

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY  
Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs

# SOUTH ASIA CENTER

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2021

## NEW FACES

| Bhanushri Sisodia  
Hindi Instructor

The South Asia Center is honored to welcome Bhanushri Sisodia, Hindi Lecturer in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics (LLL). She joined Syracuse in the Fall of 2019 and has enjoyed working with the South Asia Center to help expand the Hindi-Urdu program while teaching beginners and intermediate Hindi speakers. Prior to Syracuse, Sisodia taught Hindi for four years at Michigan State University. She has also taught at the Foreign Language Institute and the Defense Language Institute. She has thoroughly enjoyed teaching Hindi over the years and loves the chance to interact with eager language learners. For the two years she has been at Syracuse, Sisodia has led the Hindi-Urdu Culture and Conversation Tables hosted by the South Asia Center and is often found conversing with students from different fields on various topics. She said, “teaching Hindi really is my first love and passion, and the constant support of the SAC for the language program at SU has contributed to the growth of language learning. I am so grateful to be a part of this wonderful team!”



## MITHILA AND COVID-19

| Susan Wadley  
Professor Emerita, Department of Anthropology

In January 2020, a student from Kerala returning home from studies in Wuhan, China brought Covid-19 to India. In March, students (one of whom had tested positive) returning home from the UK brought it to Kolkata where it spread rapidly. On March 24, Prime Minister Modi ordered a total lockdown of the country, closing schools, banks, malls, buses, trains and more. Millions of migrant workers were stranded without jobs or income in urban India while the lack of industrial pollution led to cleaner rivers as the skies cleared, the birds flew, and the turtles returned to beaches. In the Mithila region of northern Bihar, painters in the Mithila style captured both of these events, as well as the need to mask and the work of the many Covid warriors - the police, the journalists, the mask-makers, the medical workers—who fought the virus.

By late summer of 2020, numerous paintings on these and other topics had been made, and I curated in an exhibition for SU Art Museum titled “Mithila Art in the Time of Covid” (<https://indd.adobe.com/view/b42ffd50-92eb-4c53-b8be-cad71851cee7>). The museum eventually bought two of these pieces, including the painting shown on the right by Alka Das, a high caste older painter now living in Patna who works in the traditional Mithila style. This lyrical piece reflects on the (temporary) resurgence of nature.

Sadly, the plight of the Mithila painters is severe as the tourism industry is all but closed. Many, especially those of lower castes, are totally dependent on income from painting but even those from middle class families face hardship with the loss of income. One now renowned Dalit painter, Naresh Kumar Paswan, actually left India in December and migrated to Oman in order to keep his family fed. Many use Facebook and other sites to try to sell their works, but like many in the lower rungs of society everywhere in the world, the economic toll from the pandemic is seemingly relentless.



Alka Das, “Nature in COVID Time”

*Likhiya: Writing Stories With Mithila Art.*

Documentary short films by Tula Goenka & Susan Wadley can be found on the web at the following link: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHipmCRgdpWzql4KbgdWV\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHipmCRgdpWzql4KbgdWV_Q)

# EXAMINING ISSUES OF STATELESSNESS AND CITIZENSHIP IN SOUTH ASIA AND BEYOND

| Mona Bhan

Ford-Maxwell Professor of South Asian Studies and Associate Professor of Anthropology

On April 1, 2021, we organized the inaugural seminar on Decolonizing Citizenship, as part of our Collaboration for Unprecedented Success and Excellence (CUSE) Interdisciplinary Seminar Grant, in conjunction with the Moynihan Institute and SAC. Entitled “Rethinking Citizenship in an Era of Mass Statelessness,” our CUSE project will bring together experts from Syracuse University and schools in Europe and Asia through a series of workshops, seminars, and collaborative research projects in order to examine how minority communities across multiple sites in Asia, US, and Europe engage with questions of citizenship, sovereignty, and statelessness within the context of rightwing populism and authoritarian nationalisms. The project aims to establish an interdisciplinary research consortium, and forge new advocacy networks across regional and national boundaries. These critical foundations will enable sustained research and collaboration across multiple institutions and further strengthen the Maxwell School’s reputation as a leader in questions of statelessness, citizenship, and public advocacy.

Our inaugural seminar focused on South Asia for which we invited four US and UK based scholars. Our speakers drew from their long-term research in Bangladesh, India, Kashmir, and Pakistan to discuss how recent key political events have retrenched fundamental human rights and created a crisis of citizenship for millions of communities in South Asia. Some of these events include the unilateral abrogation of Kashmir’s semi-autonomous status in 2019, that has since paved way for India’s settler colonial interventions in Kashmir, and set up conditions to intensify the state of permanent emergency, digital apartheid, and military siege. At the same time, the passing of NRC/CAA bills in the Indian parliament, which sought to render millions of Indian Muslims stateless, and sweeping changes in three farm laws in the middle of a pandemic that were designed to deregulate and privatize the agrarian economy through market reforms and dispossess farmers in Punjab, India, made it amply clear that in India, the rightwing BJP government was using a public health crisis to entrench its authoritarian powers.

Before the Indian experiments with citizenship, unequal citizenship laws were responsible for the carnage of the Rohingyas in Myanmar, and the exodus of one million Rohingyas to Bangladesh, making it the world’s worst refugee crisis till date, and in turn shaping Bangladeshi politics in profound ways. Our speakers focused on how carceral states in South Asia rely on surveillance infrastructure to criminalize and silence dissent. For instance, Bangladesh’s Digital Security Act implemented in combines several colonial-era laws with a newly energized security apparatus to arrest people without warrant. In India, policing has expanded into intimate domains of familial life and prisons and detention centers have become normalized as hundreds of activists and academics languish in prisons under hitherto obscure laws such as the UAPA which allows the central government to designate an individual a “terrorist” even before the commencement of trial or juridical due process.

In the next two years, we plan to organize three interdisciplinary workshops on populism/authoritarianism, sovereignty/statelessness, and extractive economies drawing on research and advocacy work on South Asia and beyond. Scholars working on related issues in East Europe, Turkey, China, Myanmar, Kashmir, India, Pakistan have expressed strong interest and we are in the process of planning these workshops. The first workshop, “Mass Statelessness and the Crisis of Citizenship,” will consider questions such as: How does citizenship operate in contexts of war, statelessness, and authoritarianism? How might domestic legal regimes end up undermining international-rights-based frameworks, ushering in an era of “non-rights”? How might peoples’ longstanding struggles for self-determination become grounds to annihilate them and deny populations basic freedoms that include the right to education, health, and mobility? The second workshop on extractive economies, resource sovereignty, and landlessness, will examine the ways in which minority communities experience economic and resource dispossessions because of extractive projects that normalize land grabs for military and corporate profit. The workshop will focus on the ways in which community solidarities emerge within and across nations to re-envision alternative ecological futures. The third workshop on populism and authoritarian politics will examine how authoritarian governments have normalized mass detentions and incarcerations, a phenomenon that many rights’ bodies have claimed might lead to a “humanitarian crisis of horrifying proportions.” We will examine how policing has expanded into intimate domains of familial life and how prisons and detention centers have become spaces for “non-citizens” or stateless populations who are either stripped of their fundamental rights within their states or are fleeing their homes because of ecological, political, and economic disasters.

Conceptually linked, the three workshops will address questions of statelessness, dissent, and extractive economies in a way that offers a comprehensive and long-term strategy to build intellectual networks across disciplinary fields and forge scholarly exchanges. These networks will help recruit and support students and emerging scholars, as well as sustain faculty interest and commitment to apply for external funding and pursue collaborative research and writing projects.

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

### REFLECTIONS ON PANDEMIC PIVOTING AND THE DANCE OF REORIENTING RESEARCH

| Alexandra Berger  
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Religion

Over the past year, there has been much discussion about “pivoting” research in the wake of Covid-19, particularly among those of us whose work relies heavily on in-person interactions. But what does it mean to pivot? And is that the only or most appropriate response to changing circumstances? As a dancer and someone who studies embodiment, I can’t help but think about the bodily metaphor of pivoting and what it implies about how we go about adjusting academic practices and topics of inquiry. To pivot is to keep one foot planted while stepping out with the other foot to face a different direction. In this action, the body can become something like a protractor, tracing points around the circumference of a particular center point. Perhaps this is an apt metaphor; it allows the pivoter to maintain a sense of stability while also shifting perspective. As a movement, the pivot reveals a productive tension between stability and mobility, reaching out but staying planted. It also implies that the pivoter is already standing somewhere, the stable foot having stepped, pre-pivot, onto its place.

Indeed, many of the stories I have heard about people finding ways to shift their research over the past year have been from those who were already clearly standing somewhere—physically located in the field, unable to meet with collaborators face to face, negotiating digital platforms, or collaborating with colleagues internationally. While I found these accounts of pivoting inspiring, I had trouble applying their lessons to my own situation. When travel shut down in spring 2020, I was just about to start preliminary fieldwork in India. Instead, I paused. It was as if I were stuck waiting in the wings, not yet really having a project within which to pivot. For a while, I imagined this pause as similar to the way one would freeze in a game of freeze tag; once unfrozen, I would simply pick up where I left off. In this type of pause, the world and I both emerge relatively unchanged. However, embodied lessons from my movement training teach me otherwise: not only is it infeasible to remain indefinitely “frozen,” but it is naïve to think there is ever a moment devoid of movement, even in a seemingly still state. Even when the world “returns” to familiar forms of functioning, it will be different. Someone who has survived Covid will have a different bodily experience of the world. The loss of a loved one leaves an impression on the mind-body. Even those who have been lucky enough to be relatively untouched by the illness itself have internalized a different way of being in the world—mentally calculating distance from other people, darting nervously through public spaces to minimize contact.

As these realizations settle more deeply into my bones, I have started to wonder, are there metaphors other than pivoting, or in addition to pivoting, that could help me navigate where I am (and am not) in my process? For example, I am reminded of Steve Paxton’s “small dance,” a practice of sensing the micro-movements and weight shifts that happen in the body to keep us standing “still,” our small dance with gravity. From this sensing, the dancer gradually becomes

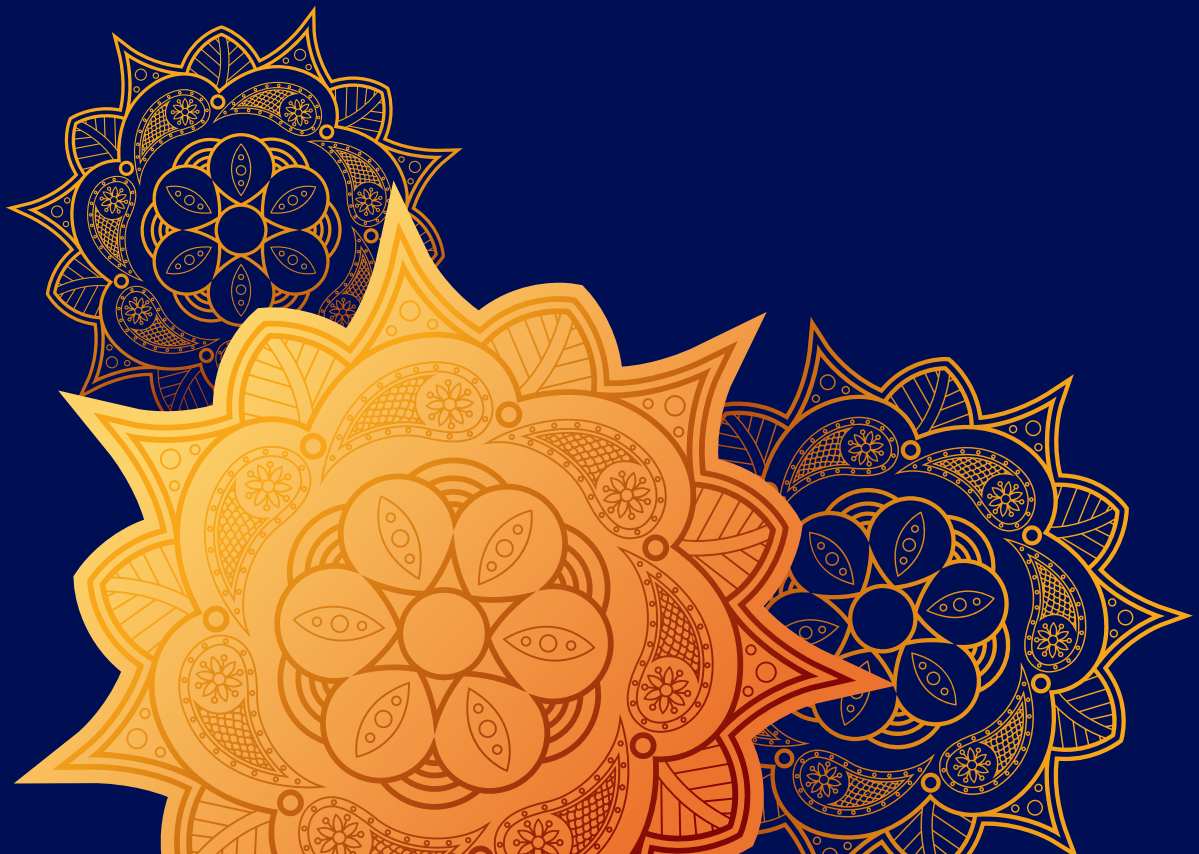
aware of how these micro-shifts develop into larger, more visible movements; the body learns to respond intelligently and intuitively to its environment. This practice asks us to pause but not freeze, to remember that we are always already standing somewhere, and to look beyond a particular vocabulary of movements in order to see that all our actions are in some way resisting, channeling, or submitting to gravity. A pivot may sometimes be the most skillful way to negotiate this dance with gravity, but at other times we may need a spiral, a slide, a leap, a collapse, or simply to return to the sensing of the small dance.

For me, a metaphorical return to the small dance means being prepared to step out in one of several different directions. Perhaps I will be back in India in January or September, following something akin to my original research plan, adjusted to account for the impact of Covid. Perhaps I will need to rely more heavily on print and digital media sources than originally planned. Or, perhaps it will make the most sense to relocate my ethnography to the U.S., focusing on diaspora populations. Whichever initial step I take, there are many more movements ahead, perhaps even some pivots.



Allie Berger (right) with Seema Sureshkumar, from their performance, SANGAM: Fusion of Kathak and Ballet. This performance was part of the 2021 SU Performing Identities Across Cultures (PICS) initiative.

A video of their submission can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjBfWaOG6H4&t=319s>



## BOOK REVIEW

### **SINGAPORE, SPIRITUALITY, AND THE SPACE OF THE STATE: SOUL OF THE LITTLE RED DOT** BY JOANNE PUNZO WAGHORNE. LONDON: BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC, 2020.

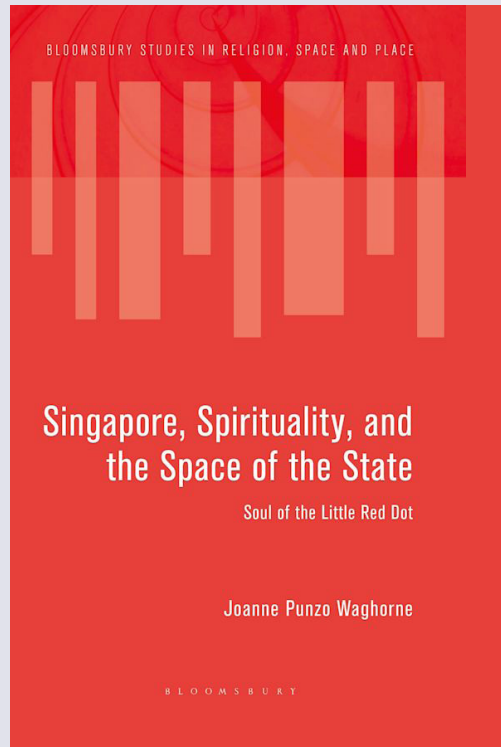
| Review by Mallory Hennigar (Religion, PhD '21)

During the ethnographic process, the question “where am I?” often emerges in a researcher’s mind. Joanne Punzo Waghorne’s *Singapore, Spirituality, and the Space of the State: Soul of the Little Red Dot* (2020) returns again and again to this question in ever more probing and resonant ways as she takes her readers on a journey with her through the spaces and places of the island city-state of Singapore. While Waghorne does not offer us any hard and fast conclusions, what we do get are carefully chosen threads of stories woven into a tapestry depicting the ever-changing, illusory landscape of Singapore and its residents’ spiritual lives and practices. As readers, we are left to sit with the complexity of Waghorne’s observations and arguments, with a clear understanding of how and why the place “boggled” her mind and continuously challenged her assumptions (4).

This is Waghorne’s first monograph based in Singapore rather than in her previous area of study in South India. As such, this book is a step outside the confines of South Asian studies.

Nevertheless, this book offers valuable insights to scholars of India, South Asia, and Asia broadly speaking. Waghorne’s interlocutors and case studies focus on people from a variety of ethnic communities, with a special focus on the South Indian diaspora. Chapter 4 also offers a complex and nuanced view into Indian nationalism through the practice of yoga within Singapore. Waghorne firmly places the immense global importance of Asia as an economic and cultural force at the center of this work, arguing that the “growing dominance of Asia” cannot be ignored (xiv).

As an authoritarian city-state of only a few hundred square miles, Singapore offers a fascinating case study in some of the biggest issues and questions of our time: authority and identity. In chapter 2, “Statecraft and Cosmology,” Waghorne turns to her History of Religions background and the concept of myth to think through the role of the authority of the Singaporean state and its founding father Lee Kuan Yew. While the level of authoritarianism within Singapore might cause an immediate negative reaction in some observers, Waghorne takes a more measured approach, giving us greater empathy and understanding of how the magical narrative of Singapore’s progress can sweep people away. Her work with myth in this chapter is especially important and timely to think through in the contemporary global political landscape. Myth has concrete transformative power, erasing the ancestral homes of Singaporeans for internationally competitive centers of art and learning (52).



The book has a large focus on charismatic guru-lead movements that have taken hold within the city. Chapter 1 introduces us to the places people make for their gurus within their high-rise home spaces, while chapter 3 takes us right into the huge auditoriums in which gurus and their audiences gather. Another important task of chapter 3 is to dig into the difference between religion and spirituality. Waghorne ties the growing importance of the category of spirituality to the question of authority. The spiritual movements she observes in these chapters call upon their members to enhance their own sense of authority over their lives, asking them to reject the traditional religious authorities, even as these gurus somewhat paradoxically depend on their followers' acceptance of their spiritual authority (62-3). In Singapore, religious institutions such as temples, masjids, and churches are under the control and regulation of the state, gurus, however, "do not collide or collude with the state, but rather occupy either the unbounded inner space of the self or commercial or domestic places transformed temporarily into consecrated space, which in Singapore must remain temporary" (85). Again, in these chapters, Waghorne does not attempt to flatten or simplify the complexity of these landscapes she traverses, but builds us a rich topographical map.

In chapter 4, Waghorne adds a new layer to the map of Singapore by exploring the practice of yoga and Indian Prime Minister Modi's International Yoga Day. While each chapter of this book offers a window into the Indian diasporic communities within Singapore and a beautiful commentary on the role of Asia within the global political landscape, this chapter is an incredibly important and fascinating read for researchers working in India. During International Yoga Day, people across the world participate in PM Modi's highly organized event meant to remind people of the Indian origin and cultural importance of yoga. Waghorne observed public spaces across the city of Singapore serving as the location of this celebration with the aid of the Modi administration's Common Yoga Protocol and the attendance of an officer from the Indian High Commission (93-4, 97-8). Waghorne argues that: "The space of the state was very publicly claimed by another macrocosm," but leaves us to puzzle through with her the "complex layers of motives and desire [that] still sit on those mats" (124).

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 return to some of Waghorne's perennial questions about temples and sacred space from her previous work, but with fresh new lenses. Chapter 5 is a case study of the ArtScience Museum, which is housed in a giant lotus shaped building, delving into the question "Can a building have a soul?" (126). Waghorne takes us alongside as she reads Thoreau's *Walden* and explores geography, architectural, and spatial theory within religious studies. A lovely meditation on the urban, the spatial, the commercial, and the spiritual, this chapter is a beautiful read with plenty of food for thought, even if we never set foot in Singapore ourselves. Chapter 6 builds on this case study with the evocative title "How is a Guru like a High-rise?" In this field research, however, Waghorne has left the temples and is exploring the spiritual spaces within Singapore's many high-rise apartment complexes. She argues that "more than spatial/temporal linking, and a simultaneous delinking from the religious or architectural pasts, conjoin the rising gurus to the high-rises in a place like Singapore" (152). These high rises offer another fascinating glimpse into Singapore's authoritarianism as the residents of each high-rise building must reflect the same ethnic ratios of the overall population. Practices that used to be based in temples are now taking place within the high-rises, but also new practices that reflect the multiethnic environment are being formed (171). The space of the high-rise is exactly the kind of space in which ungrounded, generally appealing guru-lead movements can thrive.

In the final chapter 7, Waghorne takes us on a journey through the ethnic enclave known as Little India. She focuses in this chapter on global guru movements that have established permanent and lasting spaces within the enclave including Shirdi Sai Baba, Guru Ragavendra, and the Amriteswari Society. While the extremely large guru groups that she discusses in earlier chapters have not made temple homes in Little India, these smaller groups have made their sacred spaces here. While the majority of the book focuses on the movement from particular to general spaces that lack cultural or ethnic particularities, this chapter takes us into a space that is struggling to survive because of its difference from the harmonious Singaporean integration.

In a readable narrative style, this book is rich with theoretical insights that are crucial to understanding issues that press on communities and nations across the world today. In her own words, "this book is the culmination of those continual crossings between place and self (my own and others) and spaces built of imagination, myth, and tons of concrete" (xiii). Waghorne's writing invites us along on her journeys through Singapore and walks us through the pathways of her thought-processes and analyses. This is not a book for simple, clear answers, but one with which to meditate on the changing landscapes of religion, spirituality, authority, identity, and the communities that converge within the little red dot of Singapore.

## OUTREACH UPDATES

# EXPLORING THE IMPACTS OF HUMAN DISEASE THROUGHOUT HISTORY

| By Emera Bridger Wilson  
Associate Director, South Asia Center

Since March 2020, we have been living through a historic global pandemic. As we begin to process our collective experiences with COVID-19, we might pause to reflect on how people around the world have lived through periods of disease throughout history, and how they understood their experiences. Before germ theory, how did cultures around the world conceptualize vectors of disease? What public health measures were employed in 10th Century China to slow down epidemics? How has malaria changed the course of history? These are some of the questions with which educators enrolled in this summer's International Studies Summer Institute (ISSI) grappled.

The 2021 ISSI, a professional development workshop for K-12 teachers hosted annually by the South Asia Program and other programs at the Einaudi Center for International Studies in collaboration with the Syracuse University South Asia Center, explored the history of human disease. The goal of the institute was to encourage teachers to develop a greater understanding of the different regions and cultures of the world, including South Asia, and to think critically about social, political, and environmental issues using disease and public health as a point of departure.

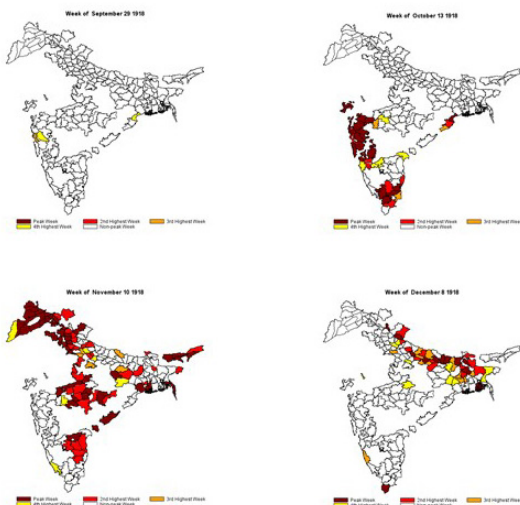
Building upon the experience of the 2020 ISSI, this year's workshop consisted of a mix of synchronous meetings, which allowed the participants to interact directly with faculty studying these issues, and asynchronous components.

On June 28, 2021, participants gathered virtually via Zoom to talk with three scholars about diseases over time. Suman Seth, Marie Underhill Noll Professor of the History of Science at Cornell, discussed "Medicine, Race and Sex in the 18th Century British Empire," focusing on the British colonists and enslaved peoples in the Caribbean.

Siddharth Chandra (Cornell PhD '97), professor of economics at Michigan State University, talked about the social and economic ramifications of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic in the U.S., India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. Chandra noted that the ports, like Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, and pilgrimage sites, like Puri, were early hot spots for the pandemic, which then travelled in a wave-like manner from east to west, highlighting the connectivity between locations. In contrast, the virus spread differently in Sri Lanka, because of two demographically distinct regions with limited connections between them, the Tamil-majority North and the majority Sinhalese South. Chandra argued that understanding how demographic, social and cultural factors impact the spread of disease historically can help scientists and public health officials create better models for how to manage the spread of disease now and in the future.

Finally, Jarra Jagne, Senior Extension Associate at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, outlined the basics of zoonotic diseases, the economic and public health impacts of these diseases, specifically avian influenza, and how we can mitigate the spread of these diseases in the future.

### The 1918 Pandemic in India



Following the synchronous session, participants completed six weeks of online activities featuring professors from Cornell and Syracuse sharing their expertise and perspectives on disease through taped lectures and readings. The topics of these asynchronous sessions ranged from the introduction of disease in colonial Peru, epidemics in early modern China, the Black Death in Art and Literature, and the most dangerous animal on earth, the mosquito. Each of these units, in addition to the presentations given on June 28, drew connections between the ways in which race, gender, social structure, and culture impact how people conceptualize and treat diseases.

In August, the participants reconvened for a synchronous Zoom session, during which the teachers discussed the lessons plans they developed around the history of disease. This session helped educators to connect the material they learned through the presentations with resources at Cornell and Syracuse to give them the confidence to teach about different world regions in the future.

This year's ISSI was supported by Cornell University's Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, South Asia Program, Southeast Asia Program, Institute for African Development, East Asia Program, Latin American Studies Program and Institute for European Studies; Syracuse University's Moynihan Institute for Global Affairs and the South Asia Center; TST-BOCES, and the U. S. Department of Education Title VI Program.



## ZOOMING AMONG UPSTATE NEW YORK COMMUNITY COLLEGES

| By Kathi Colen Peck  
Post-secondary Outreach Coordinator, South Asia Program

In the quick step to embrace our new ‘virtual’ normal this past year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our outreach program met the challenge without a stutter. In fact, we had a full year of activity, albeit all virtual. We continued to build on our collaboration with our consortium partner, the South Asia Program at Cornell as well as the Southeast Asia Program, Latin American and Caribbean Studies Program, and the Institute for African Development at Cornell to deliver programming opportunities to four community colleges, Cayuga Community College (CCC), Monroe Community College (MCC), Onondaga Community College (OCC), Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3), and an expanding set of schools and programs of education including SUNY Cortland School of Education, SUNY Buffalo State School of Education, and Syracuse University School of Education.

As part of our *Voices in Global Education Speakers* series, we organized two engaging events for education faculty and teachers-in-training among our partners. In September 2020, Chaise LaDousa (Hamilton College) and Christina Davis (Western Illinois University) gave a lively, conversational presentation on “Language, Identity, and Education in South Asia,” and in March 2021, Pawan Dhingra (Amherst College) spoke about his newly published and highly praised book, *Hyper Education: Why Good Schools, Good Grades, and Good Behavior Are Not Enough*.

The South Asia Consortium continued to support the 2020 CCIF fellows and welcomed a new cohort in May 2021. Alejandro Gonzalez-Suarez completed his project on construction technology in India and the U.S., and utilized contacts made during his January 2020 CAORC-AIIS faculty development trip to India to augment his course curricula. OCC English Professor Stephen Pierson refocused his first year composition course entirely on modern literature from South and Southeast Asia.

For 2021, SAC & SAP accepted two new CCIF fellows, Jasna Bogdanovska and Laura Penman. Jasna Bogdanovska is a Professor of Visual Arts at MCC, where she teaches photography and photojournalism. Her project, “Reframing Culture Through Visual Storytelling,” will develop a catalog of women storytellers from South & Southeast Asia that amplifies a diverse representation of gender, race, social class, and ethnicity in the visual arts. Laura Penman, Professor of Biology at MCC, will consider issues of food security and sustainable agriculture among coastal communities in South & Southeast Asia to develop case studies to illustrate impacts of management strategies for her Intro to Sustainability course.

Additionally, SAC & SAP welcomed two new global education faculty fellows (GEFF) in 2021, Lin Lin, Associate Professor of Social Studies Education at SUNY Cortland, and Diana Baker, Associate Professor of Education at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. Lin will work with Emera Bridger Wilson, associate director of the South Asia Center and Award Coordinator for the South Asia Book Award, to create a series of digital journeys through South Asia for her teachers-in-training using outstanding children’s literature associated with the South Asia Book Award. Diana Baker will enhance curricula to include South & Southeast Asia perspectives in the narratives of disability for her students.



Jasna Bogdanovska



Laura Penman



Lin Lin



Diana Baker

## BUSY YEAR FOR SOUTH ASIA BOOK AWARD

| Emera Bridger Wilson

Associate Director, South Asia Center and SABA Awards Coordinator

Despite the pandemic, those of us involved in the South Asia Book Award were busy getting the word out about the award books and the importance of including South Asia in classrooms and libraries. The mission of the South Asia Book Award, a national outreach initiative organized by ten South Asia Center around the country, is twofold. First, it recognizes authors and publishers who tell and promote well-written, engaging, and authentic stories about South Asia and its diasporas. Second, it provides recommendations and resources to help teachers and librarians incorporate the texts into the curriculum in an effective way.

In Fall 2020, the South Asia Book Award committee held a series of virtual talks to recognize the authors who won the 2020 South Asia Book Award: Meenal Patel, author of the picture book, *Priya Dreams of Marigolds and Masala*; Padma Venkatraman, author of the middle grade book, *The Bridge Home*; and Mitali Perkins, who wrote the young adult book, *Forward Me Back to You*. The authors discussed the inspiration for their books and the ways they see children's literature as a way to address issues of identity and belonging, both in South Asia and in the United States.

In December, I took part in a panel at the virtual panel at the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) which discussed ways to engage global children's literature in the classroom. During the panel we brainstormed with educator participants on ways that they could use *The Bridge Home* in their classrooms.

I continued the SABA outreach into the spring semester. In April, I worked with Tina Nabinger, the school librarian at Minoa Elementary to bring Veera Hiranandani, author of *The Night Diary*, virtually into the 5th grade classrooms. She discussed the ways in which her family's history inspired her to write about the Partition of British India. SABA worked with the school to provide a copy of Hiranandani's book to each student.

In April, I was also a guest at the University of Minnesota's Institute for Global Studies' Building Equity in Our World" Book Club for Educators. The educators and I talked about the cultural context of some of the events and themes in *The Bridge Home* and how to bring these concepts into the classroom.

Finally, the South Asia Book Award participated again in the *Global Reads Webinar*, which highlights the winners of area studies books awards. I spoke with Veera Hiranandani about her book, *The Night Diary*.

Through all of these outreach activities, the South Asia Book Award reached more than 200 educators and 70 students.

## 2020-21 FLAS FELLOWS

**Mohammad Ebad Athar** is a current PhD student in the History department at Syracuse University. He completed his MA at Syracuse and completed his BA at Rutgers University. While finishing his MA at Syracuse, he wrote a thesis titled “From the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean: Pakistan’s Historical Links with the Middle East in the 1970s.” His research interests explore the varied historical connections between South Asia and the Middle East and also the South Asian diaspora in the United States.

**Ajla Avdic** is pursuing a Master’s in International Relations at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Her past experiences include working for the local non-profit organization, Elmcrest Children’s Center, where she aided children dealing with immense trauma in their crisis management. She also conducted independent research on youth suicide rates in Seoul, South Korea. Her interests include conflict resolution, particularly for the most vulnerable groups within the world, and cultural anthropology.

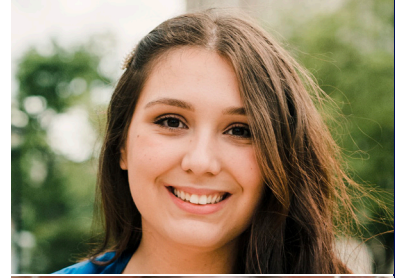
At the time of her fellowship, **Mallory Henniger** was a PhD candidate in the Department of Religion; she defended her dissertation in March 2021. Her research focuses on the experiences of Ambedkarite Buddhist youth and is based on fieldwork at a Buddhist training center in Nagpur, India.

**Jessica C. Linus** is pursuing a dual Master of Public Administration and International Relations. She is passionate about building epistemic community through skill-sharing, capacity building as it relates to education development and cross-cultural exchange within the context of socio-cultural understanding. Jessica conducted Public health Research as U.S. Student Fulbright Scholar to Rwanda from 2019 to 2020, and is currently serving as the Graduate Lead Intern of the Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa (SDGCA).

**Samantha Chaudhry-Muffuletto** was a cultural anthropology PhD student. Her research interests include the real-life effects of popular and political media representation, structural violence, human rights, and disability studies. Her primary geographical interests include India, Pakistan, and the United States.

**Varsha Srinivasan** is pursuing a dual Masters of Public Administration and International Relations. She is passionate about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives as they relate to multicultural education and cultural sensitivity, specifically in relation to immigrant diasporas in the United States. Her previous experiences include serving as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Colombia from 2019-2020 and teaching 7th grade science through Teach for America in the Las Vegas Valley from 2017-2019.

**Rabia Tanweer** is currently in the Master of Arts in International Relations program and will graduate in December 2021. I’m in the Development and Humanitarian Assistance track and am interested in working in the international development sector when I graduate. I also did my undergrad at Syracuse and majored in International Relations and minored in both Chinese Studies and South Asian Studies.



## GRADUATE STUDENT UPDATES

**Adrienne Atterberry** defended her dissertation, “Cultivating a New Transnational Elite: Parenting, Schooling, and Belong in the Age of Global IT,” on May 6, 2021.

**Mallory Hennigar** defended her dissertation, “Boundation & Bindās: Ambedkarite Youth in a Global Buddhist Movement,” with distinction in the Department of Religion on March 30, 2021, for which she won an All-University Doctoral Prize.

## ALUMNI UPDATES

**Stephen Christopher** (Anthropology, PhD ‘year) has received a Marie Curie postdoctoral fellowship from the University of Copenhagen ‘18.

## FACULTY UPDATES

**Ann G. Gold’s** photograph, “Sometimes the goddess appears as an elusive little girl” was selected by members of the American Anthropological Association as one of twelve winners in the annual AAA Photo Contest.

**Joanne Waghorne’s** book, *Singapore, Spirituality, and the Space of the State: Soul of the Little Red Dot* (Bloomsbury) was released in March 2020.

# SUPPORT

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Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs

## South Asia Center

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The South Asia Center Newsletter is the official outreach bulletin for the South Asia Center, Moynihan Institution of Global Affairs, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University.

## SOUTH ASIA CENTER

Funded by a Title VI National Resource Center Grant by the Department of Education, the South Asia Center at Syracuse University serves as a liaison between Syracuse University faculty with research interests in South Asia, educators, and the wider public in the Central New York area. Our resources and faculty interests cover the South Asia region, broadly defined as Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, and the Maldives. Our audience includes educators in area schools and colleges, the general community, individuals interested in the region, and the Syracuse University community. South Asia Outreach presents workshops, seminars, lectures, film screenings, cultural programs, and other public events.

Our email is [southasiacenter@syr.edu](mailto:southasiacenter@syr.edu)



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