

# CHICAGO SOUTH ASIA NEWSLETTER

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*sunrise at Kanyakumari,  
Tamil Nadu*

*Travel Diary*, an exhibition of  
photographs from South Asia  
by Emily K. Bloch, is on  
display at the University of  
Chicago until June 8, 2001.



*view from the front seat of the deluxe bus from  
Jaipur to Delhi*



**Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation.** by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere. **Multilingual Matters, 1998.**

“When I read work by Jacques Derrida, Homi Bhabha, or Edward Said, I am often struck by how

naive their ideas about translation sound in comparison to the detailed analysis provided by translation scholars.”

So says Edward Gentzler in the preface to *Constructing Cultures*, and he is not far off the mark: the interdisciplinary field of translation studies has surely come of age. Scholars tempted to hypothesize on the meaning of translation must now engage with a young but full discipline, inspiring in its sophistication, precision, and breadth. But the authors of *Constructing Cultures*, drawing upon cultural studies, make an even stronger claim: all cultural studies ought to take into account the dynamics of translation.

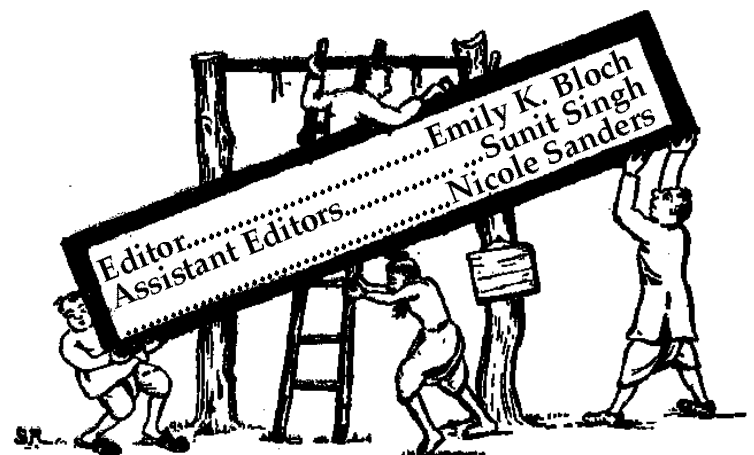
Bassnett and Lefevere are prominent members of the ‘Manipulation School’ of translation studies - scholars who believe that literary translation is best understood as a discursive strategy, the translation itself a tool of influence within the target culture. Translation scholars of this bent have taken the ‘cultural turn,’ aware that when it is studied in history, “[t]ranslation provides researchers with one of the most obvious, comprehensive, and easy to study ‘laboratory situations’ for the study of cultural interaction.” Typically, translation researchers compare translations with source texts (when available) or compare multiple translations of a single source. Bassnett and Lefevere do this but also attempt to place the translations into historical and cultural contexts. The goal is to paint a picture of the process of negotiation between the source text and the target audience, a process that involves more than the proclivities of an individual translator. Historically minded translation scholars ask, Why were these texts translated instead of others? Who sponsored the translations? What assumptions were made about the source, and about the purpose of the finished translation? Is the translation a submission to, or an acculturation of, the source? Do translations form an important part of the target culture’s literature? Such questions allow scholars to read, out of translations, one culture’s perspective on another.

At the same time, translation studies addresses the needs of practicing translators along with the needs of

historians. Translators can use the history of individual translation projects to broaden their perspectives and understand their own preconceptions. And historians who are familiar with the processes and strategies available to translators are able to unearth the choices embedded in individual translations. The authors of *Constructing Cultures* seek, thus, to bridge the practical and the theoretical, and to display the advantages of cross-fertilization in this diverse field.

The seven ‘laboratory’ studies in this short book are engaging primarily for their questions and method. In one particularly coherent essay, Lefevere investigates various translations of the *Aeneid* into English, tracking the *Aeneid*’s ability to provide what Bourdieu terms ‘cultural capital.’ Early translations claimed to provide essential knowledge for the learned gentleman whose Latin was slipping. Over the centuries, not only was the assumption of Latin forgotten, but the significance of the *Aeneid* itself had to be argued for. In another succinct essay, Lefevere argues that the Finnish *Kalevala* was hailed as a legitimate expression of ‘world literature’ only because in its English translation it was mapped onto the ‘textual grid’ (following Homi Bhabha) of epic - a form that the original text does not resemble.

Bassnett detects a dynamic of ‘collusion’ between author and reader in travel writings with unreal dialogue and other obvious fictions that nonetheless claim to be translations. Bassnett leaves us to ponder whether every reader who accepts a translation as a translation might not be guilty of such ‘collusion.’ In an essay on translating theatrical texts, Bassnett argues that the translator’s duty is not to manufacture ‘performability,’ but to transcode the play’s language alone, allowing the director and actors to seek out and ‘translate’ the ambiguities of a script into performance. When Lefevere compares Chinese and Western ideas on translation, he is perhaps biting off more than he can chew. Still, the juxtaposition is suggestive, and though he is unconvincing in his efforts to explain “why Chinese thinking about translation is less beset with anxiety and guilt feelings



Sukumar Ray

than its Western counterpart,” (attributing it largely to the benevolence of the Buddha) his questioning opens a debate on the relation between religious traditions and translation strategies. This issue is only one of many that make it particularly sad that Lefevere, a leader in translation studies, died of leukemia during the production of this book, so that we have to take these essays as his last words on the subject.

Why, in the end, might South Asian studies need translation studies? First, area studies can benefit from the translation studies method, especially where one culture's views of another culture are under consideration, or where a culture has been greatly influenced by translated texts. Second, South Asianists in America are translators, and translation studies literature provides not only practical advice, but also much needed reflection on a translator's proper assumptions and goals. Third, our own knowledge of the field relies upon translation work done by other scholars, and translation studies can help us to place in context the translation strategies employed by our predecessors and colleagues.

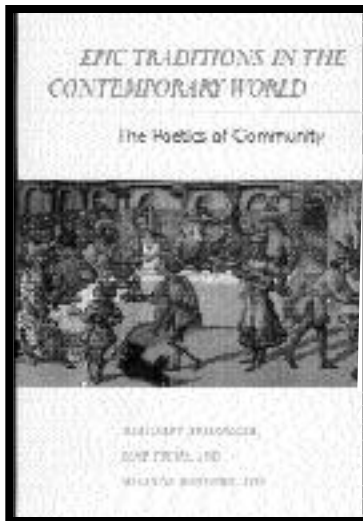
The introductory essay by Bassnett and Lefevere provides a history of the field up to the present, which allows a newcomer to hit the ground running. *Constructing Cultures* can thus be used as a first foray into translation studies, though it is not intended as an overview. For that, try Bassnett's *Translation Studies*. The work as a whole is a convincing argument that translation studies has a future in cultural studies. Most instructive of all are the new models of analysis used by translation studies scholars.

Jonathan Gold

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**Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World.** edited by Margaret Beissinger, Jane Tylus and Susanne Wofford. University of California Press, 1999.

Some years ago, Amitav Ghosh referred to the link between India and diasporic Indians as an epic relationship, a sharing of an unwritten text, made material in the symbolic restructurings of space that are articulated all over the world. It is in much the same spirit that the authors of this book broach the topic of epic poetry. Adopting an



inclusive definition of epic as “a poetic narrative of length and complexity that centers around deeds of significance to the community,” the authors are engaged in the resuscitation of a genre. Not that epics are no longer being read or written, but as the title suggests, their study has too often elided the place of epic poetry in contemporary life. This book is a collection of essays written about epic poetry on subjects as varied as the figure of lament in Western poetry to the relationship of epic to caste identity in middle India. What unites these essays however, is a congeries of issues that demarcate the contemporary boundaries of the epic: the relationship of epic to nationalism and national identity, to canons, to orality and the written word, to cross-cultural analysis, and to local knowledges.

Two selections are of direct relevance to scholars of South Asia, Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger's “Appropriating the Epic: Gender, Caste, and Regional Identity in Middle India,” and William S. Sax's “Worshiping Epic Villains: A Kaurava Cult in the Central Himalayas.” Flueckiger compares the performance of the epic Candaini in Chhattisgarh and in Uttar Pradesh, arguing that in the former, the epic is iconic of regional identity, while in the latter it is used to assert the identity of a particular caste, the Ahirs. She argues cogently for the continuing appropriation of Candaini by various groups, and suggests that folklorists not treat these local appropriations as mere variants of the same story. This insight might lead scholars to investigate more fully how the epic becomes an index of social inclusion by way of linguistic, performative, and institutional processes. Another site of analysis could be an investigation of the relationship of the Candaini epic to other, larger stories also told in the region, such as the Ramayana.

Sax's article focuses on religious practices associated with the Mahabharata. His is a story not of appropriation but of inversion. In the former Himalayan kingdom of Garhwal, the author encounters a form of “Kaurava cult,” which surprises him, given that the Kauravas are usually considered to be the villains of the Mahabharata. Using these religious practices as a springboard, Sax suggests that the reenactments of the epic in Garhwal “provide the basic paradigm for what it means to be Rajput,” and shows how some Garhwalis are in the process of reinventing themselves through remaking their god Duryodhana, and renaming him Someshvara. The authors' writings might lead us to further explore the ways in which epic mediates between conceptual scales of space and time, between the regional and the national for example, between the past and the present, or, as Amitav Ghosh has suggested, between a nation and its diaspora.

This edited volume provides a useful introduction to current scholarly analysis of epic poetry. Although many of the essays do not engage in close analysis of the texts

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themselves, they importantly point out to readers the arenas of social interaction in which epics are produced and performed, and the inseparability of epic texts and their contexts. As such, this book contributes to growing concerns about the place of epic in the imagined spaces of contemporary life.

Sareeta Bipin Amrute

University of Chicago



**Grow Long, Blessed Night: love poems from classical India.** by Martha Ann Selby. Oxford University Press, 2000.

Drawing primarily from the Sanskrit *Amarusataka* (~7th or 8th C.), Prakrit *Gahasattasai* (~1st C.) and the Tamil *cankam* anthologies *Narrinai*, *Kuruntokai* and *Ainkurunuru* (~ 3rd C.), Martha Selby's *Grow long, blessed night* offers a selection of translations and companion essays that provide an accessible entrance to the lyric love poetry of classical India. In addition to a judicious array of pellucid and engaging translations, Selby's introductory essays briefly adumbrate the poems' history, the literary theories that subtend them and the commentarial traditions engaging them. Much of this material has already been splendidly translated, most notably in Ramanujan's *Poems of Love and War* and Ingalls' *Sanskrit Poetry from Vidyakara's 'Treasury'*, and Selby's innovation lies principally in her comparative presentation, which she describes as having a threefold aim: (1) reaching a 'Pan-Indian' understanding of classical lyric poetry, (2) understanding the literary theories which informed this poetry, and (3) elucidating "images of men and women and their environmental, political and sexual worlds." This is, of course, an immense project, and given the book's brevity and emphasis on the translations themselves, the concise prefatory essays succeed most demonstrably in introducing essential questions of textual production and readership to an audience not wholly immersed in South Asian scholarship. Selby's portrayal of classical love



poetry is a valuable resource, providing an accomplished survey of one of classical India's most prolific and rewarding textual genres, while incorporating provocative depictions of the poems' literary environs that certainly enliven an appreciation of the poems themselves. The necessary economy of the introductory survey, however, makes it an unforgiving terrain for imprecision and omission, and in this regard her comparative endeavor suffers considerably.

Setting aside questions of whether the small sampling of lyric poems discussed can provide the basis for a comprehensive understanding of classical lyric poetry, *Grow long, blessed night* pays scant regard to what it means to be 'classical' at all. No attention is given to issues raised by the use of the various languages themselves, and how the designation 'classical' varies decisively depending on the language regime in question. While social rank undoubtedly played a role in the production and reception of Old Tamil poetry, the use of Tamil invoked a role position of regionality far removed from the transregional idioms of Sanskrit and Prakrit. Comparisons are focused rather on interpretive schemes of literary theory, and the stress placed on differentiation engenders notable flaws. Tamil poetry becomes equated with the relatively small body of *caikam* literature, allowing for such erroneous assertions as "*tinai* [a *cankam* principle of compositional motifs] is the hallmark of Tamil poetics," a statement that ignores a vast corpus of post-*cankam* Tamil poetry (lyric and otherwise) that disregarded or markedly reformulated such principles. Literary theorizations addressing Prakrit and Sanskrit poetry are similarly laid on the Procrustean bed, with the result that the Kashmiri school of literary interpretation championed by Anadavardhana and Abhinava is presented as the monolithically regnant view for the entirety of the Sanskrit and Prakrit poetic traditions, despite the presence of a good number of competing and often antithetical formulations. What is missing from this picture is a sense of the profound commonality the three traditions share in their understanding of linguistic affect. For Tamil, Sanskrit, and Prakrit alike, this was a process that involved a highly regimented system of interpretation guiding the elaboration of supra-denotational levels of meaning, and presupposed a reading competence that bears manifest parallels in its social distribution. Such commonality, moreover, heightens the importance of the sense of difference occasioned by the choice in language itself.

Similarly dubious is Selby's depiction of the issues of space and sexuality involved in her comparison. "I would like to trace the movement of classical sexuality as represented in these poems," she writes, "from the public domain to the private." Tamil poetry, we are told, describes a relatively free space in which women can "move freely among the *akam* [love-theme] contexts," but, after



Charles Keyes' report on a funeral ritual for a senior monk illustrates the social importance of religious ritual: of the monk as the focal point of lay merit-making and of the laity as the support and agent of the sangha.

It is possible to read these essays with a number of different audiences or goals in mind. One could read this collection with the hope of understanding what religious practitioners are doing and why. With this focus, one might consider a comparison of lay and monastic practices in a single country. For instance one might compare Taiko Yamasaki's description of the "morning star mediation" by monks in a secluded forest community in Japan with William LaFleur's description of lay devotion to Jizo, the Bodhisattva protector of deceased fetuses, infants and children, in the same country. One could also read this collection to survey the underlying theories of religious practice which these scholars bring to their subject matter. For instance, one might compare Juliane Schober's essay on the ceremonial procession of the Buddha's tooth relic in Myanmar/Burma, which emphasizes the attempt by the country's military regime to use religious ritual for the purpose of political legitimation, with Jason Carbine's vivid report of the yaktovil exorcism ceremony in Sri Lanka, which emphasizes the symbolic role of the Buddha and the Dharma in determining the cosmology governing the efficacy of the ritual actions. In each case, one begins to appreciate the importance of bringing a variety of interpretive frameworks to the subject matter of religious practices.

The strongest points of this volume are its organization and its efficiency. In the course of 15 short essays, the collection presents a picture of diverse practices united by the interaction of monastic and lay individuals in their distinct but complementary roles. For those who have confined themselves to the study of Buddhist narratives or philosophical texts, these essays provide the necessary voices behind the object of Buddhist studies. The weak point of this volume is that it does not present much new material. With the exception of Carbine's essay, specialists are likely to have seen

most of this material already. Even so, *The Life of Buddhism* is a worthwhile read for those familiar with the discipline and an excellent introduction to for those embarking on the path.

David Clairmont

University of Chicago



**Fields of Protest: Women's Movements in India.** by Raka Ray. University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Raka Ray's book, *Fields of Protest: Women's Movements in India*, which tracks the different primary concerns and issues that pre-occupy the women's movements in Bombay and Calcutta,

counters popular constructions of feminist Indian women in the West as either privileged and powerful like Indira Gandhi, or as victims-turned-avenging-queens like Phoolan Devi. Ray seeks to tell us a story about "ordinary Indian women who live, love and work inside and outside the home, struggling singly and collectively, with varying degrees of success, to survive and sometimes remake the family, home and social life." She compares autonomous women's organizations as well as politically affiliated women's organizations in Bombay and Calcutta. Combining interviews, socioeconomic data, historical analysis, participation and observation, Ray offers a stimulating comparative account that both locates in its urban inflections the story of Indian feminist struggle, as well as illuminates the reasons behind the similarities and differences in the articulation of feminist struggle in different urban spaces that inhabit the same national context. In the process, Ray intervenes in several debates surrounding feminism in India, as well as feminist politics in an international context.

Intent on exploring the political and cultural circumstances under which groups of women organize to create and sustain movements, Ray compares the nature of issues that occupy women's organizations in Bombay and Calcutta. The women's movement in Bombay is involved with explicitly feminist issues in international feminist discourses, such as violence against women, safe contraception, and amniocentesis. The concerns of the women's movement in Calcutta, namely, literacy, employment, wage discrimination, water, and electricity, tend to be marginalized. Ray thus



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seeks to recast the latter set of issues as gendered and therefore “legitimate feminist issues.” Appropriating Bourdieu’s concept of fields, Ray suggests that political fields, within which the women’s movement field or protest fields are located, vary from location to location depending upon distribution of power and political culture. Thus, by historically locating the ‘protest fields’ or women’s movement in each city in relation to the political fields and political cultures in those cities, Ray calls attention to the role of culture in a field overly dominated by resource-oriented paradigms of the political process.

This is a stimulating read for those interested in the workings of social movements, and in particular, in the relationship between feminist activism and struggle and the Left in an international context. Its comparative focus on urban spaces is a particularly innovative intervention in a field dominated by national or regional studies like Amrita Basu’s *Two Faces of Protest*. It illuminates the necessity of situating women’s movements and organizations within the specific local, state, and national political fields that shape them, and from which they spring. In particular, it makes visible the local, day to day strategies of political mobilization and organization that feminist activists and women’s organizations, both autonomous and affiliated, in Bombay and Calcutta undertake to mediate amongst the state, political parties, and women’s interests.

My only quarrel with the book is that it translates its claim that attention to cultural practices is important in order to understand the politics of women’s movements, as a call to attend to ‘political culture.’ The place of practices of cultural representation and reproduction - literature, film, journalism, the arts - is largely elided in an account that focuses on tracking the ways in which hegemonic political fields tend to shape and delimit how the local women’s movement is organized. In the process, there is very little room for explaining how these political fields and political cultures that the women’s movements or protest fields inhabit, are themselves transformed. Other than the presence of “foreign NGOs” and “the influx of NGO money,” Ray’s narrative offers no other source or agent of a transformation of these hegemonic political fields, political cultures, and relations of power. Globalization then, seems to be the unnamed source for political transformation, and NGOs seem to be the unqualified, approved actors in this account. Nonetheless, *Fields of Protest* is an informative and exciting read for those interested in rethinking feminist activism in India and other countries in relation to its contexts of Left and political activity, and for those interested in re-siting the articulation of political struggle in urban, rather than simply regional and national spaces.

Kavita Daiya

University of Chicago

**Stolen Harvest:  
The Hijacking of  
the Global Food  
Supply. by  
Vandana Shiva.  
South End Press,  
2000.**

In *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*, Vandana Shiva continues her crusade against the corporate agro-industrial complex. Discussing issues like the patenting of seeds, genetic engineering, shrimp

farming, cows and soybean cultivation, Shiva argues that the globalization of India’s agriculture undermines and threatens the lives and livelihoods of small farmers and peasants. Food is power, and that a handful of corporations is taking control over the entire food chain is indeed cause for alarm. Vandana Shiva’s work reminds us effectively about this. But however supportive I am of Shiva’s political agenda, it is difficult to endorse her oversimplified oppositions. It is not that easy to tell the good guys from the bad guys, and not all involved with globalization can be cast as part of a conspiracy to impose a Western, non-sustainable, monocultural, export-oriented, corporate-controlled food regime on India. This becomes, as I will show below, particularly disturbing in the first part of the book.

Various types of oilseeds are cultivated in India. In Bengal, as in other parts of India, mustard oil dominates. Mustard oil has a number of different uses aside from cooking such as in medicine, as lamp oil, pest control, mosquito repellent etc. Mustard oil is not only cultivated, but is processed and sold in a localized, environmentally sound, small-scale manner. But, Shiva argues, the soybean now threatens all this. In 1998, suspiciously timely with the push for US soybean import, a large tragedy of illness and deaths caused by contaminated mustard oil unfolded in Delhi. This led to the banning of local mustard oil in several states and, not long after, an announcement that India would import one million tons of soybeans for use as oilseeds. Shiva quotes a statement by the Rajasthan Oil Industries Association, describing this as a conspiracy involving the “invisible hands of the multinationals.” Perhaps, but unlikely. Shiva, in any case, argues that the mustard oil tragedy gave the US companies the “marketing opening” needed to start dumping their genetically engineered soybeans on India.

We learn a lot about how the contemporary agro-industrial-biotech complex functions. Monsanto, for example, owns patents on all transgenic soybeans and



have designed them to be resistant to their own pesticide Roundup. But instead of elaborating these aspects, Shiva finds it necessary to make the soybean the embodiment of all evil and goes on to argue about low oil content, unsustainable processing and "hidden food hazards" of soybeans. She writes that a sudden change to a soy-based diet can have all kinds of detrimental health effects, like cancer and infertility. In short, here is a story of the benign Indian mustard seed versus the malign imperialist soybean. She applies the same dichotomy to the dairy industry in India which is being destroyed by Western style animal husbandry and processing. Her argument against prawn harvesting similarly raises a number of important points but ignores local and regional pressures on the marine environment.

The strength of the book lies in the discussion on seeds and transgenic crops. Shiva gives a comprehensive analysis of how corporate monopoly of seeds, the first link in the food chain, relates to "economic concentration, patent and intellectual property rights, and genetic engineering." Through merger and purchase, a small number of US based companies have acquired control over the global market of seeds and they now impose their own genetically modified and patented seeds on farmers all over the world. This is happening with the soybean, rice, corn, wheat, cotton and a number of other crops. The above mentioned company Monsanto has, for example, recently bought a large share in India's biggest seed company MAHYCO and is now planning to penetrate the Indian market in a "big way." The general strategy of action seems to be to destroy the diversified indigenous seed market and make farmers dependent on their particular variety of seeds, seeds that cannot be preserved from previous harvest and have to be bought anew every season. Backed by international laws on patent and intellectual property rights, the agro-industrial companies also enforce a strict control over the

sale and distribution of seeds. The seeds are further developed as part of an agro-technological package, requiring pesticides and artificial fertilizers that are also provided by the same companies. Genetic engineering is not, as the industry itself often claims, the development of high-yielding crops, but rather the development of herbicide resistance crops which are designed to survive frequent spraying of a particular herbicide like Monsanto's Roundup. Shiva argues that the agro-industry falsely tries to present genetic engineering as a 'green' technology, i.e. that such crops are sustainable and require less input of chemicals and pesticides. Evidence, she claims, "shows that transgenic crops leads to increased usage of hazardous chemicals." Besides, there are also a number of 'biosafety' issues to be considered. Questions are being raised about how genetically modified crops will affect and interrelate with the surrounding environment or ecosystems. And, of course, the greatest worries for many people are whether such crops/food are safe to eat. Shiva ends her book by discussing the widespread opposition to genetic engineering. Farmers in Europe and India destroying fields planted with such crops and consumers in many parts of the world demanding that genetically modified food be labeled. She puts her hope in a global movement for food-democracy and biodiversity, a broad-based alliance of producers and consumers in North and South that challenges the food-dictatorship of global corporations.

*Stolen Harvest* is a small book (140 pages) that engages large issues. It is surely a book that provokes debate and further inquiry. Considering the important role Vandana Shiva plays in the international environmental movement - "[the] South's best known environmentalist," as a reviewer describes her on the back cover - one hoped that she would listen to the critique of her earlier work that, among other things, repeatedly pointed out that pre-colonial 'traditional' India was not necessarily a sustainable and democratic society. I see, for example, no reason why organic soybean cultivation and a modified local dairy industry could not be part of the greening and democratization of the Indian society. Genetic engineering is a completely different bag. As Jeremy Rifkin has pointed out, the recent developments in genetic research puts humanity in a radically new situation. Through the manipulation of genes, human beings have become "engineers of life itself" and can manipulate all living organisms for whatever possible reasons. The agro-industrial companies Shiva discusses are also dominant actors in this field, and corporate control and patent on living organisms are indeed bloodcurdling. In an argument with Donna Haraway about transgressing natural species boundaries, Shiva argues that she would rather be a "sacred cow than a mad one." I agree, and even an ordinary cow would do.

B. G. Karlsson

Uppsala University



o o o o o k h i c u r i by Emily K. Bloch o o o o o

**Imagining Architects: Creativity in the Religious Monuments of India** (University of Delaware Press, 2000) by Ajay J. Sinha is an examination of 11<sup>th</sup> century Vesara Hindu and Jaina temple architecture in Karnataka, India. Relying mostly on detailed analysis of the temples themselves, Sinha sites textual support from the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries as he spatially and temporally locates the movements and innovations and emphasizes the creative and ingenuous input of the architects themselves. As a non-specialist, I was at times overwhelmed by the extensive technical terms and minute detailing but this was alleviated in part by the dozens of black and white plates showing overall structures, geographic placement and internal and external pillars, brackets and ornamentations. Most interesting for me was Sinha's discussion of how and why Vesara temple architects consciously explored and transformed the "symbolic potentialities of the sanctum" and may even have been motivated by a sense of competition to create a more perfect representation of their vision. Sinha writes that the hybrid style of northern and southern influences is less a product of architectural evolution and more the result of the architects' informed and critical self-reflections.



I willingly accept the framing plot of **Red Earth and Pouring Rain**, by Vikram Chandra (Little, Brown and Company, 1995) of foreign-returned Abhay shooting a white-faced monkey who doesn't die but miraculously awakens with full consciousness of his previous existence. Yama, the god of death, immediately appears to claim Parasher who once before had cheated him. Thanks to the intervention of Hanuman, a deal is struck and Parasher will stay alive as long as he entertains his audience with his story telling. Clearly a homage to the epic tradition of the *Mahabharata*, *Red Earth's* interwoven stories cover vast territories of time, place and motivations. A cast list might have been



helpful as the stories grew more complex and peopled. The stories are for the most part engrossing and well written. I found Abhay's American stories, filled with sex and drugs and wanton behavior, less compelling and the crowd's acceptance of these stories less believable. The description of the crowd itself, as the sweet-sellers, bauble-sellers, musicians and more move in, engagingly resembles a sociological study of how a village is established, grows, takes on a life of its own and becomes a story.

The story line in **Tivolem**, by Victor Rangel-Ribeiro (Milkweed Editions, 1998), is deceptively simple: Marie-Santana returns to her home in Goa after years abroad in Africa. It is not a mystery, but the plot unfolds with hints and allusions. It is not a love story, but a couple meet and fall in love amid accusations of evil eyes and imagined improprieties. Even without the hand-drawn map on the front pages, the reader knows the layout of Tivolem – where the path rises steeply on the way to Panjim, the bridge where the vicar, justice of



the peace, principal of the English high school, postmaster and 2 returnees gather daily to discuss the world's events. The year is 1933 and the news from Europe is increasingly alarming though the village activities successfully vie for attention. Underneath the action and dialogue is a painting, a watercolor of the little moments and images which make up a life, a village, a community. This community is made of particularly disparate pieces – Goan, Indian, Portuguese and English cultures influence the daily life of all the residents who speak a mixture of Portuguese, Konkani and English. There is old money and new money, the never-lefts and the foreign-returnees, the land, the ocean, the river. There is the merging of Hindu and Catholic and regional customs in this story of romance, tradition and hope for the future.

Manil Suri's **The Death of Vishnu** (W.W. Norton &



Company, 2001) is an uneven narrative. At times insightful and sharply written, much of the writing is artificial and self-absorbed and many of the characters are transparent parodies of types. At its best, the novel offers a damning portrait of lower-middle class Bombay with its competitions for space and social standing. The relationship of life with religion and faith, as the title ironically hints, also plays a part. Vishnu is a useless old drunk who is the lax handy man for the apartment house in return for a 'home' on the coveted first landing. Suri's exploration of the physical and emotional act of dying is compelling as Vishnu lingers between life and death. The main plot is stronger than the subsidiary ones, such as the obligatory forbidden love affair between the Muslim boy and Hindu girl and the ease with which the neighbors transform into a murderous mob, which tend to be predictable and contrived.

**The Man-eating Tigers of Sundarbans** (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001) is filled with beautiful photos by Eleanor Briggs and packed with informative text by nature writer Sy Montgomery. Written for children, the prose is sometimes too cutesy but not often. Young children will enjoy looking at the pictures and hearing bits of the text; older children can read the whole book. Adults, too, have much to appreciate in this book. The author opens with an introduction to the mysteries and beauty of the Sundarbans in Bengal and Bangladesh. We learn about the adaptations of several of the animals who survive in this ever-changing river forest (new maps have to be drawn every 3 years) like the mudskipper fish who sometimes get caught in trees and can breathe out of water and the deer and tigers who are able to drink the salty water. Sundarbans is home to poisonous snakes, crocodiles, 9 kinds of sharks and, of course, Royal Bengal tigers. The rest of the book is a balanced account of how scientists study the tigers, why the tigers there eat men and the plight of the tigers. We are introduced to the people who live there and told a bit about the local gods and heroes. She ends with appendices of Bengali phrases and statistics about tigers, a bibliography and a listing of tiger preservation organizations.





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South Africa. He is co-writing a second book on money, *The Common Wealth*, linked to an open money experiment in Japan. He is working on a manifesto, "Movement as a Human Right" and in his next major book will examine movement, identity and translocal society in the communications revolution.

**Shohini Ghosh** is Reader, Video and Television Production at The Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia (Jamia University), New Delhi. Ghosh has extensive production experience as director/producer of educational films for the University Grants Commission (UGC) countrywide classroom and as an independent documentary filmmaker. She is also a founding member of Mediastorm Collective, India's first all woman documentary production collective which received The Chameli Devi Jain Award for Outstanding Work among Women Media Professionals in 1992. As Co-Director of the Centre for Feminist Legal Research (CFLR), she has worked and published on issues of speech and censorship, sex work and sexuality. She is currently directing a documentary for CFLR on the struggles of the sexworkers in Calcutta. Ghosh writes on popular culture and the media for both academic journals and the popular press and is currently working on popular media and the nineties mediascape in India.

#### Faculty News

*Represented Communities: Fiji and World Decolonization* by **John D. Kelly** (Anthro) and **Martha Kaplan** (Anthro) is forthcoming (University of Chicago Press). This diasporic study challenges Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" approach to nationalism as the culture of modernity by emphasizing the importance of decolonization and the rise of the nation-state in the US/UN dominated world. It tracks the struggles in Fiji to conform to the nation-state model, with an emphasis on systems of representation (electoral and semiotic), culminating with an assessment of the coups in 2000.

**Kathleen Morrison** (Anthro) is co-editor of the forthcoming *Empires: Approaches from Archaeology and History* (Cambridge University Press). Her paper, "Coercion, Resistance, and Hierarchy: Local Processes and Imperial Strategies in the Vijayanagara Empire," is one of two essays on South Asian empires in the text.

**Sheldon Pollock** (SALC) presented "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History" at the Center for Cultural Studies, University of California at Santa Cruz in February. In March, he spoke on "Comparative Cosmopolitanism, Comparative Vernacularism" at the Institute for Advanced Study, Colloquium Budapest and on "The Languages of Science in Early-modern India" at the AAS. His recent publications include "The Social Aesthetic and Sanskrit Literary Theory" (*Journal of Indian Philosophy*,

2001) and "The New Intellectuals in Seventeenth-Century India" (*The Dilemma of the Indian Intellectual*, ed. Nita Kumar. *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 2001). Pollock was awarded an ACLS Fellowship (2001-2). His collaborative research project, "Sanskrit Knowledge-systems on the Eve of Colonialism," received a NEH Collaborative Research Grant (2001-03). Fellow recipients are Y. Bronner (Tel Aviv), M. Deshpande (Michigan), L. McCrea (U of Chicago), C. Minkowski (Cornell), K. Preisendanz (Vienna), G. Tubb (Columbia) and D. Wyjastyk (London)

**Lloyd I Rudolph** and **Susanne Hoeber Rudolph** (PoliSci) finished an article on their recent research in India, "The Iconization of Chandrababu; Sharing Sovereignty in a Federal Market Economy." The Rudolphs delivered a joint paper in January, "Redoing the Constitutional Design," at a conference organized in New Delhi by the National Endowment for Democracy and the Confederation of Indian Industries on Good Governance in Asia. In February, Susanne Rudolph inaugurated the conference on "Women and Development" at the University of Rajasthan and Lloyd Rudolph delivered a paper, "Gandhi and Nehru on Development Discourse."

#### Student News

**Thomas Borchert** (HR-Div) is on a Fulbright-IIIE grant researching the reconstitution of a Theravada Buddhist Sangha in Southwest China after the Cultural Revolution.

**Kavita Daiya** (English) has accepted a tenure track Assistant Professor position in Postcolonial Theory in the English department at George Washington University, in Washington D.C. Her dissertation is on the narration of Partition violence and refugees in transnational South Asian public spheres, from 1947 – present.

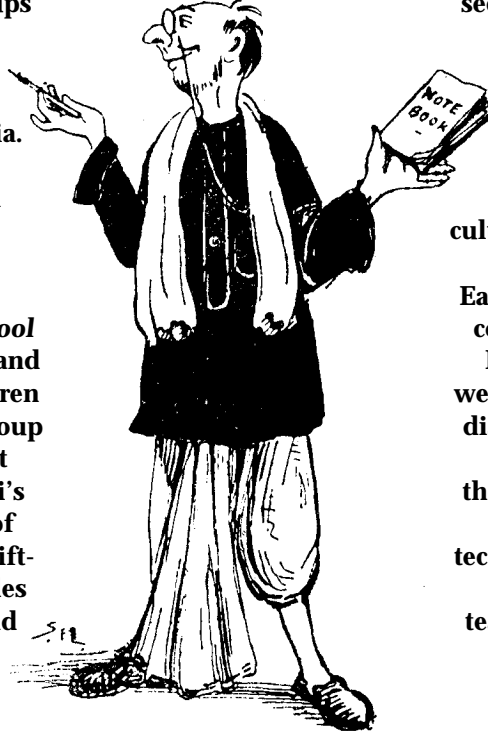
At the recent AAS Conference in Chicago, **Shreyash Palshikar** (SALC) presented a paper on "Marathi Regionalism and Nationalism" at the Maharashtra Studies Group meeting. He has a review of a South Asia-related art show forthcoming in the *Chicago Art Journal*. *India-West*, a Bay-area newspaper, recently ran a story mentioning his work as a magician, actor, and speaker. In March, he spoke on a panel at Loyola University on South Asians in non-traditional careers.

**Kamal Sadiq** (Poli Sci) presented his comparative research on Bangladeshi immigration to Northeast India and Indonesian immigration to East Malaysia at various conferences: the annual workshop on immigration organized by UCSD and UC Davis, the AAS conference where he organized and presented at a panel, "Ethnic Consequences of Migration in Asia," and at the Midwest Political Science Association meeting. He will be presenting at UCLA and at their Envisioning Globalization conference. Sadiq is currently a Guggenheim scholar at UCSD.

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## Summer Programs

The South Asia Language and Area Center received a Fulbright-Hays Groups Project Abroad grant. Sally Noble, the Assistant Director of the Center, will be leading twelve Chicago-area teachers on the month-long trip to India. The group will meet with educators at *Katha Kanzana* in New Delhi, a school founded by an organization of Indian writers to provide educational opportunities for underprivileged families and *The Children's Garden School* in Chennai, which offers educational and social development programs for children and adults. In the Madurai area, the group will visit educational self-development programs that reflect Mahatma Gandhi's conception of *sarvodaya* (upliftment of all) and Vindobha Bhavé's *Bhoodan* (gift-lands) Movement. The itinerary includes side trips to several major historical and cultural sites.



Sukumar Ray

This summer's workshop for Chicago-area secondary school teachers, *Maps, Identity and World Studies* will introduce the relationships between maps and map-making, how map design has affected and continues to affect self-perception and world-view, and the importance of maps in studying world cultures. This is a collaborative project led by South Asia, East Asia, Middle-East, Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America centers and outreaches at the University. Focusing on different geographic areas, we will examine how maps can be used to discuss the concepts of ethnicity, identity and national relations. The common theme throughout all the sessions will be the incorporation of maps and digital technologies into high school curriculums and will introduce computer assisted teaching aids including GIS (Geographic Information Systems).

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