recovery of voices and specific actions of Muslims in their own particular social and political contexts and not from doctrinal or theoretical generalizations. As she has said, “Islam is what Muslims do.”

The first set of essays culled under ‘Gender’ contain discursive analysis of Sayyid Mumtaz Ali’s Huquq un-Niswan involving issues of marriage, purdah and women’s education and a brief enunciation of the ideology of reform by male intellectuals such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi. Other articles in this section highlight the contribution of major Urdu women’s journals like Ismat, Khatoon and Tahzib un-Niswan to questions of religious and social reform and the extremely significant ratification of a series of laws pertaining to marriage such as the Muslim Personal Law of 1937 and the Dissolution of Marriage Act of 1939.

Minault stresses Urdu journalism and its role in mobilizing men and women around ideologies of reform in the section on ‘Language.’ She gives a brief biography of Rashid ul-Khairi and his major concerns in his journal Ismat which helps to highlight relevant differences between male and female reformers. Maintaining her focus on women, Minault also illuminates a vibrant and lively culture of women’s lives through a deconstruction of begamati zabān or words and idioms employed in women’s conversations.

Returning finally to questions of education and instruction that have shaped much of Minault’s work is a section on ‘Learning.’ Here she explores not only the extensive efforts of Shaikh Abdul-lah and Sayyid Karamat Husain for the education of women and girls but also larger efforts in the Muslim community for education and greater political participation in the democratic polity through campaigns for a Muslim university at Aligarh in an article researched and co-authored with David Lelyveld.

With detailed historical evidence and systematic analysis, these articles illustrate the interconnections between gender, language, and culture to reveal challenges and issues that confronted South Asian Muslims during their encounter with the British Empire. Through these interconnections, they show the broader transforming arc of history in the fields of journalism, education, law, family and politics. They therefore should interest not only students of South Asian history but anyone engaged with themes of learning, reform and identity under conditions of colonialism.

Asiya Alam is a graduate student in History at UT.
Media and Postcolonial Culture in India

Spring 2010

March 4th  Arvind Rajagopal
March 25th  Radhika Parameswaran

April 1st  Ravi Sundaram
April 15th  SV Srinivas
April 22nd  John Hutnyk

April 29th  William Mazzarella
May 6th  Purnima Mankekar

Seminar Series

Decolonization and Politics
Covering India: Illustrations of a Nation in Transition
The Postcolonial Information City: Technologies of Fear in Contemporary India
Mythological Speech: Cinema and the Affective Foundations of Mass Mobilization in South India
Music and Terror: World War III and South Asian Diasporic Activism
Beautiful Balloon: The Digital Divide and the Charisma of New Media in India
Unsettling India: Impersonation, Mobility, Identity

The South Asia Institute Seminar Series features lectures by distinguished South Asian specialists from UT and abroad. Regular seminars occur on Thursdays at 3:30 pm, preceded by a reception at 3:00 pm, in the Meyerson Conference Room (WCH 4.118). www.utexas.edu/cola/insts/southasia/

Seminar convener: Shanti Kumar, Department of Radio Television Film, UT Austin
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Locating the Ascetic’s Habitat: Toward a Micro-comparison of Religious Discourses

9/23 J. Patrick Olivelle Asian Studies  
India’s Earliest Writings: A Slightly New Perspective on Ashokan Inscriptions

10/21 Heather Hindman Asian Studies  
Entrepreneurial Dreams of a (not so neo) Liberal Nepal

11/4 Ipsita Chatterjee Geography  
Science, Religion and the Ideology of Urban Governance: Ahmedabad City, India

11/11 Shanti Kumar Radio/TV/Film  
Globalization and Regional Cinemas in India

11/18 Cynthia M. Talbot History  
Transformations of a Heroic History: Prithviraj Chauhan in Colonial India

Seminar convener:  
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With over 50 faculty members in a dozen schools and departments, the University of Texas at Austin has one of the most distinguished South Asia programs in the country.

The South Asia Institute was established as part of a university initiative to promote South Asian programs, especially those pertaining to contemporary issues, across the entire university and in the larger community. As a National Resource Center for South Asia funded by a Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the institute sponsors major conferences, scholarly symposia and a weekly South Asia Seminar. The institute also provides Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships to students pursuing graduate degrees relating to South Asia in any department or school of the University.

Additionally, the Title VI grant also provides resources for outreach programs to K-12 schools, post-secondary institutions, business and civic organizations, and the Texas community at large. Another central mission of the Institute is to promote the study of contemporary South Asian languages in cooperation with the Department of Asian Studies and the Hindi-Urdu Flagship Program. Bengali, Hindi, Malayalam, Sanskrit, Tamil and Urdu are currently taught in the department. The South Asia Initiative underscores the University’s commitment to making the University of Texas South Asia program the best in the country within the next several years.