

Fall Lecture Series 2011

Thursday, September 8: 12-1 PM
206 Ingraham Hall

Fall Welcome Party!

Thursday, September 15: 12-1 PM
206 Ingraham Hall

CSA Film Series

Allahabad's Mela: The People and Their Great Fair

This film provides the background of Allahabad's January 2001 great pot (or pitcher) fair (maha-kumbha-mela), offers interviews with Hindu holy men and some of the millions of lay devotees who come to live in a tent city and bathe where the Ganges, Jamuna and invisible Saraswati Rivers meet, and talks with Muslims and members of different occupations about tolerance, justice, and the mela's culture . (Edited by Joseph Elder from Sudheer Gupta's original 89-minute film SEARCHING FOR SARASWATI)"

Thursday, September 22: 12-1 PM
206 Ingraham Hall

Gowri Ramnarayan

Deputy Editor, *The Hindu*

Sarpa Satra/Sarpa Sutra: The Mahabharata, Arun Kolatkar, and an Experimental Play

Gowri Ramnarayan is an award-winning playwright in English, a trained musician, a veteran journalist, a major theatre critic, and translator of Vijay Tendulkar's play *Kanyadaan*. She has a Ph.D in Aesthetics from the University of Madras (1989 - *The Language of Emotion in Art: a Comparative Study of Some Indian and Western Theories*). She is currently Deputy Editor for *The Hindu*, a national English daily with 13 editions in India, and a circulation of over a million copies, writing features, interviews, profiles and reviews on cinema, theatre, music and literature.

To be followed by a performance at the Mitchell Theater, Vilas Hall (821

University Ave.) entitled *Lost in Love: A Musical Narrative About Bhakti (Devotion)* Sep. 22, 4 p.m.

Thursday, September 29: 12-1 PM
206 Ingraham Hall

Donald R. Davis Jr.

Associate Professor of Languages & Cultures of Asia, University of Wisconsin
– Madison

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Legal Consciousness in Medieval Indian Narratives

This paper employs the notion of legal consciousness to examine stories about law and justice in medieval India. Legal consciousness refers both to ordinary people's awareness of how law operates and to gaps that exist between what people think they know about the law and what actually happens in legal matters. Drawing on stories found in collections such as the *Kathasaritsagara* and *Rajatarangini*, as well as the famous *Mrcchakatika* of Kalidasa, evidence of literary depictions of legal problems and their resolution will be used to gain some insight into contemporary consciousness of law and legal procedures in medieval India. The conclusions made about erstwhile ideas of legality and justice will be shown to supplement the understanding of India's legal history possible from other sources.

Thursday, October 6: 12-1 PM
206 Ingraham Hall

Ajantha Subramanian

Morris Kahn Associate Professor of Anthropology and of Social Studies,
Harvard University

Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Social Studies, Duke University

Gifted: Merit and Caste in the making of Indian Technical Knowledge



In India today, the technical sciences are prized as the true measure of intellectual worth and a proven means of professional advancement. Abroad, the technical graduate has become the country's greatest export, widely understood to exemplify India's comparative advantage in the global marketplace. At the center of India's success story are the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), a set of institutions founded and administered by the Indian government with the aim of producing native engineers to help with technologically driven nation-building. The IITian is seen as a uniquely meritocratic individual who is gifted with an innate capacity for technical knowledge. In this paper, I address the production of the IITian's technical merit by illuminating the relationship between meritocracy and caste exceptionalism. Using ethnographic data, I show how IITians have come to deploy notions of autonomy and individuality to characterize their alma maters as state-free spaces and themselves as self-made men. At the same time, state and caste haunt their claims, revealing a gap between the expressed ideology of meritocracy and the affective and political economic dimensions of their relationship to state and community. Finally, I argue that the ideology of technical merit that underwrites the exceptionalism of the IITs has served to occlude a structural critique of caste.

Thursday, October 13: 12-1 PM
206 Ingraham Hall

Qasid Mallah

Professor of Archaeology, Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur

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Lakhan-Jo-Daro, Sindh: New Excavations at an Urban Center of the Indus Civilization

Indus valley civilization is one of the largest civilization of the world which covers huge area of South Asia i.e. the entire length of present Pakistan and parts of India. More than 2000 settlements are recorded with several major

urban centers. The largest settlements so far known are Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Dholavira, and Ganweriwala. Recent excavations at the site of Lakhan-Jo-Daro are revealing this new site as another large urban center.

The settlement of Lakhan-Jo-Daro is located along right bank of Indus River in a development area of Sukkur City at Latitude 27°.43'.27 North and 68°.50'.51 East degrees longitude. Until now three major mounded areas such as western mounds central mounds and eastern mounds; collectively all mounds encompass area more than three kilometer radius. The central mounds are further divided as "A" , "B" , "C" and "D" mounds. These mounds have been investigated since 1988 and six excavation seasons (1994, 1996, 2000, 2006, 2008 and 2009/10) have been launched. In the course of the most recent excavation project important new features of Indus architecture and artifacts have been recovered that confirm the overall significance of the site. This lecture will provide an overview of the site and recent discoveries in the larger context of contemporary studies of the Indus civilization.

Dr. Qasid Mallah received his MA (1997) and PhD (2000) from the University of Wisconsin - Madison. His professional training is in experimental archaeology (ceramics), with a specialization in survey and excavation. He is currently Professor and Chair in the Department of Archaeology at Shah Abdul Latif University in Khairpur, Sindh, Pakistan. He has written numerous articles for international journals on Indus period archaeological finds and ancient civilization. He is also the editor of a research journal entitled Ancient Sindh.

This lecture is part of the [Pakistan Lecture Series](#) sponsored by the American Institute of Pakistan Studies

Thursday, October 27: 12-1 PM
206 Ingraham Hall

Akinori Uesugi

Independent Scholar

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Excavations at the Harappan Cemetery at Farmana: New Insights on Relationship Between the Harappan and Local Cultures in the Ghaggar Plain, Haryana, India

The socio-cultural relations between the Harappan culture and local cultures

during the Harappan period (2600 - 1900 BC) is one of the important issues in understanding the social structure in the urban phase of that period. The burials provide a number of clues for this issue. A Harappan cemetery at Farmana in the eastern half of the Ghaggar plain that was excavated during 2007 and 2008 has provided many information relevant to this issue. This paper will overview the evidence for the relations between the Harappans and locals through the Farmana cemetery as well as some evidence from other sites related to this issue.

Thursday, November 3: 12-1 PM
206 Ingraham Hall

Jeffrey Samuels

Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Western Kentucky University

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Toward an Aesthetic of Monastic Recruitment: The Monastery as an Avenue for Upward Mobility?

One theory that is often used to account for monastic recruitment in South and Southeast Asia posits that boys become monks because monasteries provide them with an avenue for social mobility. While monasteries may provide children with a level of education that may not otherwise be available to them, reducing monastic recruitment to an individual's or a family's economic wants and needs masks how aesthetics, social bonds, and emotions affect monastic culture in general and the recruitment process in particular.

Turning to conversations with Sri Lankan monastics, ordinands, and their parents, I seek to nuance the upward mobility thesis. In doing so, I will suggest that accounting for the place that affective-aesthetic bonds have in the recruitment process challenges not only our understanding of monastic recruitment, but also the model of generalized economic exchange that is sometimes used to describe how Buddhist institutions are formed and sustained.

Prof. Samuels' research interests center on the intersection of religion and culture in contemporary Sri Lanka and Malaysia. He recently published a monograph titled *Attracting the Heart: Social Relations and the Aesthetics of Emotion in Sri Lankan Monastic Culture* (University of Hawaii Press). Since 2006, He began a new book-length project examining the social history of Theravada Buddhism in Malaysia. Besides publishing one book and co-

editing another book (with Anne Blackburn) on Buddhist texts and practices in South and Southeast Asia, he has published more than two dozen articles, book chapters, and book reviews.

This lecture is supported by the University Lectures Committee.

Thursday, November 10: 12-1 PM
206 Ingraham Hall

CSA Film Series

Dadi and Her Family: A Rural Mother-In-Law in North India

This film focuses on a grandmother (Dadi) in a Jat farm family in Haryana. Dadi is committed to preserving her family consisting of her husband, her sons, her daughters-in-law, and her grandchildren, all sharing their incomes and expenses. During the film Dadi contrasts the behavior of daughters-in-law today with daughters-in-law in her day, organizes household work as well as celebrations, and describes the ultimate dependence of women on the men to whom they are given in marriage. Dadi and her family recognize, but cannot fully control, the constantly changing forces holding the family together as well as threatening to break up the family and to divide and separate the family property.

Thursday, November 17: 12-1 PM
206 Ingraham Hall

J. Mark Kenoyer

Professor and Chair of Anthropology and Director of Center for South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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The Role of Marine Shell in Ornament, Art and Ritual of the Indus Civilization: An Ethnoarchaeological Perspective

This lecture will present an overview of the role of the marine shell, specifically *Turbinella pyrum*, which has been called the Sacred Conch shell, by some scholars. The shell was used extensively during the Indus civilization circa 2600-1900 BC, to make ornaments, inlay and various ritual objects. It continued to be used for the production of various types of ornaments in later historical times and is still used in modern Bengal. The

unique feature of this shell is that it is found only in the waters of the Indian subcontinent and this allows the study of the distribution of finished objects throughout South Asia and beyond. The talk will highlight recent discoveries of this shell in the Indus region and present a brief discussion of the ethnographic studies carried out by the author in Bengal and most recently in Bangladesh.

Thursday, December 1: 12-1 PM
206 Ingraham Hall

Shelley Feldman

President of American Institute of Bangladesh Studies and Director Feminist, Gender and Sexuality Studies & Professor, Development Sociology, Cornell University

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Constructing States and Citizens: Partition as a Social Project

Discussions of the 1947 partition of South Asia often presume the dramatic and violent division of the subcontinent as the basis for the formation of a Muslim majority and Hindu majority state: East and West Pakistan and India. In this paper, I reframe this popular understanding of partition through an exploration of the myriad ways in which states unfold as social projects as, for example, through the promotion of regulations regarding who is and is not recognized as a citizen of the nation. I examine such regulations and attend to the practices that constitute the making of home and belonging, including the significance of social as well as territorial claims of borders and boundaries.

Thursday, December 8: 4-6 PM
336 Ingraham Hall

Censorship and Scholarship: The Indian Case of A.K. Ramanujan's "300 Ramayanas"

Vinay Dharwadker, Professor, Languages and Cultures of Asia

Sandeep Kindo, PhD student, Languages and Cultures of Asia

John Stavrellis, PhD student, Languages and Cultures of Asia

Recent developments in India stemming from the removal of A.K. Ramanujan's "300 Ramayanas" from the Delhi University history curriculum

raise issues of local politics, scholarly freedom, censorship, and the Indian constitution. This panel discussion will map the key developments and players, comment on the essay itself, and highlight legal issues relevant to the controversy.