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Newsletter No. 22
Fall 2022

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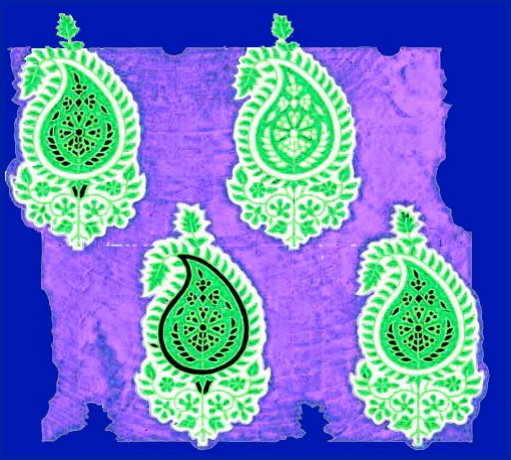
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Editorial



This issue, which should be the last one before the CEH and the CEIAS merge in January 2023 to become the Center for South Asian and Himalayan Studies (CESAH), has the same format as the preceding one, with sections (including this Editorial) signed or co-signed by colleagues from both research units. The upcoming creation of CESAH will be a major milestone in the history of both South Asian and Himalayan studies in France. Members of the two teams settled into their new shared space within the new EHESS building located on Campus Condorcet a year ago now, and the future new Centre is gradually emerging through both its formal institutional

setup and informal everyday contacts. Our cohabitation was disrupted by the occupation of the EHESS building between the two rounds of presidential elections in April—an occupation that led to serious damage inside the building. Team members were able to come back to work on the premises after a closure of more than two months. And, of course, Covid is not yet a thing of the past. All in all, this is a time of challenges and adaptation, fortunately on a modest scale—all of this is of course overshadowed by the somber events in Eastern Europe overshadowed by the and Pakistan.

This brings us to the contents of this issue. The “Upcoming events” section announces the Karachi and Pondicherry Winter Schools, a theme further elaborated on—among several others—in the substantial “Focus On” section, which also features reports on the student-organized 22nd International AJEI Workshop, the transfer of the Catherine Servan-Schreiber book collection to Mauritius, and the architecture of the CEIAS archives. The “Interviews” section enables those who didn't get to meet Laurence Gautier during her stay as guest lecturer at the EHESS to hear more about her work on Muslim universities in India. Another section provides brief reports on other conferences organized in recent months. This is followed by a section with richly illustrated notes “From the Field”, from Madhya Pradesh to Bihar, and to the Nepalese Terai. This is completed by a congratulatory section on scholarships awarded, a “Welcome” section introducing researcher Martine Mazaudon who recently joined us and, as always, the fervently awaited list of latest publications.

Although always only a partial reflection of the Centre’s (now Centres’) activities, we hope that this Newsletter provides you with an enticing glimpse into the rich tapestry obtained by interweaving the CEH and CEIAS trajectories. We wish you well for these last months of 2022, which will be the very last ones before the merger and creation of CESAH—the new name under which we will be getting in touch in a few months.

Michel Boivin (CEIAS) and Nicolas Sihlé (CEH)

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Upcoming Events

Social Sciences
Winter School
K · a · r · a · c · h · i

ceias
centre d'études Inde | Asie du Sud
centre for South Asian studies

IBA Institute of Business Administration Karachi
Leadership and Ideas for Tomorrow

L'ÉCOLE DES HAUTES ÉTUDES EN SCIENCES SOCIALES

Social Sciences Winter School in Karachi Cities, Urban Change and Heritage Management through Geotechnologies and Digital Humanities November 21–26, 2022

By Rémy Delage

Karachi, Pakistan

The major thread of the first Social Sciences Winter School in Karachi, jointly organized by the Center for South Asian Studies in Paris (CEIAS, CNRS-EHESS) and the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), will be held in Karachi in fall 2022. It will address issues at the interface between **Cities, Urban Change, and Heritage Management** and different thematic focal points, scales of interpretation, theoretical questions and methodological frameworks, and in interaction with various local and international stakeholders. The theme chosen for this terfirst edition in Karachi is fully in line with the intersection of the multidisciplinary fields of urban studies and heritage studies.



Within the framework of this training course, the urban question will be approached more particularly from the angle of the relations between heritage and territory. By heritage, we mean all tangible and non-material assets—with a double dimension, both individual and collective—which can be enhanced by society for their intrinsic qualities. Therefore, heritage is increasingly seen as a territorial resource at the service of local development projects, urban and regional planning policies, and even broader identity-based undertakings. What is the nature and scale of the social, spatial and political processes of heritage development in the Pakistani context? What are the social and institutional adjustments involved in the process of heritage development? How is the “architectural space” articulated with a networked “heritage territory”? Does the territorialization of religious heritage contribute to a broader process of urban heritage development and tourism enhancement on a regional and/or national scale? These are only a few lines of thought we intend to explore during the plenary sessions and to implement during the workshops by training students in the use of innovative methodological tools.

Indeed, three workshops will pull together different threads of the connection between cities, urban change and heritage management issues, while mobilizing various approaches and disciplines, as well as innovative tools such as geotechnologies and digital humanities.

The Winter School will be organized as follows:

- **Training within plenary sessions at the start of the school:** presentations will introduce various thematic and methodological facets of research and field practices.
- **Three methodological and multidisciplinary workshops,** each lasting three and half days, will address these issues from various intersecting angles, and will discuss theoretical models, text analysis, analytical tools, survey methods, data collection, etc.
- **Knowledge-restitution and debate:** participants in each workshop will work on a mock research project based on the four-day training course and make an oral presentation before receiving their training certificate.

Methodological workshops

Upon registering, each student will have to choose a workshop among the three proposed below:

- **Workshop 1** – Public policies and practices of public space through spatial geotechnologies
- **Workshop 2** – Spatial architecture and material heritage: from digitization to valorization
- **Workshop 3** – Towards a digital heritage of research archives: issues, tools and perspectives

Participants

- With a limit of forty-five selected students, the target audience of the Social Sciences Winter School in Karachi is mainly made up of master 2 and PhD students of all social science fields, as well of engineers and young lecturers-researchers. Students will be selected on the basis of their qualifications, and on how the training could contribute to their research or professional projects.

Training staff

- The team will be from various disciplinary backgrounds and will be international, made up of young and senior researchers originating from Pakistani and French Universities, as well as from research centers of excellence.

Venue

- The plenary sessions, the training course and the last day dedicated to knowledge and project presentation by students, with the delivery of certificates, will be held at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi. Cultural and social activities (exhibitions, concerts, etc.) may take place at the *Alliance Française de Karachi* (AFK).

Steering committee

- Rémy Delage, codirector of the CEIAS (CNRS-EHESS)
- Michel Boivin, codirector of the CEIAS (CNRS-EHESS)
- Dr. S. Akbar Zaidi, Executive Director (IBA)
- Ms. Shehreena Amin, Senior Manager External Linkages (IBA)

For more information

- Website: winterspy.hypotheses.org/pakistan
- Email contact: winterschoolkarachi[at]gmail.com

The “Himalayan Journeys” photography exhibition is changing venues

The exhibition staged to accompany the “Himalayan Journeys: Circulations and Transformations” conference, organized by the CEH in June 2022, will be shown from October 4 to 19, 2022 in the gallery of the auditorium at Inalco (65 rue des Grands Moulins, 75013 Paris) from October 4 to 19, 2022, then in the entrance hall of the library "Humathèque" on Campus Condorcet from November 28, 2022 to January 3, 2023.

The Himalayas have never been an impenetrable barrier or an obstacle to movement. These mountains have been the setting for multiple mobilities whose material, technological and spiritual aspects are presented here. This

photography exhibition is an invitation to travel as well as to reflect on the ongoing transformations that affect Himalayan communities and their environments.

Chemins himalayens →



Interview with

Laurence Gautier

Over the spring of 2022, Laurence Gautier (LG) was invited as guest lecturer (*directrice d'études invitée*) at the EHESS by Corinne Lefèvre (CL). Last April 21, Corinne Lefèvre and Laurence Gautier met to discuss Laurence's work on Muslim universities in India, as well as her future projects.

CL: Welcome, Laurence. Very nice of you to have accepted this interview. My first question would be: how did you become interested in the history of South Asia in general?

LG: I developed an interest in India in particular and in South Asia in general at an early age. I first traveled to India when I was nineteen years old. This first trip had a major influence on me. I felt that I was diving into a completely new world. This was an exhilarating experience for me and I knew that I'd come back. Which I did, a few years later when I spent a year there to study history at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in Delhi. As a student, I was particularly interested in India's long history of religious pluralism, its different modes of coexistence and the rise of communal conflicts. Although France and India's historical trajectories are very different, I was interested in how today, in contemporary contexts, at a time when France itself and Europe in general have much more diverse populations, we can raise similar questions on coexistence in plural societies. That's how it all started.

CL: And then, you decided to do your PhD at the University of Cambridge, which is quite unusual for French historians even today. What was the reason behind that choice?

LG: It was a bit of a coincidence. I started my MA in France, but at the end of my first year someone told me about a one-year MPhil program at Cambridge in South Asian studies. I was particularly interested in the transdisciplinary character of this program, so I applied, thinking that I would come back to France a year later to do my PhD. Once at Cambridge, I realized how lucky I was to study there. As students, we had a wonderful work environment. We had great scholars among our teachers, among whom Chris Bayly, David Washbrook and Joya Chatterji, my former supervisor. There was also a great pool of students in my college as well as at the Center for South Asian Studies, who played an important part in my intellectual growth. For all these reasons, I decided to continue my PhD there. But it was not a long-term plan. It just happened.

CL: So eventually, even though Cambridge was a kind of accident, but a very fortunate one, you developed a marked interest in the political history of postcolonial India. So how and why did you decide to explore these histories through this specific lens of Indian Muslim universities? And what do you think, with the benefit of hindsight, are the major advantages of this approach for revisiting the process of nation building and the development of new forms of Muslim leadership?

LG: My main research question was: how did Muslims define their own positions in the Indian nation state after Independence? I look at universities as political sites. Several

well-known scholars have shown that Muslim educational institutions played a key role in the emergence of the pan-Indian Muslim community as a political category during the colonial period. Among them, the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College—future Aligarh Muslim University—turned out to be particularly important. The College was established to provide modern Western-style education to Muslim students so that the "community" may retain privileged access to power under the colonial regime. The institution claimed to serve the interests of the entire Muslim community, even though in practice it primarily addressed North Indian Muslim elites. Later, the Aligarh authorities participated in the foundation of the Muslim League, the party that claimed to represent all India's Muslims. By contrast, Jamia Millia Islamia was known for its anti-colonial character and its proximity with Congress. The institution was established in 1920 when some of Aligarh students and alumni rejected the loyalist attitude of the University's authorities, choosing instead to follow Gandhi's call for Non-Cooperation. My starting point was to look at what happened, after Partition, to these two institutions with intertwined yet distinctive political trajectories.

"But this doesn't mean that the notion of Muslim community as a political category disappeared"

Shifting attention to the post-independence period prompted me to ask new questions. Firstly, what role did state-sponsored Muslim institutions play in nation-building? As in many other postcolonial countries after Independence, universities were expected to play a major role in the economic development of the country as well as in strengthening the nation's unity. What was interesting for me was to ask this question from the minority perspective. After Independence, both institutions continued to address Muslim students primarily (but not exclusively), even after they became state-sponsored institutions. As a result, they found themselves at

the by paying visits to the RSS juncture between state authorities and the Muslim population. The question then was: what ideas of nation did these minority institutions put forward after Independence?

The next question was: what relationship did these institutions develop with state authorities? What role did they play in Muslims' political representation in post-Independence India? Partition largely delegitimized Muslim political parties, especially the Muslim League, which was considered to be responsible for the division of the subcontinent. After Independence, the Constituent Assembly also put an end to any form of separate political representation for Muslims in parliament. But this doesn't mean that the notion of Muslim community as a political category disappeared: far from it. The secular state continued in many ways to consider Indian Muslims as a separate population. I argue that state authorities regarded Muslim universities as intermediaries through which they could reach out to the Muslim population. Parallel to that, these institutions became major actors in the development of different forms of Muslim politics. They crystallized part of the debates on Muslims' status as citizens, as a minority group and as a backward community. These debates allowed students to emerge as important political actors in the larger public sphere. Aligarh and Jamia also served as important platforms for Muslim politicians and organizations keen to establish themselves as Muslim spokespersons.

I hope that this answers your question.

CL: Absolutely! And it so happens that you've had in different ways, let's say, first-hand experience of some Indian universities. First, as a student at JNU and then you taught for a couple of years at Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities, one of a growing number of private universities. Has this experience, as an insider both in your capacity as student and lecturer, changed the way you approach the history of Indian universities?

"The notion that universities fulfil a political function is at the heart of my work"

LG: JNU certainly had a major influence on me. It's at JNU that I realized how important universities can be in the Indian

political landscape. Anyone who goes to JNU would notice the numerous political posters, the slogans, etc. Students debate many issues such as gender and caste inequalities, alongside more campus-specific issues. There was, and still is, a very deeply rooted awareness that politics form an integral part of education.

Private universities like Jindal don't have the same level of political activity, quite obviously, but this doesn't mean that education is completely apolitical there. At Jindal, many of my colleagues had trained at public universities, including JNU. They were conscious of the need to teach students to think critically and to draw a connection between what we study in class and the debates in the larger public sphere.

This notion that universities fulfil a political function is very much at the heart of my work.

CL: And now to stay, let's say, focused on today's situation: as a close and keen observer of India's political life, how would you describe the present situation of universities in the country? What common challenges are they facing and which ones in particular weigh on Indian Muslim universities? And yet another question: how are present circumstances affecting students' daily lives and prospects?

LG: There is clearly a convergence of neoliberal and authoritarian trends affecting universities nowadays. Let's first talk about the neoliberal trends. The government is clearly encouraging the expansion of private universities but continues to underinvest in the public higher-education sector. Tuition fees are going up. Many permanent teaching posts have not been filled for years: universities function increasingly with teachers on short-term contracts. This consolidates a feeling of vulnerability among large sections of the teaching body. These trends are not unique to India. Unfortunately, we can see similar trends elsewhere.

These developments also affect the very notion of university education. For many, within the circles of power, there's this understanding that universities are there primarily to provide vocational training so that university graduates will contribute to economic growth. Within this framework, there is a widespread understanding that education should be divorced from politics because politics are a "distraction" from studies; they're a waste of time, energy and public money. They may also be seen as a threat to political and social order.

This is where authoritarian trends merge with the neo-liberal ones. State authorities view student politics as a form of dissent. Political activities on campus are not seen as a normal part of university life or the legitimate result of critical discussions, but as a direct attack upon the integrity of the nation. This mode of thinking has a very concrete impact on university life. The governments, at central and state levels, have chosen to appoint vice-chancellors who follow the same ideological line as them, with the idea that they should bring universities under control. Some students have been arrested and teachers threatened for being supposedly “seditious.” Violent attacks have also been carried out by student activist groups affiliated with the Hindu right: these students feel, rightly or wrongly, that they will not be punished for their actions. And last but not least, police forces have carried out attacks on campus: I have in mind the attacks that took place at Jamia Millia and Aligarh, the two universities I'm studying, in December 2019 during the anti-CAA protests. All of this produces a climate of anxiety and self-censorship, that goes against a culture of open debate.

“These controversies, big or small, make it even easier for a large section of the public to believe that Jamia and Aligarh are hotbeds of anti-national or “jihadi” activities”

All universities suffer from this climate but some are more targeted than others. JNU, which is seen as a bastion of the left, has been one such target: since the arrest of student leaders in 2016, there has been a clear effort on behalf of the university administration to bring the institution “under control.”

Muslim universities are certainly another such target: their Muslim character makes them suspect in the eyes of part of the population and political class. Much like Indian Muslim citizens, they constantly have to prove that they are loyal to the nation. The vice-chancellors repeatedly put their patriotism on

display. They try to maintain good relationships with the party in power by paying visits to the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] for instance. But it seems that's never enough. There's always a threat that controversies will erupt again, sometimes over very petty issues. For example, in 2018, some right-wing students started protesting at AMU against the fact that Jinnah's portrait was hanging in the corridors of the Students' Union. Now, this portrait has been there since the late colonial period—no one had ever really cared about it until then, and then suddenly it became a major issue: it was a way of suggesting that AMU retained pro-Pakistani affinities more than 70 years after Partition. These controversies, big or small, make it even easier for a large section of the public to believe that Jamia and Aligarh are hotbeds of anti-national or "jihadi" activities. This is exactly the kind of rhetoric that was used during and after the police attacks on these two universities in December 2019. Again, when the riots in northeastern Delhi occurred in early 2020, some Jamia students were put behind bars because they were accused of conspiracy during these riots. These allegations are part of a larger narrative that projects Indian Muslims as "internal others," always suspected of disloyalty to the nation.

CL: This brings me to my next question about, again, Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia, which are the focus of your doctoral dissertation and forthcoming book. How would you describe their intellectual clout in India today?

LG: Aligarh remains a major symbol of Muslim educational reform. Its founder, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, is frequently invoked as a role model and a source of inspiration. Both Aligarh and Jamia have departments that have made a lasting impact in their domains. AMU's History Department, for instance, played a very important role in the renewal of medieval studies, with a number of well-known scholars like Irfan Habib. These historians, many of whom were inspired by Marxist ideas, vigorously opposed the colonial and communal views of Indian history when Hindus and Muslims formed separate civilizational blocks.

As for Jamia, for a long time it remained an institution focused on primary and secondary education. It's primarily in this domain that this university's made a lasting impact. During the late colonial period, it was among the pioneers of "basic education," a child-centric model of education which paid a lot of attention to manual and creative activities. It also played an important role in the promotion of adult education. Its departments of Education and Social Work continue to carry

on this legacy. More recently, Jamia has also become famous for its Mass Research Communication Centre, one of the first centers, created in the 1980s, dedicated to mass communication. Many prominent journalists, filmmakers and film personalities (including Shah Rukh Khan!) trained there.

"The vast majority, between 80% and 90% of the students come from UP and Bihar"

Today, both Aligarh and Jamia are ranked among India's top ten universities. But their academic achievements and their public perception seem to be at odds with each other.

Many alumni at Aligarh lament the 'decline' of their university. They decry the effects of "in-breeding," corruption and factional rivalries, which have tarnished the reputation of the university. I think that this sense of decline also has to do with political and social developments. AMU no longer has the same level of political influence as before. In the early period after Independence, Nehru's government made AMU one of the first three central universities. The prime minister invested personally in Aligarh's expansion. He wanted to make the university an instrument of national integration. After him, Indira Gandhi continued to regard AMU as an important Muslim symbol, particularly at a time when Muslim organizations made AMU's minority status one of the main "Muslim issues." Since the 1980s, however, AMU's political influence has waned. Other "Muslim issues" have captured public attention, including the question of Muslim Personal Law or the Babri Masjid.

On top of this, I think that a lot of talk about the decline of Aligarh has to do with the change in the social composition of the university. When Aligarh was established in the late 19th century, it was very much an elite institution, which was reserved for a small section of the upper-caste Muslim population. With the expansion of higher education after Independence, the composition of the student population has changed significantly. You have a much more socially diverse population, coming from sections of society which are not endowed with the same level of cultural capital. I think that a lot of the alumni who lament Aligarh's decline have in mind this change in the social composition of the university, which is less elite and more socially diverse. Moreover, the multiplication of

universities has accentuated the regionalization of AMU. AMU still has students coming from different parts of the country, from South India, from Bengal, from Kashmir for instance, but the vast majority come from UP and Bihar: between 80% and 90% of the students. This too contributes to the sense of decline, with the idea that Aligarh is no longer a pan-Indian institution.

The situation is a bit different in the case of Jamia. Jamia started as a small school in the rural outskirts of Delhi. Now, it is a central university in the heart of the nation's capital. Since the 1980s, the University has expanded rapidly thanks to financial support from the central administration. It has also gained much greater visibility. The University is now ranked even slightly higher than Aligarh in national rankings.

But even regarding Jamia, its academic achievements and its perception in the wider public sphere tend to be at odds with each other. I think this has a lot to do with the fact that these are Muslim-majority institutions. There is the assumption that these universities only address Muslims—even though many of their students are not Muslim—or that what they do matters mostly to Muslims, as if these universities' focus primarily on Islamic Studies, which is clearly not the case. A lot of common Muslim-related stereotypes are also associated with these institutions: these are often seen as conservative, inward-looking institutions. These stereotypes have an adverse effect on the influence these universities could have.

CL: One last question now about your current and future research projects. Do you have any plans, I'm curious to know, to include Pakistan in your investigations?

LG: I'm currently finishing my book manuscript, which is an extension of my PhD dissertation on the politics of AMU and Jamia post-Independence. I hope that the book will come out very soon. I'm also working on another project with two colleagues of mine, Julien Levesque and Nicolas Belorgey. We're doing a prosopographical study of Muslim spokespersons since Independence. We've built a database of individuals who've held positions in organizations that claim to speak on behalf of Muslims. For us, it's an opportunity to raise questions about the different forms of Muslim political representation that unfolded after Independence.

The question of Muslim political representation is at the heart of my research work. Soon after I finish my book, I plan to pursue this work in two main directions. First, I plan to continue

with the study of different types of Muslim spokespersons, within and beyond political parties. Second, I want to examine Congress's "Muslim policy" after Independence. The BJP often dismisses the party as "pseudo-secular" because it engages in "minority appeasement." My point is not to endorse these allegations but to see if we can speak at all of a Congress "Muslim policy" after Independence

"I'm interested primarily in minority representation in a secular and plural society"

At this point in time, I don't plan to include Pakistan in my study because I'm interested primarily in minority representation in a secular and plural society. Of course, there are Muslim minorities within Pakistan, but that's not really my research question. I'm more interested in Muslims as a minority in a country where the majority of the population is not Muslim. Instead of looking at Pakistan, I'm planning to look at other regions within India. My work until now has been by and large focused on North India, especially Delhi and UP. This time, I plan to look at other states well beyond the Hindi belt, notably Kerala and perhaps Hyderabad. Contrary to North India, these are regions where Muslim political parties continued to flourish in the post-Independence period. It would be interesting for me to compare the situation with North India where it was much more difficult to retain Muslim political parties in the post-Partition context.

I would also like to compare the situation in India with that of other secular countries with a Muslim minority. This includes France of course. I'm not going to become overnight a specialist of the representation of Muslims in France, but I do think that even though the contexts in France and India are very different, there are similar questions that can be raised.

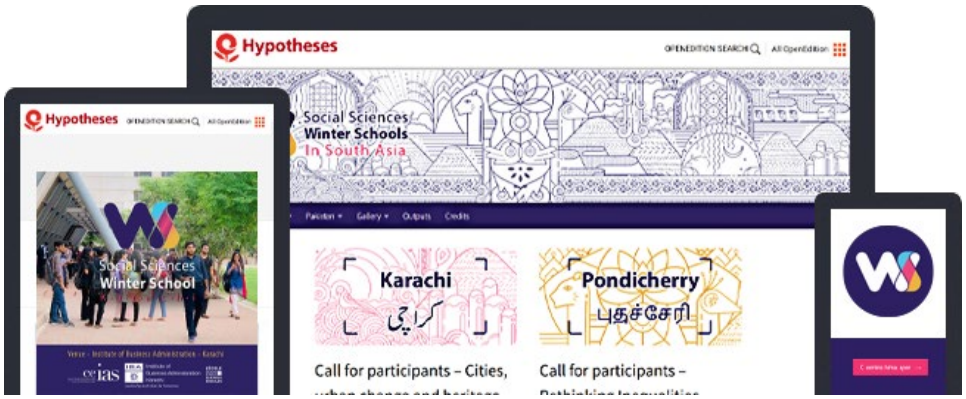
CL: That sounds very promising! Thank you so much for your time. And that's it!

LG: That's it!

Focus On

A Network of Social Sciences Winter Schools in South Asia

By Rémy Delage



https://winterspy.hypotheses.org

The Social Sciences Winter School in South Asia (SSWS) is a network of international collaborative training projects that has been implemented across South Asia over the course of the past decade. The Winter School was initially designed as a program of intensive and multidisciplinary training workshops to address theoretical and methodological issues in research in social sciences. These events provide the opportunity to share experiences and research ideas. A transversal theme in the field of human and social sciences is chosen every year to serve as the main thread for the training sessions.

Brief history

In December 2013, Rémy Delage (geographer, CNRS), Christophe Jalil Nordman (economist, IRD) and Thanuja Mummidi (anthropologist, Pondicherry University) formulated the idea of designing a multi-year program of training workshops in the field of social sciences. Inspired by similar summer school experiences worldwide, the simple idea was to combine theory and research practice by conducting parallel methodological workshops, all included in a single practical setup. Instead of proposing already existing courses on classical research methods, they opted to emphasize innovative research and surveying techniques which are not often taught in this way.



School of Social Sciences, University of Pondicherry



French Institute of Pondicherry

The first experimental edition of the Social Sciences Winter School was held in December 2014 at the Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (School of Social Sciences and International Studies, Pondicherry University). Preparing such an ambitious project required the creation of an international collaborative team of research institutes and resource persons from India, with Pondicherry University (PU) and the French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP), as well as from France with the Centre for South Asian Studies (CEIAS) and the French Institute for Development Research (IRD). Thanks to the steady logistic, institutional and financial support these academic institutions have been able to provide over the years, the collaborative endeavor has brought about the success and establishment of this now major event in the academic landscape of India's social sciences. For the 2019 edition, the institutional and collaborative framework was slightly

remodeled, while involving a new partner: the *Madras Institute of Development Studies* (MIDS) based in Chennai.

An intensive and stimulating training program

Training lasts five consecutive days and is articulated around two poles, the plenary sessions and the methodological workshops, as detailed below:

- **Plenary sessions:** over a one-day period, four to six talks are presented by experienced researchers from various partner academic institutions. The aim is to present the state of the art and an overview of the theoretical and methodological issues on a particular research topic.
- **Project/knowledge restitution:** the training ends with a half-day of knowledge restitution, under the form of a simulated research project designed by each group, and which puts in practice what they have learned, and the delivery of certificates to participants. for the following three and a half days, three workshops à la carte for around 40 to 50 trainees are devoted to tutorials. They discuss theoretical models, text analysis, analytical tools, survey methods, data collection and analysis, etc.
- **Project/knowledge restitution:** training ends with a half-day of knowledge restitution: this takes the form of a simulated research project designed by each group, and which puts into practice what they have learned; certicates are also delivered to participants



First Edition of the Winter School in Pondichery (2014).

All the students and researchers who shared the Winter School experience explained the reasons for its success: the availability of the lecturers, the combination of theory and methodology within a single practical module and, above all, the possibility — provided by the heterogeneity of disciplinary backgrounds within each workshop — of exchanging very different views on some common intellectual issues. This argument was often put forward by students and scholars during informal discussions at the end of each session. But more than that, it was the enthusiasm, fun and friendliness that permeated the entire winter school course, which were much appreciated by all. All these ingredients, which were already included in the initial plan, partly explain why this Winter School has been an undeniable success since its inception.

Exporting the winter school across South Asia



The CEIAS welcome at EHESS in Paris

Prof. S. A. Zaidi, Exec. Director & Sh. Amin, Senior Manager from IBA (Karachi).

For these reasons, the idea of exporting the concept of this Winter School to other South Asian countries slowly emerged in the minds of the partner organizations. In 2019, Rémy Delage and Michel Boivin, both CEIAS co-directors in Paris, started to explore the idea of replicating the Winter School training model in Karachi (Pakistan) where they used to carry out social science research and had forged long-lasting relationships with various academic partners. While it was not possible to implement this project immediately due to the world health crisis that started in 2020, it finally got underway in 2021 through various exchanges and meetings between the

CEIAS in Paris and the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) in Karachi. We are very happy to announce that the first Social Sciences Winter School in Karachi will therefore be held in November 2022.



Early visit of Michel Boivin and Rémy Delage, co-directors of CEIAS,

at Alliance Française in Karachi.

Similarly, the idea of creating a third winter school in Kathmandu, Nepal is slowly but surely taking shape. Let's hope it will soon become a reality.

Social Sciences
Winter School

Forthcoming editions in South Asia

- 2022 (Karachi, Pakistan) – Cities, Urban Change and Heritage Management through Digital Humanities
- 2022 (Pondicherry, India) – Rethinking Inequalities in Social Sciences

Past editions in Pondicherry (India)

- 2019 – Heritage, Communities, Sustainability
- 2018 – Labor and Development
- 2017 – Water and Socio-environmental Challenges
- 2016 – Mobility and Social Dynamics

- 2014 – Health and Societal Challenges

CEIAS PhD Students Organized the 22nd International AJEI Workshop

by Hugo Ribadeau Dumas

The 22nd international workshop of the AJEI (*Association des Jeunes Études Indiennes*—Junior Researchers' Association for Indian Studies) took place on April 21, 22 and 23, 2022. This year, there were six CEIAS PhD students on the organizing committee: Kiran Bhatty, Lola Cindric, José Egas, Cansu Gurkaya, Hugo Ribadeau Dumas and Vishnu Tandon. Roma Casamitjana was also part of the team.

Very early on, we decided that the workshop would tackle the process of categorization. As part of our respective doctoral research, we all engage with very different themes, such as citizenship, federalism, friendship, education, or artistic practices. Despite the diversity of these topics, we realized that we all face one common challenge: at some point or another, we have to deal with categories to name, classify or describe objects, groups or phenomena. This is inescapable. And the process is not neutral: opting to mobilize certain categories at the expense of others may have deep consequences, in normative or analytical terms.

We also realized that the field of social sciences in South Asia is particularly sensitive to the issue of categorization. From the colonial rigidification of religious and caste groups through administrative surveys to more contemporary debates on what constitutes a city in the South Asian context, a wide range of debates related to categories have had long-lasting outcomes in terms of the popular psyche, identity or governance.

We therefore titled the workshop "Categories in South Asia: Process, Challenges, and Implications," with the hope it would push young scholars to

reflect on their own usage of categories. Although we knew the topic would be stimulating, we did not expect such an enthusiastic response: our call-for papers drew close to 150 applications from a dozen countries. Only 18 places were available: we, therefore, had to comply with a rigorous selection process. All of us, members of the organizing committee, read and graded each abstract separately, based on three criteria: (1) relevance to the workshop theme, (2) fluency and style, and (3) originality.

The 18 selected candidates—14 PhD students and 4 Master students—represented diverse disciplines, including sociology, criminology, sports studies, psychology, anthropology, history, political science, geography and comparative literature. Ten students came from Indian universities, and eight from European institutions. Although most papers focused on India—with the majority of applications focusing on this particular origin—two proposals on Nepal and Bangladesh were also selected. Among the participants was a representative from the CEIAS, Raffaello De Leon-Jones Diani (*Hindu, Muslim, and Yogi: Categories of South Asian Identity*) as well as a student affiliated with the IFP, Marine Frantz (*What's a Village without Its Farmland: Reconsidering Rural Definition*).

Once the best candidates had been singled out, we proceeded to design the workshop program and divided the papers into different panels. This step forced us to carry out serious work of… categorization—as we said earlier, categories are inevitable! For each panel, we invited senior researchers from both French and Indian research institutions to fuel the debates as discussants.

After two years of interruption due to the Covid pandemic, we felt it was important for young researchers to be able to meet in person and to experience the lost pleasure of debating face-to-face. And yet, we also wanted to ensure that the AJEI workshop would continue to serve as a bridge between France and South Asia. We therefore took the decision to organize this edition of the workshop in hybrid mode, with simultaneous sessions in Paris (on Campus Condorcet) and in New Delhi (at the Centre for Policy Research), through the use of online platforms. The workshop was open to the public.

In Delhi, the event took place in a very convivial atmosphere. In Paris, however, there were slightly more restless vibes, as the workshop took place in the midst of the occupation of the EHESS building on Campus Condorcet. Although we were on the verge of canceling the on-site session in Paris and migrating online, we felt we could not let down the four young scholars who had traveled to France to participate in the event. We therefore managed to find an alternative small conference room at Boulevard Raspail and ensured that the session actually took place.

As members of the organizing committee, we are all grateful for having been given the opportunity to organize the workshop according to our own style and scholarly inspiration. It was a crucial learning experience for us all. It took us

7 months of meticulous planning and hard work to ensure the success of the event. Throughout the whole process, we were able to overcome many challenges in a good team spirit.

We are also very thankful to the CPR, CSH, GIS Asie, EHESS and the CEIAS for their key institutional, financial and material support.

Thanks also go to all the senior discussants whose engagement gave rise to genuinely fruitful discussions. Thanks also to all the panelists, most of whom traveled to Paris and Delhi to share their research material and to help us collectively to reflect on categories and categorization.

Last but not least, thank you to the current AJEI Board, and especially its president Khaliq Parkar, its secretary Victor Alembik and its treasurer Johan Krieg. Thank you for your guidance throughout the whole process.

As a final word, we would like to pay tribute to the IFP for initiating this tradition of connecting young scholars from France/Europe and India/South Asia through these very unique international AJEI workshops. We have done our very best to carry on this tradition successfully, in our own style. We hope the tradition will continue and that there will be more exchanges between young scholars working on South Asia.

The Catherine Servan-Schreiber Collection

Book Collection
by Marie Fourcade

Catherine, who passed away on November 6,2021, had built up an extensive library over the years as a researcher and teacher of oral literature and as an anthropologist of India and its diaspora in Mauritius.

Whether the topic be oral literature, Anglo-Indian literature, the Indian diaspora, or music and songs—all topics she had extensive knowledge of, her library is well stocked but also includes foundational works on the colonial period and purely linguistic works and booklets on Bhojpuri as well as various novels.

In recent years, in order to ensure the continued availability of her books, Catherine had distributed part of her collections to the relevant Parisian institutions, but her intention was that her library contribute to the development of Indian studies in Mauritius.

Those of her colleagues who are well acquainted with the island have selected the University of Mauritius located in Réduit, whose library will be the final destination of the Catherine Servan-Schreiber Collection.

A fund set up and managed by Sylvie Servan-Schreiber, Julie Peghini and Victor Champion has made it possible, thanks to the generosity of all, not only to finance the transport of the books by boat, but also to guarantee their processing, thus providing work to a dedicated Mauritian staff. The only thing missing was the Senate's approval, which was granted on April 27.

This collection will be available for loan and may in the future be the focus for other donations that could further enrich the collection, bearing in mind that the donation procedure is rather slow and complicated but workable if you're patient.

The CEIAS will keep you up to date on developments regarding this enterprise which was initiated and supported by her family and a large number of her friends and colleagues, thus turning this incentive into a successful project!

Catherine Servan-Schreiber, Scholar of the Sister Arts

By Marie Fourcade

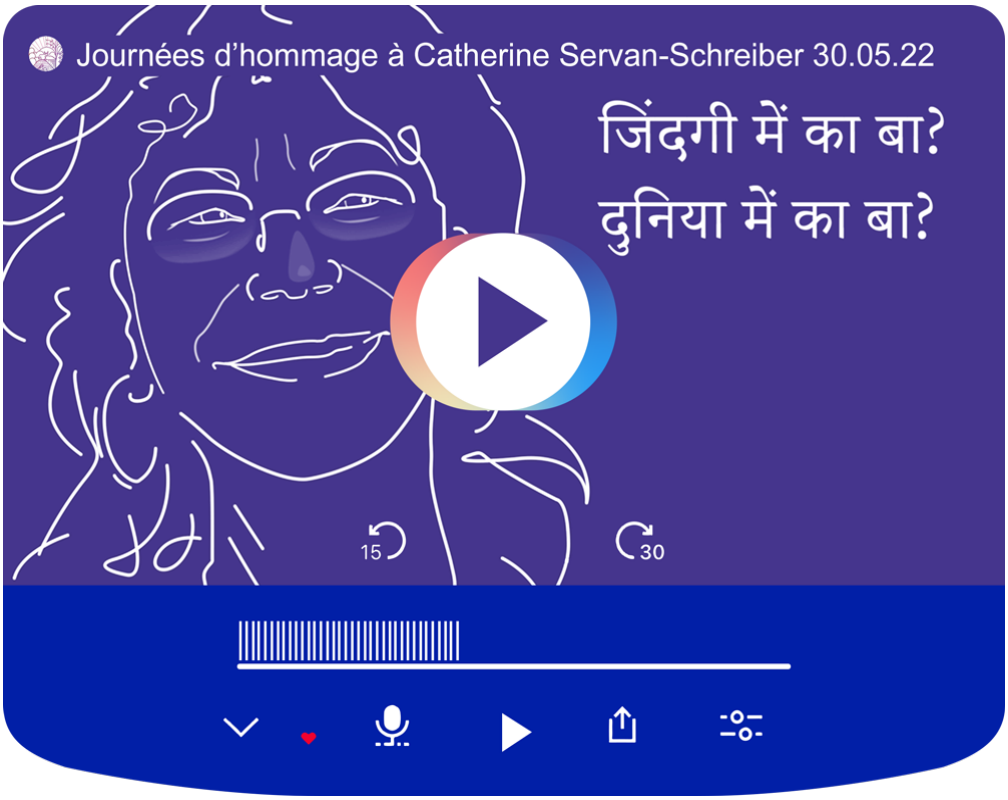
On May 30 and 31, 2022, two days were dedicated to the memory of Catherine Servan-Schreiber. The links to the program and to the pictures put together by Wahid, our graphic artist (see below), as well as the many photos will provide you with an overview. The occasion was an opportunity to celebrate a creative powerhouse, a curious mind, an inspired body of work, a capacity for human and even humanistic interaction and a very generous sense of sharing — all qualities that Catherine possessed, shared with us and encouraged us to emulate if we could.

During these two days, we traveled back and forth with her between the Indian subcontinent and Mauritius against a backdrop of many details, anecdotes, patchworks—sometimes surprising—selected from among Catherine's many talents, calling up old memories and creating new ones, some of which were quite comical.

Music, song, poetry, cinema and theater were present to bring together a sum of references which constituted the essence of her research, beyond the wealth of the oral literatures she promoted so well in the first stages of her itinerary, before dropping anchor in Mauritius where she started a new field of research, which proved to be just as fruitful. We were even able to hear her

voice thanks to the recordings of Tirthankar Chandra and Stéphane Dorin, an experience that was particularly moving.

Let us quote as an epilogue the words of her sister Sylvie written the day after the commemoration, which go straight to our hearts and make us appreciate the work put in for the great THANK YOU we wanted to offer Catherine: "... What is certain is that you have paid her a breathtaking tribute, impossible to do better, it is exactly what she would have wanted, everything was there, and she was there with us."



In Memory of V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai (24/10/1921-18/01/1992)

Tuesday January 18, 2022 from 4:30 pm to 8:00 pm
by Tiziana Leucci



Auditorium of the *Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Paris Nord*
20 Ave George Sand, 93210 Saint-Denis

Organizers:

- Tiziana LEUCCI (CEIAS, CNRS-EHESS Paris-Aubervilliers, Conservatoire "G. Fauré" Les Lilas-Est Ensemble)
- Dominique DELORME (dancer, choreographer, dance teacher)

- Pierre PHILIPPE-MEDEN (Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, RiRRa21)

Report by Tiziana Leucci (Center for Indian and South Asian Studies, CEIAS, *Bharatanāṭyam* teacher at the Conservatory of Music and Dance "Gabriel Fauré," Les Lilas-Est Ensemble, France)

On January 18, 1992, V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai (24/10/1921-18/01/1992), the very creative *Bharatanāṭyam* Master, who, up until the very end of his life, mesmerized and electrified international audiences with his dance compositions, passed away from cancer in a hospital in Chennai, leaving his family members and his dance students in deep sadness. His demise was a great loss and a source of emptiness and distress for all of us, his disciples, as we lost all at once not only a great artist, an excellent teacher and a remarkable dance and music composer, but also a caring artistic "father." When last year, Dominique Delorme—both of us were his students—suggested to me that we organize a ceremony in his memory together, I accepted with joy. At that time, we were in full lock-down due to the Covid 19 pandemic, and all cultural and artistic activities were at a standstill in France. Therefore, it was very difficult for us to know in advance what the situation and related Covid sanitary measures and restrictions for the next year would be at the date set for the tribute to our Master for the 30th anniversary of his death. Nonetheless, we started to plan the event without any guarantee that our vision could come true. Dominique immediately contacted the other students and quite a number of them promptly agreed to come to Paris to participate in the ceremony. On my side, thanks to an academic project titled "Connected Histories of Dance," which I am coordinating in France with my colleague Marie Fourcade of the Center for Indian and South Asian Studies (*Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud*—CEIAS), we were able to reserve the beautiful Auditorium of the *Maison de Sciences de l'Homme de Paris Nord* ('House of the Sciences & Humanities of Paris-North') of the Universities of Paris 8 and Paris 13, which has a large stage allowing the participants to perform their dance items. Thus, despite uncertainty until the very last minute, finally we were lucky enough to celebrate the commemorative tribute as planned, on the January 18, 2022, exactly thirty years after Master passed away (Photo no. 1 = Poster). Unfortunately, Dominique Delorme could not join us that day as he suffered a sudden severe back pain preventing him from dancing. One of the members of the event's organizing committee was our colleague, Pierre Philippe-Meden, a professor at the University of Montpellier 3, in the South of France, the city where V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai received, in 1990, the French Government's highest honor for artists and writers, namely *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres* ("Knight of Arts and the Literatures").



(Photo 2) V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai in 1990, after receiving the French Government's highest artistic and literary award medal, *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres*, from the former Director of the Opera-house ballet, Brigitte Lefèvre, at the prestigious International Dance Festival of Montpellier, France. Courtesy of Elisabeth Petit.

Actually, Master was the first Indian citizen and artist to get this very prestigious French award, after having received in India the equally distinguished one from the *Sangeet Natak Academi* of New Delhi.

The commemoration ceremony started with a welcome speech by Marie Fourcade that focused on the importance of the Indian artistic system of learning, followed by my introductory lecture titled: "The Dance in South India between Tradition, Transmission and Innovation: The Case of V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai (1921-1992)."



(Photo 3) Marie Fourcade (on the left) while reading her welcome speech. Tiziana Leucci (on the right) is introducing her lecture ‘‘The Dance in South India between Tradition, Transmission and Innovation: The Case of V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai (1921-1992).” Photo by Margherita Trento.

In this presentation I spoke about Master’s background and career. A member of a very distinguished hereditary family of temple artists, he underwent during his life quite a number of dramatic personal experiences, some of which mirror the major socio-political events taking place in South India in those years. Born into the community of *devadāsī* (Sanskrit : “gods’ attendants,”, temple dancers) and *naṭṭuvaṉār* (Tamil: “those who belong to the dancing,”, dance masters), he was directly affected by the change of attitude towards those excellent performing artists before and after the approval of the *Devadasi Act*, in November 1947, three months after India obtained its Independence from British colonial rule. Such a law was the product of long legal debates begun in the second half of the 19th century. The drastic change in the artistic landscape of South India, along with the stigma attached to those hereditary artists, left the majority of them without patronage and financial support, which was once provided by the local authorities, both religious and aristocratic. His mother, Vaithyswarankoyil Sethuammal, was a *devadāsī* linked to a local Shiva temple. In that place, the presiding deity is still worshiped today by a large number of devotees and sick people due to the healing powers attributed to the deity in this shrine. Unfortunately, Muthuswamy’s mother died when he

was still a small child. Soon after, his only sibling, a sister just a few years older than him, also fell ill and passed away. Consequently, it was his maternal uncle who took care of the orphan, while some others of his mother's relatives started to instruct him in music, dance and poetry. Thus, he received his training in dance, *abhinaya* (Sanskrit: "leading the audience to the aesthetic experience," the art of facial and gestural expression), and music firstly from his maternal uncle, the *naṭṭuvaṉār* Vaithyswaran Koyil Minakshisundaram Pillai (c.1879-1945), and later on under the guidance of the renowned and outstanding *naṭṭuvaṉār* Kattumarnakovyil Muthukumara Pillai (1874-1960). Master used to say to us that in his youth the artistic and literary training was quite rigorous and took place in the teachers' house. The students lived in the *naṭṭuvaṉār*'s home and were considered members of his family, conforming to the traditional Indian pedagogical system of *gurukulam* (Sanskrit: "belonging to the teacher's lineage; learning a discipline/art in the master's home"). There, they were instructed in music, dance, poetry and acting, by their own guru and by the other senior artists who used to visit their master's house regularly. No monetary fees were paid to the teachers, who were supported by the temple authorities and by aristocratic patronage. In exchange the students were expected, during their free time, to help their master's family by washing clothes, cleaning the house, plucking flowers from the garden and making garlands for the images of the deities, fetching water from the well, preparing meals, etc. At the end of their training, which lasted seven or eight years, a special ceremony used to take place as an "offering, thanks giving" to the teachers (Sanskrit: *gurudakṣinā*) for having passed on their knowledge to the younger generation of artists. On this occasion the students offered their masters some symbolic and inexpensive presents, consisting in new cotton clothes, some flowers, fruits and sweets, some camphor and incense sticks, areca nuts, coconuts and betel leaves. A tribute in memory of the ancestors of the teacher's lineage, who were all performing artists, was also given at that time in order to strengthen the intergenerational ties. Finally, the masters used to bless each pupil by wishing them a prosperous life as an artist and, later on, as a teacher too. In exchange, the students promised their masters to pass on the artistic knowledge received by them during their training, and to further enrich the family's dance and music repertoire with new compositions. In that way they were all very concerned not to break the transmission of the arts and to make sure their knowledge continued on into the next generations. Thus, despite the changing of times, conditions and contexts, that is exactly what all of us are now trying humbly to do in our own work, both artistic and academic, by keeping V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai's memory and dance style alive, teaching his compositions, *adavus* (Tamil: dance steps and postures), *abhinaya* and dance sequences to our own students.

After having completed his training, Master got married within the Isai Vellala (Tamil: "cultivators of music and dance") community of performing artists, musicians and dance teachers, to the only daughter of Ramaswamy Pillai, a *naṭṭuvaṉār* at the Kuttalam Shiva temple in the Tanjavur region, who trained quite a number of pupils in dance, all the way up until the end of his life. The couple had eight children, five daughters and three sons. Unfortunately, the

oldest one died young. Out of all his children, only the second son, K. M. Selvam, followed the family artistic tradition. He was trained from a young age by his maternal grandfather at Kuttalam, and by his own father when he was visiting the family in the village. K. M. Selvam now lives in Chennai and, with his teaching, is keeping both his grandfather K. Ramaswamy Pillai's and his father V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai's dance styles alive, by enriching their repertoires with his own new compositions. Many of us continued to work with him after his father passed away, and now we are also sending our own students to India so they can be trained by him.



(Photo 4) K. M. Selvam Pillai, son of V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai, giving a *nattuvangam* class to Ofra Hoffman (Chennai 2015). From the documentary: "*Master. The Art of Nattuvanar Kuttalam M. Selvam,*" by Ofra Hoffman. Courtesy of Ofra Hoffman.

When Master used to visit his family in the village, many of us followed him, stayed there and worked with him at Kuttalam in a true *gurukulam* system. There, we received daily training from him, and we lived with his own family. In the meantime, we were very lucky to observe his father in law, K. Ramaswamy Pillai, while he was teaching his own pupils. In the fall of the year 1989, the *Sruti Foundation' Bani Festival* invited the surviving *naṭṭuvaṉārs* to demonstrate their own specific dance style. At that time the most famous hereditary performing artists and their disciples participated in this unique and prestigious event.



Photo 5: V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai during a rehearsal with his students preparing them for the demonstration of his dance style to the *Sruti Foundation's Bani Festival*, held in Madras on December 1989. Courtesy of Kalpana.

V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai, along with his elderly father in law, K. Ramaswamy Pillai, and his son K. M. Selvam, were all part of that memorable and historical *Sruti* seminar. Some years ago, the *Sruti* magazine dedicated two issues to our Master, in one of which Dominique Delorme and myself participated with a contribution evoking the years spent learning dance with him.

Although he had to face various difficulties and struggles, during his life Master tried his best to pass on the artistic knowledge he received from his own gurus, by adjusting the traditional pedagogical method to the new situations and times. In the first decades of the 20th century, some of the hereditary artists got the opportunity to work in Indian cinema, which started to become at that time a mass-entertainment industry. V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai was one among them. This new context made him adapt the traditional dance styles to the screen, by experimenting innovative combinations of body movements for this new performing space. I am fully convinced that the qualities of his later dance compositions, with their intricate and unpredictable combination of steps and rhythms, are partly due to his involvement in the cinema and its specific rules and parameters. Certainly, such experience helped him to express fully his potential as an innovator in the *Bharatanāṭyam*'s field of later times. Thus, he composed quite a number of dance items for films and worked with the major cinema artists in those times and several famous actresses performed his own compositions. Among them, two young students of his, the pretty Sayee–Subbulakshmi made a name as brilliant dancers in both the South and North Indian movies.



(Photo no. 6) V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai with his two pupils Sayee and Subbulakshmi (Madras 1953). Courtesy of Elisabeth Petit.

When I first met Master he already had cancer, but despite his old age and illness he was teaching all his students every day, from morning till evening, in his small room located near the Kapaliswara Shiva temple, in the lively Mylapore area of Chennai. Due to the high quality of his teaching and the originality of his dance and music compositions, beside his Indian pupils he had several foreign students with a solid professional music, ballet, and

modern dance background, coming mainly from Europe and North America. From 1988 till 1992, when he passed away, I was trained by him and learnt the technical intricacies and the lyrical elements of his sparkling dance style.



(Photo no. 7). Tiziana Leucci performing a dance composition by V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai.

Photo by Pierpaolo Sabbatini (1993).

From the very beginning of my apprenticeship, I was intrigued and curious about the genesis of his fascinating method of teaching and composing items. His creativity, his open-minded attitude, his sense of aesthetics, his quest for

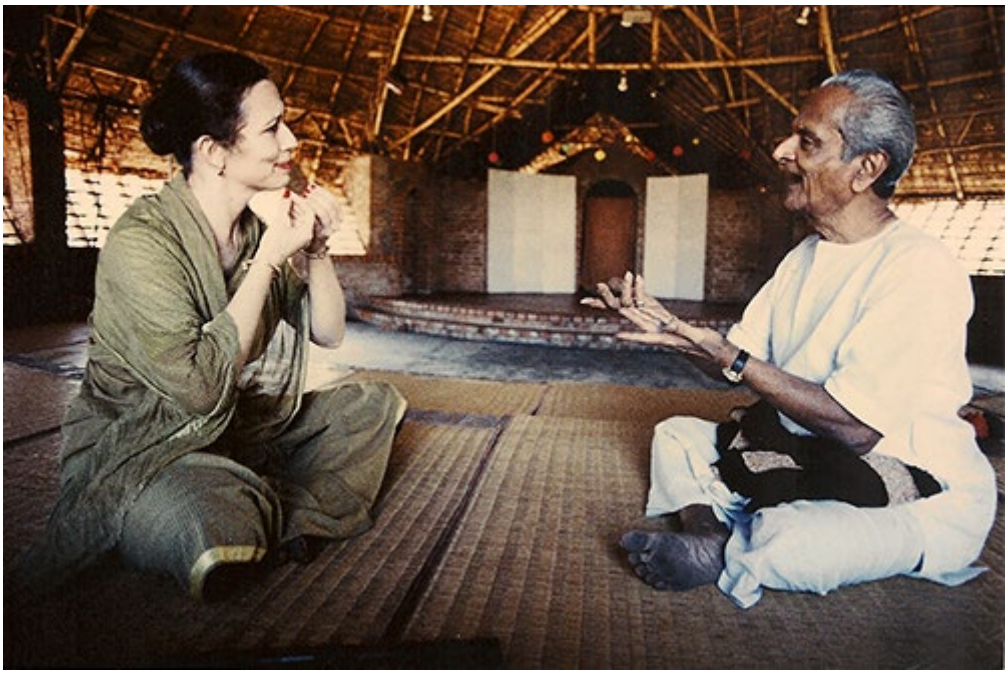
novelty, beauty and grace, as well as his sincere commitment towards all of his students, both Indian and foreign, remain very vivid in my memory to this day. For each one of us, the dance classes took place, rigorously, daily and individually. His meticulous attention towards each detail of a rhythmical composition, or a choreographic sequence, as well as his respect and love for his own artistic profession, left a deep impression on our own work—in my case in both the field of dance and in academic studies. Still today, I cannot find the proper words to fully express my gratitude towards him. That is why during the commemoration ceremony, such feelings of deep admiration, respect and affection were shared by all his students. We therefore consider ourselves very lucky to have been his disciples and to have learned such a wonderful repertoire of dance, songs and music compositions. During the homage ceremony, all of us evoked the enchanting experience of witnessing Master composing, and rehearsing with all those great artists who were constantly visiting him in Mylapore, like the excellent singer Madurai Sethuraman, the *mrndanga* drum player Balachandar, and many others.



(Photo no. 8) V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai demonstrating a dance during a rehearsal with his accompanying musicians, the great vocalist Madurai T. Sethuraman and the brilliant *mrndangam* player M. Balachandar at the International Dance Festival of Montpellier, France 1990. Courtesy of Elisabeth Petit.

If we were so enthralled while admiring their enthusiasm and talent, on the other hand Master also appreciated our devotion to him and to his knowledge, as well as our dedication to and love for Indian arts and cultures. He knew and respected our efforts and determination to learn *Bharatanāṭyam* under his precious guidance, and he was well aware that in order to do that we traveled from so far to South India, ready to leave our families and friends, also renouncing the comforts of our native countries. He admired our capacity to adopt Indian traditions and practices, and to adjust to the local weather, foods, clothes, etc. In the 1970s and 1980s, when the majority of his students were

learning dance in the city of Chennai (named in those days Madras), life in India, and all over the world too, was very different from today. At that time there were no cell phones, internet, e-mails, social media, and none of us could afford to get a phone in our flats. Thus, the only way to communicate with our own families for any emergency was by sending a telegram and, later on, by faxing a message. Before ISD points were available all over the city, allowing us to get internationally connected by the phone, letters and aerograms were the common way for all of us to get in touch with our loved ones. The only problem was that, by the time our letter arrived in our native places and from there the answers to us in India, we had to wait sometimes a month or even two in order to read our relatives' replies. V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai knew all that and he appreciated the fact that we did not mind living alone in India, far away from our families and friends in order to study *Bharatanāṭyam* with him. During his career as a choreographer and a dance teacher, as mentioned before, he trained a large number of students coming from India and abroad, particularly from France. The dialogue between us did not suffer much of the linguistic barriers as, beside his very eloquent vocabulary of hand gestures and facial expressions and his inborn sense of humor, we could easily fill the communication gap between his broken English and our broken Tamil! Actually, during our classes Master did not talk much, on the contrary we worked a lot during the strict and strenuous training; no time therefore for useless chatting, which according to him was an unworthy wasting of time, which could rather be better spent in the learning process…



(Photo no. 9) V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai teaching and demonstrating an item of *abhinaya* to Elisabeth Petit, Madras 1989. Photo by Harry Peccinotti. Courtesy of Elisabeth Petit.

His serious attitude towards his art was shared by the music, ballet and modern dance masters and choreographers, with whom we worked in our native countries. Amongst his foreign disciples, I was the only one from Italy, and as he could not properly pronounce my name, Tiziana, he used to call me

“Tillana,” like the sparkling South Indian music and dance compositions employing joyful *rāgas*, which was for him a familiar term, much easier to remember and to say. In memory of him, when my own daughter was born in Paris, where I moved after leaving India, I called her Tillana, giving her the same Tamil name that Master himself selected for me. During my lecture I evoked some pleasant memories of him during the years spent in Chennai. The other participants also added their own learning and performing experiences with him and together they painted a very touching portrait of the man and the artist. They also evoked a number of humorous and hearth-warming anecdotes, ornamented by some lovely photos, and videos of him which we shared with the audience, composed mainly by university professors and students, by local dancers, choreographers, actors, *Bharatanāṭyam* practitioners, and by other lovers of Indian arts and culture.

The second part of the ceremony was entirely devoted to the demonstration of V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai’s dances. All the participants performed an item choreographed by Master, except Elisabeth Petit, who had herself composed the abhinaya gestures and facial expressions for a very lyrical old French song about “tenderness” (in French: “*La tendresse*”) sung by Bourvil, a true poem in music similar to South Indian *padams* and *javalis*, which pertinently evoked for her memories of our Master, his personality and his life’s struggles, his humanity, dignity and “tenderness” as well, whereas Kunti read a very moving text relating her own learning experience with him, by underlining his commitment towards his students and his art. Soon afterwards, the participants demonstrated the items composed by him. Here is the list of the dances performed and the name of the student:

- 1. *Pushpanjali* by Menaka de Mahodaya, in *rāga gambhiranattai*, *khanda jathi ata tāla*.
- 2. *Mallari* followed by a Sloka to Shiva by Tiziana Leucci, in *rāga shanmukhapriya*, *adi tāla*.
- 3. *Ganapathi Kauthuvam* by Lucia Thibaut, in *rāga nattai*, *eka tāla*.
- 4. *Subrahmanyam Kauthuvam* by Malavika in *rāga nattai*, *eka tāla*.
- 5. *Kirtana “Adavande”* by Armelle Choquard, in *rāga malika*, *rupaka tāla*.
- 6. *Padam “Natanamadinar”* by Shakuntala, in *rāga vasanta*, *ata tāla*.
- 7. Bourvil’s French song “*La tendresse*” by Elisabeth Petit.
- 8. *Tillana* by Kalpana, *rāga kapi*, *adi tāla*.

We were also delighted and honored that some of Master’s senior disciples, such as the French Malavika, who trained a large number of *Bharatanāṭyam* dancers in France, participated in the ceremony. At the end of the homage we were very moved by the commemoration of such a great artist and teacher and all of us shed tears in remembering him. The audience too, was very pleased to witness the performance of such a variety of dance items and very much appreciated the beauty, the vigor and the grace of V. S. Muthuswamy’s style. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the other organizers of this ceremony, Dominique Delorme and Pierre Philippe-Meden, to the staff

of the *Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Paris-Nord*, to my colleagues of the Center for Indian and South Asian Studies, to Marie Fourcade, for delivering the welcome speech and the presentation of each performer, to Wahid Mendil who designed the poster and took care of all the publicity related to the event, and to Francie Crebs for the editing of this report. Last but not least, I am very grateful to all Master's other students : Malavika, Menaka de Mahodaya, Shakuntala, Elisabeth Petit, Kalpana, Kunti, Armelle Choquard and Lucia Thibaut, who graciously participated in this tribute by also sharing with the audience their learning, performing and teaching experiences under his guidance, by demonstrating his enchanting dance items and by helping us in many ways before and during the entire ceremony.



(Photo no. 10) 1. V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai's students at the end of their dance demonstrations for the tribute to their *Bharatanāṭyam* Master. From left to right: Lucia Thibaut, Armelle Choquard, Malavika, Shakuntala, Elisabeth Petit, Tiziana Leucci, Kalpana and Kunti. Photo by Margherita Trento.

I would like to particularly thank Elisabeth Petit, Kalpana, Kunti and Ofra Hoffman for sending their photos and videos about V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai and his son K. M. Selvam. Those precious historical documents enriched my introductory lecture about our beloved *Bharatanāṭyam* Master, towards whom all our gratefulness ultimately goes. We feel very lucky and blessed; we are therefore very thankful and immensely indebted to him for having passed on to us a part of his vast knowledge and deep love for the dance, the music and the poetry of South India.

Photos Captions' list:

- 1. Poster for the Homage to V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai, Bharatanāṭyam Master, for the 30th anniversary of his death. Auditorium of the Maison de Sciences de l'Homme de Paris Nord, January 18, 2022. Design by Wahid Medil, photo by Harry Peccinotti.
- 2. V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai in 1990, after receiving the French Government's highest artistic and literary award medal, Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, from the former Director of the Opera-house ballet, Brigitte Lefèvre, at the prestigious International Dance Festival of Montpellier, France. Courtesy of Elisabeth Petit.
- 3. Marie Fourcade (on the left) after reading her welcome speech. Tiziana Leucci (on the right) is introducing her lecture ''The Dance in South India between Tradition, Transmission and Innovation: The Case of V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai (1921-1992).'' Photo by Margherita Trento.
- 4. K. M. Selvam Pillai, son of V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai, giving a nattuvangam class to Ofra Hoffman (Chennai 2015). From the documentary: "Master. The Art of Nattuvanar Kuttalam M. Selvam," by Ofra Hoffman. Courtesy of Ofra Hoffman.
- 5. V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai during a rehearsal with his students preparing them for the demonstration of his dance style to the Sruti Foundation's Bani Festival, held in Madras on December 1989. Courtesy of Kalpana.
- 6. V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai with his two pupils Sayee and Subbulakshmi (Madras 1953). Courtesy of Elisabeth Petit.
- 7. Tiziana Leucci performing a dance composition by V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai. Photo by Pierpaolo Sabbatini (1993).
- 8. V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai demonstrating a dance during a rehearsal with his accompanying musicians, the great vocalist Madurai T. Sethuraman and the brilliant mrndangam player M. Balachandar at the International Dance Festival of Montpellier, France 1990. Courtesy of Elisabeth Petit.
- 9. V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai teaching and demonstrating an item of abhinaya to Elisabeth Petit, Madras 1989. Photo by Harry Peccinotti. Courtesy of Elisabeth Petit.
- 10. V. S. Muthuswamy Pillai's students at the end of their dance demonstrations for the tribute to their Bharatanāṭyam Master. From left to right: Lucia Thibaut, Armelle Choquard, Malavika, Shakuntala, Elisabeth Petit, Tiziana Leucci, Kalpana and Kunti. Photo by Margherita Trento.
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Bangladesh Studies: An Overview

by Charza Shahabuddin

The international conference “Bangladesh Studies: An Overview,” a collaboration between the INALCO/Cerlom and the CEIAS/EHESS/CNRS, took place on June 14 and 15, 2022 on the fiftieth anniversary of Bangladesh’s Independence. Bangladesh Studies being underrepresented in France, it was a great opportunity to bring together researchers, activists and publishers from England, the United States, Norway, and Bangladesh to question the dominant narratives and to deconstruct certain preconceptions regarding Bangladesh present and past.



As the conference keynote speaker, the anthropologist Dina Siddiqi (NYU) claimed it is necessary to “decolonize” Bangladesh Studies; in her own words: is it possible to produce knowledge on this young country by using concepts and categories stemming from Western prisms? Two narratives exist about this young country: the victim story, and the success story. One the one hand, Bangladesh is a country which has been a victim of natural disasters, whose population must be saved; on the other hand, Bangladesh is an economic miracle thanks to the boom of the textile sector and the employment of women.

The purpose of this conference was to highlight intermediate narratives, the untold stories, in order to displace the production of knowledge from colonial knowledge to knowledge based on local empirical and conceptual data, specific to Bangladesh and its historical, social and cultural trajectory. For instance, Camelia Dewan (University of Oslo) who recently published *Misreading the Bengal Delta*, showed that misreading and decolonizing are part of the same approach. She revealed the way international donors within the development sector, implementing their political and economic agendas, are disconnected from the priorities in the Bangladeshi field, and how they contribute to reproducing the image of a victimized and vulnerable Bangladesh.

The first panel "Contesting dominant narratives" started with the translation by Philippe Benoit (INALCO) of "The Father of the Nation," Sheik Mujibur Rahman's prison diary, followed by the historian Layli Uddin (Queen Mary University of London) who offered a fresh perspective on the socio-political context in Pakistan before Independence by presenting another popular political leader, Maulana Bashani. Nasrin Siraj (VU University Amsterdam) examined the mobility and immobility of Bengali migrants in the Chittagong Hills Tracts in order to subjectivize the Bengalis rather than the *chakmas* (*a native tribal group from the easternmost regions of the Indian subcontinent*) as being the others and offered an innovative analysis of the power relations between the different ethnic groups that make up [AC1] Bangladesh.

The purpose of the second panel "**Defining Islam in Bangladesh or the diversity of Islamic tradition**" was to emphasize the serious pitfall that stems from trying to define Islam. Charza Shahabuddin (EHESS) showed how one of the major educational sectors in Bangladesh, the system of Koranic schools, brings together all the issues at the heart of Islam (competition, integration, modernization), and is particularly representative of the debates that attempted to define an "authentic" Islam. The publisher Ahmedur Rashid Chowdhury (Shuddhashar) and the anthropologist Lisa Knight (Furman University) who both work on the exiled Bangladeshi community re-examined the nexus between Humanism, Muslims and Islamists. Mubashar Hasan (University of Western Sydney) focused on an approach to the daily life of Muslims in Bangladesh. The linguist Hans Harder (Heidelberg University) examined the Maijbhandari tradition of Bengali spiritual songs in order to highlight the different local specificities of Bengali Sufi theology, hagiography, and esoteric songs. Finally, the archaeologist Coline Lefrancq (CNRS) put the religious traditions into perspective by exploring the urban environment of the Mahasthangarh center between the 6th and the 13th centuries. She showed how different contributions of material and written sources are necessary to resituate Bangladesh as part of a region rich in exchanges and faced with external contacts, particularly religious ones, for centuries.

The second day of the conference began with two keynote speakers' papers: the poet Kaiser Huq (Dhaka University) spoke about the aesthetic experience of Bengali poetry and Bangla culture, followed by anthropologist Samia Huq

(BRAC University) who demonstrated how secular power, or at least the aspiration to the principles of secularism holds a certain epistemic ground, which produces specific ways of understanding the self and led to the creation of an expansive gap between Muslim and non-Muslim others in contemporary Bangladesh. The third panel “Reassessing gender equality in Bangladesh” addressed the central issue of domestic violence against women in Bangladesh. Professor Nelufar Parvin (Dhaka University) demonstrated the effect of domestic violence on a patriarchal and patrimonial society inducing structural violence, gender discrimination, human rights violations and reduction of productivity. Anthropologist Nayanika Mookherjee (Durham University) presented her latest work related to the theme of irreconciliation, impunity and justice, by questioning what forgiveness really means. Anthropologist Dina Siddiqi (NYU) re-examined the question of empowerment linked to the question of Muslim bodies, in particular those of women, the bodies of workers, in connection with the bodies of Islamists, all visible during demonstrations.

The fourth panel “Bangladesh between borders, migrations and refugees” focused on the issues of borders and migration: Marie Percot (IIMAD) underlined the reasons leading to migratory movement, the way migration is organized and its consequences for families, the process of hypervisibility/invisibility to which these migrants are subjected based on the case of Bangladeshi farmers going to neighboring India to process waste. Arild Engelsen Ruud (University of Oslo) and Nordine Drici (ND Consultance) both questioned what migration really means in terms of human rights, the idea of the State, and state authoritarianism. The last panel “Bangladesh historical homelands” returned us to more literary aspects, with a presentation by Thibaut d’Hubert (University of Chicago) on the transformative power of love, taking the example of poems by Alaol, a Muslim poet of the Eastern Arakan region. The conference ended with the historian Samuel Berthet (Alliance française Hyderabad) who presented his paper on “East of the Delta: Navigation in Bengal from the 16th to the 18th Century and the Different times in History”.

What was at stake during this conference was both to highlight the diversity of “Bangladesh Studies” all around the world and the different aspects of this vivid and productive academic research, and to bring out their capacity to decolonize the production of knowledge on Bangladesh.

From the Field

Pipes at Rest.... Unlike Women

By Olivia Aubriot



Photo 1: Pipes rolled up at the end of the irrigation season



Photo 2: Women fetching water from a “well” dug in a pond, in order to get access to water when the latter is empty

April 2022. Mandu, Madhya Pradesh.

The winter wheat irrigation season has just ended. Everywhere the pipes are tidied up; the ponds—from which the water has been pumped—are all empty. Sure, it's the beginning of the dry season, but up until 20 years ago, before the massive use of pumps in this area, many of these ponds were full all year

round, used for fish farming, watering livestock, and even for the domestic water needs of families. Of course, irrigation makes it possible to grow wheat, and hence provide food. It also reduces the period of labor migration outside of the agricultural season, from 6-7 months to 2-3 months. But another effect is to reduces water stocks... and render water chores (collecting water for drinking and water for washing) even longer and more difficult. Especially at the beginning of this exceptional heat wave, which experts say is the result of climate change. A burden that falls mainly on girls and young women.

(Field work done for the ANR project entitled Mandu, ANR-18-CE03-0006)

Storm in a Teacup? Tea Drinking as a Research Lubricant

By Hugo Ribadeau Dumas



Photo 1: “Tea King” shop, Sushant Singh Rajput Chowk, Purnea

In February 2022, I settled in Purnea, a city of about 250,000 residents located in eastern Bihar. I had come to collect data as part of my doctoral thesis, which is about the intertwining between urban development and evolving social relationships, and more particularly friendship. How do men and women make friends in a small city like Purnea. With whom? And why does it matter to understand social inequalities?



Photo 2 : The owner of a tea stall does his accounting before opening his shop, in Bhatta Bazar, Purnea

As part of my research in Purnea, I mobilized mixed-methods, including a survey with 500 respondents. To go beyond a mere quantitative approach, I wanted qualitative observations to constitute a central aspect of my work: finding ways to meet a diversity of Purnea dwellers was therefore one of my key methodological challenges. To maximize my social interactions, I leveraged a wide range of channels, including coaching centers, political groups, sports clubs, shiv charcha (groupings of women “discussing” Lord Shiva), etc. One of my favorite spots of socialization happened to be tea shops.

It is a well-known fact that tea is an important medium of socialization in India. As the saying goes: “*mazbut rishte aur kadak chai, donon dheere dheere bante hain*”—solid relationships and strong tea both take time to brew.



Photo 3: In a village of rural Purnea, Bihar

In Purnea, besides traditional tea shops set up on the pavement with nothing more than a gas cylinder or a *chulha* (earthen stove), I was struck by the number of fancier tea shops sporting witty names ("*Tea Zone,*" "*Tea King*"), fashionable furniture and larger menus (tandoori chai, chocolate chai, edible teacups, etc.). Some residents told me that Purnea has been witnessing some sort of a tea buzz ("*chai ki daur*") in the last couple of years. I first felt that this phenomenon was the sign of rising consumerism and the adoption of cultural codes from larger cities. I was a little off the mark: "not really," the owner of one such modern tea shop told me: "*this is all about unemployment. Many of us have university degrees but just could not find a job. Like Modi ji when he was younger, we have no other option but to sell tea.*"



Photo 4: "Chai lover" shop, bus stand, Purnea



Photo 5: “Garam Chai” is among the latest trendy tea shops which opened in Purnea

In Purnea, tea is concocted with a generous amount of milk; it is typically very sweet and rarely features ginger or spices. Yet the flavor is very strong: the caramelization of the milk does the trick. The *kulhad*, the earthen teacups in which the tea is served, add another layer of aroma. Black tea, which is much less common, is prepared with lemon and black pepper.

I went almost daily to one tea stall. The manager, who was in his early 20s, was himself a good illustration of the new economic aspirations among young Purnea dwellers. Beside his attendance at the tea shop, he also delivered food on a bike for Swiggy (a food ordering mobile application) and was actively trying to make it big in the Bhojpuri pop industry. He had already recorded one song (*Abhi Khele Ke Umar Ba*, which means “*this is the age for playing around*”) and was saving money—5,000 rupees—to shoot a video clip (“*with girls,*” he specified).



Photo 6 : “Tea King” shop, Sushant Singh Rajput Chowk, Purnea



Photo 7 : “Tea King” shop, Sushant Singh Rajput Chowk, Purnea

Returning to the tea shop again and again gave me the opportunity to observe peculiar forms of socialization. “*Baithakbazi*” (also called “*addabazi*” in other contexts) refers to the performance of sitting down and engaging in random chit chat, possibly with strangers. Many Purnea dwellers I met lamented that this form of conviviality, so prevalent in villages, was disappearing in the city—I found that it was very much alive in tea shops.

For a lot can happen around a teacup. Some youngsters crossed the entire city to be able to drink their tea and smoke their cigarette “*far from the elders of [their] neighborhood.*” Those who had previously migrated to “Punjab” or

“Madras” (as they would call it) would regale other customers with anecdotes from these locations. I also saw perfect strangers exchanging business tips; one man, an engineer, even promised a job to a younger fellow tea drinker.

The socio-economic background of the clientele was heterogenous: on different occasions, I met the manager, the clerk and the sweeper of the same real estate company. Strangers would easily mingle and sip their tea together. This social diversity, genuine as it was, did not completely hide the social fault lines of Purnea. For instance, while inter-caste interactions definitely occurred at the shop, they took place within certain limits. As the member of a lower caste told me, “*there is a difference between doing friendship [dosti karna] and becoming friends [dost banna].*” Conviviality in a teashop is surely important as far as social cohesion is concerned, but it does not necessarily hold revolutionary potency.



Photo 8: A “machaan”, a bamboo structure used for socialization purposes, at the outskirts of Purnea



Photo 9: Baithakbazi in Madhopara, Purnea

Strikingly enough, tea shops are blatantly gendered: these spaces are almost exclusively visited by men. In Purnea, women do go out to socialize around snacks—and particularly around pani puri (gol gappa)—but rarely would they have tea in the streets. This reality eventually inspired me to conduct a side survey on the consumption of snacks in the city, and its relevance for the access to public space for men and women.



Photo 10: In a village of Munger district, Bihar



Photo 11: A traditional tea stand in the small town of Banmankhi, near Purnea.



Photo 12: The new trend in Purnea: edible teacups

Forest or Not? The "Ground Truth"

By Joëlle Smadja

It's a well-known fact: it is hot on the Nepalese plain of Terai in April. This was even more the case this year, as the temperatures rose to about 6°C above average. It is therefore in a sometimes-oppressive heat that we traveled through our study area as part of the GoLFor-DEEPN program, Local Governance of Forests: Development, Environment and Political Economy in Nepal. This is an interdisciplinary program funded by the ANR (*Agence nationale de la recherche*—French National Research Agency), and federates economists—the project is headed up by François Libois of the Paris School of Economics—and geographers. The objective of this program is to evaluate, on the scale of Nepal, the effects of the decentralization of forest management from the forest department to the local level: by working on the Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs), we seek to examine their effect on the state of forest cover, on collective action within villages and on the functioning of the local political system.

The economists have collected thousands of data on these CFUGs in 14 districts of Nepal and, by cross-referencing these data with census data, are able to produce maps that raise many questions. A geographer from the University of Paris-Cité, Nicolas Delbart, who specializes in remote sensing, is in turn interested in forest cover and its evolution within and around these CFUGs. As for Olivia Aubriot, Romain Valadaud (post-doc on this project) and myself, our role is to help interpret and understand the quantitative data through field observations and detailed interviews, which we can conduct because of our knowledge of the country and the language. We can then redirect certain questions.

Most of our fieldwork took place in the Chitwan district where the eponymous national park is located. The three of us, Romain, Sanjay Chaudhary—a Nepalese colleague living in this district—and myself, start up the mission. Interviews are proceeding apace. We spend hours talking to people in charge of these CFUGs, to users, to representatives of different committees, to the forestry administration, etc. We are in the middle of the campaign period for the local elections and we understand a little of what is at stake, including for the CFUGs. All this is exciting and exhausting. We juggle between Nepali, English and French. When an email arrives from Nicolas who could not join this mission but continues to work from Paris on the forest cover from satellite images. He asks us if we can go and check the vegetation cover in certain sectors and gives us GPS points for this purpose. For these points, the satellite images seem to indicate scrubby vegetation, but on the land use maps of the ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development)—which are nevertheless deduced from other teledetection images—or on topographic maps, the sectors corresponding to

this type of pixel are all mapped as “forest.” These discrepancies leave Nicolas puzzled. Are there forests in these areas? Have any forests been cut down? The verifications he asks us to make correspond to what is called “ground truth” in remote sensing. For us, this is a godsend. At the end of a tiring day spent driving around in the heat of the Nepalese plain, after hours of discussion, this treasure hunt to find these GPS points is a very playful relaxing moment. We’ll do it using the Alpine Quest application that Olivia, who is on another field site in India, in Mandu, recommends. The first point is disconcerting. We are in the middle of a maize field, where the stalks are neither very tall not very dense.



Photo 1: Maize fields and banana trees

According to the farmers we interviewed, the land here has been cultivated for decades. The forest is far away. Did we make a mistake? No, the GPS point shows us the latitude and longitude to the nearest minute and second. The second GPS point leads us again to a cornfield. The third one, on the other hand, shows us a mosaic of corn fields, rice fields and a banana plantation with banana trees that are more than 5 meters high, planted very close together.

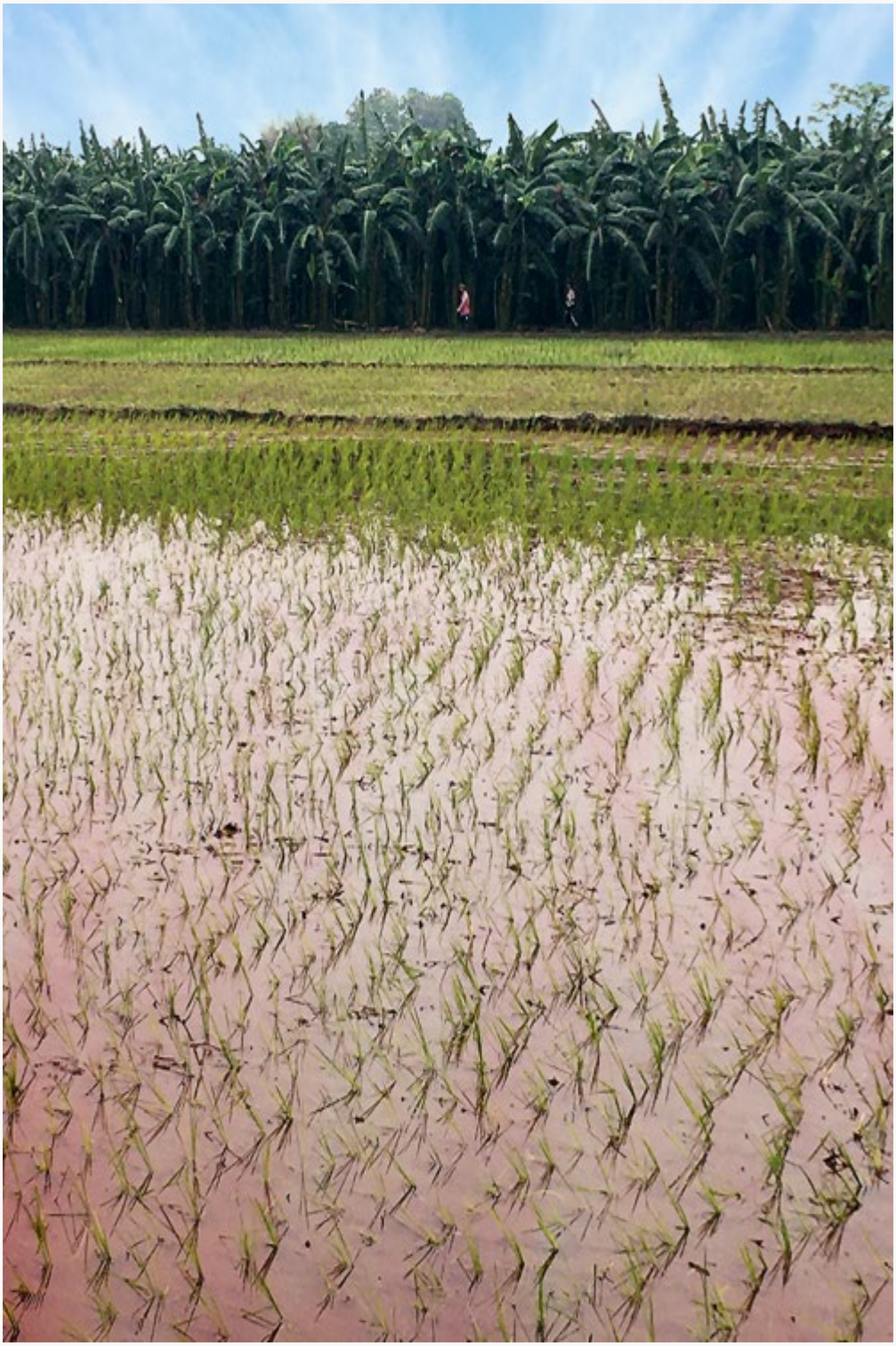


Photo 2: Rice field and banana trees



Photo 3: Maize field and banana trees

This type of banana plantation has obviously been mapped as “forest.” But this “ground truth” is not enough. It is an in-depth interview with the owner of the fields, which will allow us to understand the mapping difficulties and the mistakes made. Indeed, he explains that throughout this entire sector, banana plantations alternate in rotation with other crops.



Photo 4: Crop rotation

The banana trees are grown for five years and then cut down because they produce a lot of insects (beetles in particular) that compromise the crops. After being grown for five years, they thus will be replaced by maize, mustard or rice crops for another five years, after which the banana trees will be planted again. A headache for cartographers! Hence the misinterpretations that cannot be resolved by simple field site observation. Interviews with villagers and the introduction of a long time scale are essential for understanding this type of land use.

Along with Olivia A., François L. and Mani Nepal (a Nepalese researcher), who join us for the second part of our stay, the other GPS points we try to verify lead us into the national park and its buffer zone. The quest for the “ground truth” proves much more difficult. Indeed, the GPS points are far off the beaten track, in sectors inaccessible by jeep. But, leaving the jeep and the experienced forest rangers who accompany us is hardly possible. They

are supposed to protect us from the wild fauna and in particular, in the park, from Dhurba, the wild elephant that bears the name of the first man he killed. He is said to have more than twenty deaths to his name. Another of his companions, Ronaldo, is just as dangerous; he is so named because he runs very fast. We do not meet them. On the track, we meet a brown bear who has the good taste to turn his back on us and leave. The rhinos are splashing around in a pond and ignore us. We envy them. As for the buffer zone, where villagers can go to fish or cut grass, it is much frequented by tigers, who find there a larder full of small game, but also sometimes heckle jeeps carrying tourists or attack villagers. In the end, we wisely gave up on identifying most of the GPS points in these sectors. We sacrifice science and “ground truth” for our safety, but we tell ourselves that our Unit Director and the CNRS Defense Inspector will approve and that Nicolas D. will not hold it against us. We go back to drink a fresh lemonade under the fans. It is hot…



Photo 5: Rice field and banana trees

Welcome to

Martine Mazaudon

emerita CNRS Senior Research Fellow (*Directrice de recherche*), joined the CEH (*Centre d'études himalayennes*—Center for Himalayan Studies) in July 2021. A specialist of the Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in the Himalayan region, she has been previously associated simultaneously with the CNRS Lacito research group, which she headed up from 1996 to 1999, and with the EPHE IV and University Paris 3 for teaching. She was a visiting scholar at UC Berkeley and at UCLA.

Her research interests comprise two main parts: language documentation and linguistic typology, with a focus on Tibeto-Burman languages, and historical linguistics and principles of language change. She takes *"Panchronic phonology"* as defined by André Haudricourt as a framework for her studies, adding the study of phonological change in progress as practiced by participants in the Laboratory Phonology (*LabPhon*) community, for a better understanding of phonological change on a different time scale.

To assist historical linguists in their tasks, in collaboration with John Lowe (UC Berkeley), she explored building a computer-tool, the *Reconstruction Engine*, to check and mechanize parts of the work.

Due to their original characteristics in the Himalayan area, tones, their nature, birth and development have been a recurring theme in her research.

She spent several years doing fieldwork in Nepal, collecting data on all aspects of the Tamang language and other languages of that group, and collaborated with Boyd Michailovsky in some research on "Kiranti" languages. She also worked on Tibetan, Dzongkha and other languages of Bhutan, Naxi of Yunnan, and Karen of Burma.

Concerned by the long-term preservation of language documentation, especially audio recordings collected by field-linguists, she participated in 1996 in the conception and creation by Boyd Michailovsky and John B. Lowe of the "Lacito Archive," now known as "the *Pangloss* collection."

Ethno-mathematics is another of her interests. She published an extensive description of the principles of *number building* in Tibeto-Burman languages, with a view of encouraging field researchers, linguists or anthropologists, to document these very endangered systems before they all standardize to the dominant decimal pattern.

Ongoing projects include a dictionary of the Tamang language, an edited translation into English, with collaborators, of some of André Haudricourt's main articles, and an updating of the machinery of the Reconstruction Engine.

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Congratulations

The CEIAS would like to congratulate Otávio Amaral, who has obtained a scholarship to spend the fall at the New School School for Social Research in New York City, where he will be working with Judith Butler on the following project:

The *Hijras* of South India: A Heuristic Approach between the Body and the Sacred

India is a country that challenges Western models of belief, gender and religiosity. The social organization, the beliefs, the behavior; all of these elements are inserted into a perspective that could be considered as the opposite of Western reality, especially of the European and American reality of the global North. Louis Dumont (1966, 1967, 1983) was one of the first French anthropologists to think about the caste system that emerged from Hinduism and the construction of India as a nation-state. While the construction of personhood in the West is weaved through individualism, while Christian morality based on the duality of the soul and the body is extremely diffuse, Dumont (1966) states that the organization of society in India is built from the social organization of work and ritual obligations whose justification is anchored in an impurity/purity dynamic. The Western notion of the individual and his agency within the society that surrounds him invades and builds the principles of democracy and human rights in the South Asian context, articulating a close relationship between hierarchy, division of ritual obligations, and the nation-state. According to Mauss (1950), the Indian person is constituted through the metaphysical assemblage of spirit, cosmos and body.

In terms of the construction of gender, particularly when we perceive sexuality as a manifestation of desire and a construction of identity, the Indian perception would be no different. It confronts our expectations of what can be considered as female, male, or transgender. *Hijras* are actors who construct their identity from the liminality of the dichotomies opposing male and female. It is an identity that flees from the categories of the Western world and the Indian world itself. These individuals find themselves on the margins of a society as gendered as the Indian social structure. It is another identity, an alternative and sacred identity that can be shaped by many

perspectives beyond sexuality and performance. For this reason, this object leads us towards the interpretation of other elements as hermeneutic factors in order to describe the *hijra* identity; such as religion, body usages, and artistic aesthetic (Boisvert, 2018; Novello, 2011). According to Serena Nanda (1996; 1999), these individuals are considered “neither male nor female.” Known differently according to distinct regions—*aravani*, *thirunangai* and *kinnar* are other names that can signify a *hijra*—they are the living embodiment of the symbols of Hindu mythology. It is through the devotion to the goddess *Bahuchara Mata*, the mother of all *hijras*, that they are seen as a symbol of fertility (Boisvert, 2018; Loh, 2014; Reddy, 2005; Sharma, 2012).

Since 2014, *Hijras* are perceived by the Indian state as the “third gender” (Le Monde, April 15, 2014). They are part of the exotic imaginary that surrounds Indian and Hindu culture. Yet these individuals cannot be seen by our eyes within a specific framework that restricts the individual to his/her/their gender according to the model of a Western and modern construction of personhood. Present in the great Hindu epics such as the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, in addition to the Vedas and the Laws of Manu, their aesthetic performances are constructed by a particular perception of religious rituals within the construction of the Self. Several rituals shape the construction of the relationships at the center of the community. Often placed on the margins of society, these individuals construct social rules that reflect—beyond reinventing—values of Indian society, such as hierarchy. One of the most important moments in the life of a *hijra* is the ritual through which she will be welcomed by the local community (*gharana*) in addition to formalizing the relationship between the newcomer and her *guru*. Nevertheless, it is the nirvan the ritual that refers to the symbology of the body, a rite of passage where the individual is emasculated and receives the sacred powers of the goddess. *Nirvan* provides legitimacy to perform the *badhai*—a revenue-generating ritual according to which *hijras* dance and sing to bless a newborn (Boisvert, 2018; Nanda, 1999; Novello, 2011). Although no longer mandatory according to the community’s values, the *nirvan* is the ritual that testifies to the divine role of the relationship between the *hijras*, the blessings—a moment when *hijras* can convey feelings that will guarantee the child prosperity—and the cosmos. It is thus the intermediary between the world here and the acquisition of sacred powers. It involves the action of emasculation, traditionally accomplished at home by an elder *hijra*, followed by several days of isolation during

which the blood that comes out is a symbol of masculinity leaving that body (Boisvert, 2018; Cohen, 1995; Nanda, 1998). It is during this moment of caesura that the *hijra* who has just undergone the ritual will be consecrated to her new status, and endowed with the powers transmitted by the goddess due to her complete devotion.

The body is the surface through which the intimate is externalized to the world; it is the materiality through which the universe is felt by the individual so as to establish a relationship between his bodily sensibility and human agency. The body is, then, a signifier of the expression of the social order in which the subject is inserted; it is a signifier in itself from which the relationship between bearer and producer of signs is constructed (Augé, 2017, p. 191). When *hijras* become a heuristic object of reflection, it is crucial to challenge Western values concerning the body and its meanings, in addition to how corporeality acts within the construction of Self. In the words of David Le Breton (2018, p. 74), “corporeality is a matter of symbol, it is not a fatality that Man must take upon himself and whose manifestations are deployed as if he could not do anything about it” (free translation from the French). In turn, Michel Leiris (2018) perceives the sacred as a manifestation of the intimacy of the individual. For him, the sacred concerns the most intimate sphere of the subjectivation of the individual. It is the affective manifestation of lived experiences; these being always felt through the sensitivity of the body. For that, the sacred is not restricted to the religious world as it is often said, but includes a feeling which unfolds desire, a resistance to the current moral and social order.

Taking all this into consideration, we may affirm that *hijras* are undeniably a diverse community within which several individual trajectories build cultural and sensitive representations of an identity challenging Western and Indian values themselves on gender and personhood. How could we think about the uses of the body and the daily life of these actors?

To come to an answer, it will be a question here of undertaking a “dense description” (Geertz, 2017) of the symbolic system shared by a community; culture being this dynamic manufacture of symbols produced by human beings in order to give meaning to life and to construct different visions of being in the world and within the social. My methodology thus consists in carrying out a dense and sensitive descriptive analysis, that is to say, an ethnographic approach attentive to the senses, to gestures, to

feelings and to the perplexity that is imbued in the relationship to the Other that we observe; here the ethnographer is an actor and author at the same time (Laplantine, 2018). This fieldwork will therefore be carried out during a year in Bangalore, State of Karnataka.

The choice of the city is not a coincidence. As I already had an experience within the associative environment of this city, I will take advantage of the established contacts in order to integrate in particular into the associations working on sexual education, the assistance to the carriers of HIV and the LGBTI cause. However, the goal is not to realize fieldwork restricted to these establishments, but to be able to accompany the daily life of the *hijras* who live in the city. The entry point for the fieldwork will be through this network of contacts that can be fruitful since this community, although religious and largely known in Indian urban contexts, is on the margins of Indian society today.

At first, I plan to conduct “comprehensive interviews” (Kauffmann, 1996), either in English or in Hindi, a free interlocution with the aim of breaking the ice between respondents and investigators in the associative environment. From this insertion point, the second stage will consist of a participant observation of the daily life, prayers, beauty rituals and performances of the Bangalore *hijras* in order to apprehend the relationship between the body and the intimate sacred of these interlocutors. For David Le Breton (2004), symbolic interactionism is a social science approach whose aim is to understand the construction of symbols by individuals. Indeed, since culture is considered as a symbolic system built from the interaction between subjects, the interpretation of this system consists in a reading and translation process, focused on the signifiers shared among the actors of the culture. It is through interlocutions, through daily experiences, that I will try to collect data. Given that the body is a semantic vector that mediates between individuals and the reality that surrounds them, it is on the analysis of these interactions between *hijras* within their intimacy as well as on the social context of the city where they live that I will base my analysis.

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