

The Other From Within Workshop Oct 13th-15th 2020

Updated: Jan 6, 2021

Summary Review by Crispin Bates and William Gould.

Day One (13th October) of this three-day workshop was themed 'The birth of Indian anthropology: Colonial legacies and the re-invention of the other'.

The workshop commenced with an introduction to the project by Professor William Gould (University of Leeds) and Associate Professor Jesus Chairez-Garza (Manchester University). Jesus explained that the primary objective of the project is to develop an intellectual history of the discipline of anthropology in South Asia, similar to that which George Stocking has produced for the rest of the world.

The presentations commenced with Dr. **Anirban Bandyopadhyay** (Jawaharlal Nehru University) talking about the career of the Bengali anthropologist N.K. Bose. The career of N.K. Bose he argued was quite unconventional. He wanted to travel and called himself a 'scholar wanderer'. Very much involved in the freedom struggle, thereafter he joined the faculty of Calcutta University. His commitment to the nationalist movement was revealed in the three books Bose wrote about Gandhi. He went on to play a prominent role as Director of the Anthropological Survey of India and Commissioner of Scheduled Tribes.

Bose had no PhD in anthropology, and spent a large amount of time spent in public service, yet he is considered one of India's leading anthropologists. What is there to make of this? In the book *Anthropologists of the East*, there is a chapter on N.K. Bose which summaries his contribution under 10 heads. Reading Bose's diary and speeches though tell us a lot more about the vernacularisation of the social sciences.

Within Bose's writings there is revealed a constant tension between Bose the sociologist as a field worker focused on material culture and belief systems, and Bose's ideas about nation state and caste. He imagined both nation and caste to be benevolent, caste being primarily an economic institution that reduced competition and provided security to the lower classes.

Bose was not immune to historical change and imagined both the Brahminical and tribal modes of productions contributing to the development of the Indian social system.

Unfortunately his role in government his vocation as an anthropologist and meant that he acted sometimes in a manner not dissimilar to that of a colonial administrator, travelling around the country, meeting people, and giving speeches or lectures, but spending very little time in what we would regard as academic field research.

The second presentation was by Prof. **Bhangya Bhukya**, (University of Hyderabad) and concerned Fürer-Haimendorf and the Evolution of Social Policy in Hyderabad State. Haimendorf grew up in Austria, where he completed his PhD before travelling to London to acquaint himself with the research methods of anthropologists such as [Bronislaw Malinowski](#). He first came to India in 1936. Before that all his research was based upon secondary sources. Up to WWII he struggled to get an Indian visa. That is what brought him to Hyderabad state. For one decade he worked closely with the Hyderabad state. He did fieldwork in village Marlavai village in Jainoor mandal of KB Asifabad district, where he had a simple house built. His wife Betty died there in 1987, and he too soon after. Tombs were constructed in their honour, plus statues, which are anointed on the occasion of his birthday. His picture also hangs in many houses. His leading assistant was Kala Manohar Rao. People remember well his interactions with the Gonds of this region and with the anthropology dept at Osmania University. One of his major innovations was to get schools in tribal areas to teach the local language using the Devanagari script. Other activities included advising them on debt and their relations with moneylenders. Unrest in the Telengana region in the 1940s, involving both Gonds and Lambardars, gave the state a special interest in this region. But most of the government welfare and development schemes introduced were merely a patchwork. Anthropologists played an important role in trying to reach tribal communities. But anthropological developmentalism did not help at all. Problematically, Bhangya argues, Haimendorf entirely failed to introspect and comment on these political problems.

The third presentation by Assoc. Prof. **Aya Ikegame** (Tokyo University) concerned M.N. Srinivas and the nationalising of anthropology. Aya wanted to work on C. Parvathamma – the first female dalit anthropologist from Karnataka – and compare her work and world-view with that of Srinivas, but she could not get access to the relevant books in Japan. Instead therefore she spoke exclusively about Srinivas's pioneering villages studies of the 1950s and 1960s.

As a PhD student in Oxford Srinivas turned his MPhil dissertation on the Koorg into a structural-functional study of the sort that was fashionable at that time. Offered a lectureship in Oxford, he spent his first year doing fieldwork in the village of [Rampura, Molakalmuru Taluk, in the Chitradurga District of Karnataka](#).

Aya explored the ways in which Srinivas' Brahmanism affected his work, arguing that it perhaps enabled the nationalisation of Indian anthropology, but it also left problematic legacies.

Srinivas arrived in Rampur with his cook Nacha and 26 pieces of luggage, which were all carried for him by the villagers. He was clearly different, but humour created a sense of equality.

The Remembered Village is a product as much of 1976 (when Srinivas wrote the book, from memory, after his notes were burnt in an accident) as of 1948, when he began his fieldwork. His 'distance' was crucial in his mind to his professionalism. Although he had given up drawing a caste mark on his forehead like other Iyengar Brahmins, he did not do things like eating meat or drinking alcohol. He was thus unlike other Brahmins, but not part of the opposition to Brahmanism. However, his possession of a camera and other modern technology gave him a special role within the village on festival occasions.

Srinivas was not really a native anthropologist, but imagined himself like Malinowski visiting the Trobriand islands, when he crossed the street from the Brahmin quarters to the street of the Koorg shepherd caste in Rampura.

His role as public intellectual in post-independence India was to inform people about their country, as well as allow to elites to reminisce about their youth growing up in the country. His book has been described as a Brahmin odyssey, and raises questions about how we might remove the deep-rooted othering characteristic in Indian academic anthropology.

The next presentation was by Dr. **Sumahan Banerjee** (Editor, *Man in India* & Associate Professor, *Department of Anthropology, Vidyasagar University*). His presentation was about the journal *Man in India*, the oldest surviving journal of anthropology India. Strictly speaking MII was preceded by the journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay. However, *Man in India* was the first journal founded under the editorship of an Indian social scientist. The journal was not supposed to just report on anthropological research, Sumahan argued, but to consider the development of anthropology as a discipline.

S.C. Roy was its editor. He laid much emphasis on the mutual relationships of people on the land, rather than just the individual characteristics of ethnic or caste groups. The journal was thus trying ultimately to focus on the nature of 'the Indian man': which included both the self and its other in India. There was also a sense that a further purpose of the journal was to save anthropology as a discipline within India.

There were sixteen editors in total over the years. The longest serving was R.M. Sarkar (thirty-one years). Most were Bengali anthropologist. S.C. Roy's daughter was also very committed to maintaining the journal.

Sumahan revealed interesting and almost nepotistic connections between MII and other journals: Thus the founding editor the *Eastern Anthropologist*, D.M. Mazumdar, had previously been an editor with *Man in India*. The Journal of the *Indian Anthropological Society* (1966) was supposed to be a professional journal (as opposed to one run by a family), but S.C. Roy also for a while edited it, as well as another anthropological journal.

Over the years, Sumahan argued, *Man in India* changed in style and began to include ethnographic notes and enquiries and book reviews. It has also kept up to date, the latest issue discussing the impact of Covid 19.

The **Question and Answer** session that followed these three presentations was animated. Uday Chandra (Georgetown University, UAE) began by asking about N.K. Bose: he juggled many hats. But what was innovative about N.K. Bose's *Structure of Indian Society*. Was this a turning point towards the structural functional analysis of the village? Does it reflect the post Monatagu-Chelmsford embracing of Dalits and Tribals as part of Hindu society? (A deeply political move in the aftermath of Partition.)

Anirban replied by quoting Prathama Banerjee's *The Politics of Time* and said that the Bengali intellectual uses the culture commentary as a literary escape route from the politics of difference. Bose revealed his Hindu Indian nationalist prejudices quite clearly as he spoke about the Muslim method of absorption as being a total conversion, unlike the Hindu method of conversion, which was more tolerant. Bose was always travelling and talking to people, but he did little intensive field work. Most of his work was as a public intellectual. His work often not very polished, but provoked discussion. He could even be described as re-invention of the Bengali amateur intellectual travel writer. Anirban posed the question as to whether or not this kind of public anthropology may be considered a respectable contribution to scholarship.

Uday Chandra queried Bhangya's presentation and wondered why he was so popular with the villagers among whom he lived. Was doing any sort of advocacy work? Why was he so admired? Bhangya answered that Haimendorf was an advisor to the Nizam's govt and conducted a kind of local darbar in which he listened to people's problems and complaints and attempted to resolve them. People therefore imagined he carried the authority of the state and/or a local ruler. During the Bhoodan movement he distributed 1 lakh of land, which also added hugely to his reputation.

Bhangya commented that Haimendorf was brought in as an advisor, after the crushing of the anti-feudal tribal insurgency of Komaram Bheem against the Hyderabad state, so his work could even be considered as part of a program of counter insurgency by the government. Uday replied that it is odd that he did not sense this. His approach was really not dissimilar to that of a mid 19th century soldier administrator, who patronised the populace whilst also being an expert in counter insurgency. Bhangya commented that Haimendorf also worked among head-hunting Nagas and Chenchus, and playing a role in bringing them under state control too.

Dr Kriti Kapila (King's College, London) commented that the colonial, post-colonial, and princely states are all different. In the N/E an emissary of the state was never looked at with such kindness. But maybe as an emissary of the Nizam, Haimendorf was viewed with more respect. Bhangya replied there was not much difference between these states in tribal areas. We find British programmes reproduced in Princely States too. However, the Nizam was very supportive of local cultural organisations – perhaps that is why he is remembered fondly. When it came to any threat to his political power though he was ruthless.

Prof. Samir Kumar Das (Political Science, Calcutta University) asked what makes Anthropology national? Aya answered that Srinivas tried to develop concepts that were relevant to the whole of India. At the same time his approach was not dissimilar to that of anthropologists from the outside. This made his work very accessible in the English-speaking world. However, he never wrote in Kannada, so his ideas circulated much less within India.

Uday commented that British anthropology was dominated by the rivalry between Malinowski (London School of Economic) and Evans-Pritchard (Oxford). The Lucknow school in India believed itself to be much more indigenous. Uday described Srinivas as a 'colonised mind' (although he had worked with Ghurye before going to Oxford).

Sujata Patel (IIAS) said that M.N. Srinivas's idea of caste was very *jati* oriented. He never talked about the horizontal mobilisation that was possible through caste.

Uday wondered if economic and social change (plus a stress on *jati* by the state) had caused Indian society itself to be more focused on *jati* and less on occupation (as in the days of the British ethnographer Denzil Ibbetson – who founded the caste and occupational categories used in the colonial Indian censuses).

Aya suggested that Srinivas tried to address both *jati* and change over time. Naively he wrote in a public essay that sanskritisation and westernisation would eventually cause social difference to altogether disappear in India. There is maybe an overlap here with Bose's optimistic view of India's future.

Anirban wondered about state interventions: how much are they associated with economic change and how much with cultural change? Perhaps they both often happened although they were not always intended.

Jesus noted that Srinivas neglected entirely India's Muslims and adivasis and only looks for the essence of Hinduism within the village. Kriti argued that this shows how Indian

anthropology can be national, nationalist, and simply state anthropology. Aya noted how in Japan and India, anthropology escaped this dilemma by becoming mostly the study of tribes. She also drew a parallel between Srinivas' work and *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*: a famous 1946 study of Japan by American [anthropologist Ruth Benedict](#) - written at the invitation of the U.S. [Office of War Information](#), in order to understand and predict the behaviour of the Japanese post [World War II](#) by reference to a series of contradictions in traditional culture.

Sumahan Bannerjee argued that Indian scholars came up in the 1940s who contributed to the nation building project. Bose was no different. He objectified culture and regarded it as the 'essence' of man. He was a diffusionist by orientation and believed that Hinduism would eventually become normative across all of Indian society. The journal *Man in India* did though reflect many different other types of anthropology that were being practiced.

Debjyoti Das (Manchester University) asked: why did folklore go down the list of priorities or attention. Sumahan answered that up until the 1920s folklore was very important. R.E. Enthoven's *Folklore of Bombay* (1923) was a set text. But Malinowski shifted focus of everyone towards a more logical positivist approach. Crispin Bates (Edinburgh) observed that in the UK and India, only the Journal of Royal Asiatic Society continued to publish this type of material.

Uday Chandra concluded by commenting how - curiously - in the aftermath of R.H. Risley, the founder of the first survey of the peoples of India in the 1900s, Indians remained far more enthusiast about physical anthropology than British academics. In defence, Vibha Aurora commented that in India, physical anthropology included also the practice of forensics, so there was always a slightly more practical side to it.

Day Two (14th October) of the-three day workshop was themed 'The fieldwork of ideas: Anthropological Problems in India in the nationalist moment.'

It began with a presentation by Dr **Arkotong Longkumer** (Edinburgh University) entitled 'Please take us seriously' on fieldwork, the RSS, and the ethnographer as 'son of the soil'.

Arko began by pointing out that many movements for greater autonomy or even independence in North-East before World War Two and that the RSS first came into the region of Assam and Meghalaya in the 1940s in anticipation of Partition. These days

Kalyan Ashram, BJP, VHP, RSS and all other members of the Sangh Parivar are active in the North-east and these organisations make a big contribution at the time of elections.

Rani Gaidinlu, a Naga spiritualist, led the Heraka movement, which became active around 2004. The VHP had set up many schools by this time. Most of these activists came from Orissa and U.P. Arko got to know of them, who were curious to know about him. He actually met the main pracharak in the 1990s, but forgot about this meeting. However, the VHP activists were well informed and had studied all of his books. They found out his father, his village, and the tribe in Nagaland where he was born. Arko also got to know students who were staying in RSS hostels, many of whom vouched for his neutrality.

The Sangh Parivar was very clearly suspicious of journalists. Especially those they called 'helicopter journalists'. They seemed to accept his neutrality as an academic and invited him to a few shakhas – outside the state of Nagaland, so as to avoid him from knowing any of the attendees. He met many of the pracharaks from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Meghalaya. They would introduce him as a son of the soil. Initially he thought this was an act of deference. It often went down well, because the audience were very suspicious of Hindu settlers, esp. Bengalis. They would say we are not interested in imposing practices from Hindu UP on the tribal children. This was however possibly a show, as children seemed quite willing to touch their feet and speak Hindi rather than English. The RSS men in the N/E would speak both English or in Nagalese. This was surprising, since in Delhi they would always insist on speaking in Hindi, and English is not so widely spoken in N/E

Arko encountered violence in an incident whilst chatting to a *pracharak*, who became passionate about condemning Christians in N/E. Two drunk Assamese men came up and threatened to take him outside because he was stirring things up. One RSS men said this was quite common. If he ever brought up the issue of conversion, he might often be slapped or punched, and accused of being a trouble-maker. In this case, Arko intervened to prevent an escalation. In the 1980s, they actually had to close the *shakha* in Assam after the *pracharaks* were murdered. There is a clear sense therefore that the RSS conflicts with local autonomy and independence.

Arko had no explanation for the keen desire of the RSS volunteers he met to be understood. Clearly it was a strange environment for them, where they were in a minority, occasionally vulnerable, and often out of their depth – like hapless Christian missionaries in colonial Bengal. Even in the face of setbacks they had no choice but to continue, for fear of undermining their faith. One almost felt sympathy for them, were it not for the fact that they are clearly growing in strength from year to year, especially since the BJP took control of the state government in Assam in 2016. They therefore now have the power of state institutions at their back, unlike before.

Assoc Prof **Kriti Kapila** (King's College, London) next spoke about 'The location of culture in Indian anthropology'. She began by talking about the debate about indigeneity and the anthropological versus historical perspective, expressed in the writings of Adam Cooper and Terry Turner. She then turned to her main theme, which was an investigation into the Genomic mapping of Indian Populations, which was completed in the 1990s with a view to identifying patterns of migrations. The problem, she stated, is who are these migrant (or non-migrant) groups? A how to define them? It turns out that Indian physical anthropologists used a lot of very old definitions, including the concept of the endogamous group as being characteristic of Indian castes and tribes.

Claims of indigeneity are being made by growing number of groups in India and a growing number of genome projects are now going on. An early 2000s article on the genetic origins of Indian caste system suggested that there was a significant genomic difference between upper and lower caste women in AP, but not between men. Partha Majumdar in the Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta published another similar study, but insisted his researchers were not interested in caste, but only global migration. Kirti expressed her concern about pre-laboratory ideas about culture and difference which seem to have informed all of this work.

The Anthropological Survey of India was late to enter into genomic research. It was originally located in the Indian museum in Calcutta. J.H. Hutton was Director and V. Elwin was deputy director. Risley's surveys, completed in 1893, were then condemned by Verrier Elwin as being inaccurate as they did not include the modern science of serological analysis.

The Anthropological Survey of India STILL continues to collect anthropometric data. Its latest foray into genomics is considered merely an upgrade on their earlier research according to V.R. Rao, the previous director. Rao believed genomics would prove that caste and tribal Indians are in fact closely related.

While colonial administration was obsessed with ideas of civilisation, contemporary researchers in the era of globalisation are concerned more with migration. Curiously, the cultural effects of migration are not considered. The concern is simply with ancestry: the locus of identification. In the USA they are concerned with their individual ancestry. In India, rarely so, except in cases of maternity. In India, studies are most often made on the basis of previous assumptions about community (which are linked to govt practices).

Caste and tribe are now being imposed upon the idea of the original inhabitant and the migrant. There is a risk that this knowledge may be harnessed by exclusionary politics – as seen in 2019's Indian Citizenship Amendment Bill controversy.

V.R. Rao was convinced there is no evidence of the stability of the endogamous group, and criticised an influential 1968 essay on the biological origins of the endogamous group, published in *Current Anthropology* (the authors included American and Indian scholars, including T.N. Madan).^[1] However, according to Kriti, the conclusions of that study still seem to dominate the thinking of most genomic researchers in India.

Prof William Gould (Leeds University) next presented on Sociology and the vagrant in India: The 'beggar problem' and social welfare in 1950s India. He began by quoting Radhakamal Mukherjee and Vasudeva Moorthy's mid 1940s study into vagrancy and Madhav Sadashiv's extensive 1955 report on Vagrancy in New Delhi. The Beggar Problem was commissioned from Gore in the Delhi School of Social Work by the Planning Commission. Some Indian anthropologists and sociologists looked down upon such forms of applied and interdisciplinary research. Srinivas considered social work to be nothing more than a popular cheap variety of applied sociology.

William posed the question: In what ways were masculine middle-class Indian intellectuals co-created in their studies on the deviant poor? Mukherjee and Gore were also part of a bureaucratic and technological community, which undoubtedly shaped their work. Mukherjee and Moorthy thought that economics was the major driver of sociological change. Their analysis focused on the waste of national resources resulting from giving to beggars, and the unproductive nature of begging, rather than the human suffering associated with begging. Their ideas clearly fed into the developing ideas of citizenship. They carefully recorded 'fake' disabilities, mirroring the moral culpability enshrined in the English poor laws.

T.N. Madan's study on Mukherjee and Moorthy is a critique of its implicit modernity, including constant reference to family norms. Tradition versus modernity was a fundamental part of their analysis.

Gore believed that giving was integral to Indian society, which disconnected giving from actual need. However, his Delhi study implied that a serious programme of reform would have to be secular and involve breaking down of old associations with village and family.

Sickeningly, Mukherjee was most concerned with the establishment of institutions to care for the disabled, and prevent them from breeding. The 1959 Bombay Begging Act similarly ended up targeting the disabled, although many thought it was engaged in a moral programme of reform of the able-bodied poor, who preferred crime to productive life.

Aside from the clearly moral agenda in post-colonial Indian research on begging, Gould concluded that it was also apparent that begging in Delhi was a legacy of Partition, with beggars across the city speaking a variety of different languages.

The final paper by Dr **Arunima Bhattacharya** (Leeds University) focused on *Studies in Social Tensions Among the Refugees from Eastern Pakistan*, a report published by the Indian Government's Department of Anthropology in 1954. The report was the culmination of a series of conferences and meetings between the representatives of the Indian Government and UNESCO to deal with the refugee crisis in India, particularly in Bengal, following the partition of the country in 1947. The survey and report were conducted under the supervision of Birija Shankar Guha (1894-1961) an anthropologist and the founding director of the Anthropological Survey of India until his death in 1961.

The report focused on two distinct refugee colonies in West Bengal, Jirat, a refugee settlement managed and funded by the West Bengal Government in the sub-urban district of Hooghly, and Azadgarh colony near Jadavpur in south Calcutta which was established by displaced people on illegally occupied land and developed and administered by elected ward committees from among the refugees themselves. The intent of this project was to use the construct of 'social tension' to infer the causative factors that induced the instabilities in the psychology of the refugee subjects, as revealed through their life histories—within this construct, the project recorded allegations made by the refugees against Muslims from East Pakistan, against whom they felt they were helpless.

It was inferred by the project that the communal tension linked to their trauma of loss and displacement was displaced by emotions of antagonism against the Indian government and its people. 100 subjects were interviewed and were asked approx. four questions each. A marked degree of tensions against Muslims was revealed, the greatest among lower-class men, and upper-class women (both of whom were presumably less educated). Analysis of the report revealed the several reasons why resettlement failed:

1. Land Acquisition: a failure to settle migrants on land, due to deference to entrenched landholders.
2. Refugees often displaced Muslims in urban areas (according to Romila Sanyal) – complicating the subject position of migrants.
3. There was an RSS agenda to how the project was carried out.

Arunima noted that land acquisition and rehabilitation in 1950s that has shaped urbanisation in post-independence Calcutta particularly in relation to refugee settlements in the city. That there are obvious links between the Hindu Majoritarian interests backing the project and the similar anti-Muslim prejudices documented in N.K. Bose's 1964 study on the ethnic communities of Calcutta. That this legacy is tied in with the contribution of the ASI in policy decisions dealing with migration in the first decade after partition and still impacts the current state government's electoral politics around land rights and rehabilitation.

In the **Question and Answer** session that followed the three presentations, Arko was asked, how he managed the different beliefs and social practices of his interlocuters. He was also asked if the RSS were embarrassed about the dissonance between their views and local political beliefs. Arko replied that Assam is not marginal to the idea of the greater Indian experiment, which goes as far East as Mongolia. The RSS represent one of Krishna's brides as being from Arunachal and try to tie N/E tribal practices to Hindu practices. They take a cue for this from the anthropologist G.S. Ghurye. However, there are a lot of tensions, when they have to live in communities where the locals eat beef and buffalo and drink rice beer.

The RSS has been especially inspired to work in N/E because of 1962 war with China and Chinese claims on Arunachal Pradesh. Interestingly, they were first invited there, not by the BJP but by the Congress, who encouraged the establishment of Vivekananda Kendras – where a lot of anthropological studies of tribes were carried on.

Suryakant Wagmore said that, based on his fieldwork on the RSS in Bengaluru he believes that the RSS is working towards framing Hinduism as a 'civil' religion, which also requires a lot of reworking of earlier ideas and politics and ideology. He asked of Arko if there was anything national about the RSS project in North East. Arko replied that the RSS often entered through alliances with non-Christian activists, and claimed that Nagas were all Hindus in the remote past.

Kriti Kapila said that in an essay in a *festchrift* for Dipankar Gupta she argued that STs, adivasis, and indigenous peoples are not the same, as they are expressed in what anthropologists would describe as different 'registers'.

Sarit Kumar Chaudhuri commented that he had organised an exhibition on the Krishan Rukmini tale in Arunachal Pradesh. The different versions of this tale, he said, were a common subject of interest and remain so to this day.

Day 3 (15th October) of the workshop was entitled 'People on Parade: Anthropology and the Role of Museum Exhibitions'.

It began with a presentation by **Professor Sarit Kumar Chaudhuri** speaking on 'Anthropological Museums, Exhibitions and Representations of Indigenous People in India'.

S.K. Chaudhuri began by stating that he would not go into detail on the debate about the nature of indigenous peoples and adivasis, or the concept of 'indigeneity'. He commented on the title of the project by suggesting that when we look at the notion of 'others', there was a point of time in which anthropology was thought of, primarily, as the study of 'others'. There were ideas of greater and smaller traditions and there were attempts to look at Indian society from a 'civilisational' approach.

The anthropological museums in India, Sarit Chaudhuri pointed out, were linked to the Anthropological Survey of India, which also had connections to the Indian Museum in Kolkata, with its ethnographic section curated by anthropologists. On the 100-year celebration of the establishment of anthropology in Kolkata University we also remember that the department led to the formation of the museum. Similarly, in all of the older departments, a museum has usually developed.

Sarit continued to focus the first part of his paper on the North East, and the Museum at the Dept. of Anthropology, University of Guwahati, which he believes is one of the best museums of anthropology in Asia. Generally, though museums are often managed by state governments or institutions, and linked to the regional presence of the Anthropological Survey of India. Most of these anthropological museums have been frozen in the form of object-oriented exhibitions, and there has been little relative engagement with the subject populations themselves. There are notable exceptions: The Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS, Bhopal) exhibition last year had a conference in which local and specialised museums presented. These smaller museums contribute to a kind of experimental museum activity in which local communities are more implicated. This involves new kinds of thinking around subject-object-location. Overall though we don't find much reflection on this, despite the existence of a 'new museum' movement from 1974, and the appearance of new community and open-air museums.

The mandates of the IGRMS Bhopal include the celebration of cultural diversity; the promotion of national integration; and a circular dialogue of past, present and future. Many from creative domain involved in the museum. Several elements are open air. Communities are involved. An attempt is made at the transparent consideration of the evolution of mankind. The museum is not a tribal museum, but has a special focus on marginalised populations since they are missing in the national mainstream. The museum is divided into 14 eco-cultural zones. In each there are different kinds of experiments going on within exhibitions. The Bhopal museum in particular, he said, was very people centric, conforming neither to the city of Bhopal nor to the approach of other research museums. It has 32 examples of rock art. The concept of the 'sacred grove' is amongst those highlighted. S.C. Malhotra played a leading role in its development. It aims to work with communities across boundaries of states and communities. Finally, Professor Chaudhuri discussed a specific initiative involved the invitation of peoples from across the country to create spaces for exhibition within 200 acres of land set aside for the project. Further news on this is awaited. A similar 'Museum of Mankind' has been established in Mysore, but this was not discussed.

The second presentation of the day was delivered by **Dr. Vibha Joshi Parkin** on 'Engaging with ethnographic museum objects from erstwhile Naga Hills in their historical contexts, ranging from imperial, colonial and postcolonial eras to contemporary reimagining'.

Vibha began by talking about the Pitt Rivers museum and its collection on India's North East. It holds 7000 artefacts and photographs which have been collected since its first curator, Henry Balfour. Anthropology was taught partly in the museums in Oxford and the museum collections themselves were part of the pedagogy of anthropology. Vibha summarised some of the key figures associated with the museum, from J.H. Hutton who ended up taking a Chair in Cambridge, to J.P. Mills, and Haimendorf.

The paper then discussed how the data related to the museum exhibitions was collected and how monographs were traditionally written. It also explored the publication *Notes and Queries* brought out by Hutton from 1912, which became an important outcome of this research.

Vibha went on to talk about the specific collections and archives of Ursula Graham Bower, and then of J.P. Mills, which included a collection of human remains and skull trophies. This, along with other kinds of collections on the North East make for quite difficult histories.

The next part of the paper made a comparison between the anthropological museums in the UK and museums with ethnographic sections in India on a similar scale. This included the National Museum in Delhi, which is characterised in many ways by a discourse of 'pride of the nation', which comes to govern the kinds of objects that are displayed. However, there is little consideration of whether the collection is correct or not, in terms of how mannequins have been dressed or represented. Vibha summarised this as a general kind of apathy in some museums.

The paper showed how Alan Macfarlane's database – the Naga video disk project - triggered lots of work on Nagaland. It also explored the developments that have been seen in continental European collections. For example, Zurich and Basel exhibitions have experimented with time change and relationships between objects. There is also a Naga Exhibition in the Humboldt Forum, curated by Roland Platz. Most of the curation was done by a Naga woman from the community. The idea was that it would be their vision of how communities interacted with objects in the museum. Humboldt and London exhibits therefore have representations from Naga artists. The Cambridge museum also represents the tribal population. However, overall, museums tend to display only a fraction of their collections most of which remain in storage. Finally, Vibha moved onto the subject of 'Decolonising' museums and the repatriation of human remains. From 2017, there has been discussion about what to do with human remains. Pitt Rivers have removed heads and remains from their collections. However it is still the case that the museum has a Victorian evolutionary aspect to it. This was

problematic but is now used as a means of teaching about the collection and how it has changed over time. Also in Oxford, there was an initiative in which Sumi Nagas looked at the textiles collection and produced reactions to them. In the case of the national museum of Delhi, the idea of repatriation is effectively absent and there is no recognition of India as a colonising power.

The third presentation of the day was delivered by **Dr. Debojyoti Das** on the subject of 'Visual Anthropology and the Knowledge of the 'Other': Representing colonial Anti-Slavery/ Headhunting Expedition through Photographs in Naga Hills'

Debojyoti started off by discussing forms of ethnographic representation via photography as a form of colonial domination/rule by discussing the 'King of Comedy Visits Shanghai' and the idea of 'native' representation. He then introduced the work of Christophe von Fürer-Haimendorf and his representations of naked Naga people. Haimendorf took many shots before he got a representation that was aesthetically pleasing. Importantly, he did not represent the use of violence in the rule of law.

A larger point was then made in the paper about how photography as a form of representation was implicated in the production of violent histories. This can be seen through popular newspaper and magazine stories that were created by colonial newspapers, many of which romanticised what they saw as 'native' peoples. Photography, then, shaped both representation and interpretation, and had a complex relationship to text.

Debojyoti gave examples of how colonial photography attempted to brand head-hunters as slave traders, which was a powerful theme at a time when the League of Nations and India Office were being questioned about the trafficking of slaves. Photography and the texts that accompanied it attempted to show how slaves sought freedom by looking for rescue from the colonial government. In this sense, photography became a means to promote ideas of political order and progress. The Pitt Rivers museum also organised a text with an image of J.P. Mills holding a child as a representation of colonial patriarchy.

Turning to the Haimendorf photographs, the paper discussed how they represented a kind of body politics, and a particular kind of representation of objects. Debojyoti also discussed the theme of the colonial gaze around 'wildness'.

Photos represented the self of the colonial subject. We can see this in images of the rescued slave set up as a way of establishing their identities and the role of the rescue mission. Photographs also shaped public opinion in the metropolis. In this case, exhibitions and collections objectified the Nagas in particular ways. For example, Verrier Elwin created a kind of representation of central Indian tribes for the benefit of middle class urban Indian political society. In conclusion Debojyoti discussed how this

photography might be seen in terms of a colonising camera, but also as a critical methodological tool in exploring marginalised societies.

The fourth and final presentation of the day was delivered jointly by **Dakxinkumar Chhara and Kevin Greenbank** on the digitisation of the Budhan Theatre archive.

Dakxin started off by exploring the history of 'Criminal Tribes' in general, beginning with the Thuggee and Dacoity department in the 1830s, the Umaji Naik rebellion, the rebellion of 1857, and into the period of the systematic notification of tribal populations. Dakxin located the origins of the idea of hereditary criminality in the work of Cesare Lombroso, which he argued formed one of the backgrounds to the 1871 Criminal Tribes Act. He then moved through the CTA amendments – 1911, 1924 and the denial of potential representation in evidence given to the Simon Commission (including that of B.R. Ambedkar whose evidence suggested the exclusion of 'Criminal Tribes' within the category of Depressed Classes). He noted that Ambedkar neglected to include 124 Criminal Tribes in list of Depressed Classes in representation before Simon commission, but ultimately only 51 were included as untouchables.

After independence a committee took 5 years to decide to repeal the Criminal Tribes Act. This happened in 1952, but was replaced by the Habitual Offenders Act. Even today, there is no reference to de-notified tribes in the Constitution of India and there are no guarantees of their rights. To this end, Budhan Theatre began celebrating an alternative 'independence day' of 31 August, from 1998 – with support and encouragement from Mahasweta Devi. The theatre group performs alternative street plays, and through theatre the group tries to give voice to community members about what is happening across DNT and nomadic communities. It has now become a huge cultural movement.

From its beginnings in 1998, the processes of theatre were being filmed and there is a huge archive of film material that needs to be migrated and digitised.

Kevin Greenbank discussed how the original plan was that the transfer of the material and the new formats and its cataloguing would take place in India. However, because of COVID Kevin has not been able to get over there as much as he would have wanted. Kevin also discussed the role of Sahapedia (Delhi), who would be hosting the materials in exhibition format. These would be held in 3 types of files to allow streaming onto different formats and with the ability to preserve the actual originals.

In the **Questions and Answers** from Day 3, Kriti expressed her enthusiasm for the Bhudan theatre movement and the effort to digitise its outputs. She noted that there was a brief moment of 'rehabilitation' of Criminal Tribes in for example, Punjab in the 1950s, where the very category 'tribe' created a classificatory problem for the state. She suggested that perhaps Kevin or Dakxin would like to explore some comparisons with other parts of India to establish the extent to which the experience of erstwhile/so-

called Criminal Tribes in western India were generalisable across the whole subcontinent. Dakxin replied that the problem of rehabilitation of CTs was fairly similar across the whole of India. B Bhukya suggested that there isn't a huge difference in the suppression of CTs in different places and that in fact in some ways it is possibly worse in the postcolonial era. Amongst this discussion, Kevin Greenbank suggested that having film and a film-based archive easily accessible online with a film-maker there from the beginning was a great advantage. He also talked about the public accessibility of the material and the sharing of it/copyright, etc. Dakxin also further explained the community basis of their activity and how it is open and shared.

Vibha Joshi on being asked about the difference between Indian and overseas collections, expanded a little more on the lack of detail and care in the India collections. Thus the exhibition on the Naga in the National Museum in Delhi mixes up male and female outfits, and there is no attempt to confirm authenticity. She mentioned that there were several Naga exhibitions in Europe in 2008, but none included contributions from present-day Nagas. The Basel exhibition focussed on objects. Others simply followed simply a chronological structure. She commented that the Pitt Rivers in Oxford has not trashed old exhibitions, which are quite evolutionary, but has sought instead to explain how purpose of anthropology has changed over time. Exhibitions on weaving, and tattooing, were all done by indigenous peoples. In India, there has been no attempt to do this. Most Nagas have no idea collections even exist. Vibha expressed a concern that the collection of martial exhibits in some museums reinforced patriarchal ideas about the communities being represented (notably in the J.P. Mills collection).

Questions from Kriti were posed around the anthropological questions of repatriation and movement of materials. This led to a quite lengthy discussion in which all the participants of the workshop felt there was need for a dedicated panel or even workshop. In particular, Arko Longkumer went into detail about the lack of representation in exhibitions from community members and organisations, and the problems in how sensitive heritage is being dealt with by museums. Kriti was particularly curious about village museums and the particular kinds of displays and collections held there.

Debojyoti Das commented that photography became a part of the governing technology of empire. A notable example was the widely reproduced photo of J.P. Mills, DC Naga Hills holding a rescued slave child after the Pangsha punitive military expedition. There was clearly something to be covered up in the violence of this event, since papers relating to the expedition were not released until 60 years later. Furer-Haimendorf accompanied the expedition. Had little chance to converse with natives but took nearly 6,000 photos. F-H took a lot of pictures of burning villages, and not so many photos of freed slaves.

Debojyoti mentioned the widely circulated images of naked Konyak tribal men and women. The most famous was the picture of Helnak, young girl of Wakching. The booklet *The Pangsha Letters: An Expedition to Rescue Slaves in the Naga Hills* by James

Philip Mills (published in 2014 by the Kohima Education Trust) was put together by Mills' daughter, Geraldine Hobson and she selected photos from the Naga video disc project containing all of his photographs.

Vibha Joshi commented: it seems Haimendorf's photos in certain publications were addressed to a different audience, and some were intended to earn money from illustrated articles. can you elaborate? Arunima asked if there was any change in the narrative from colonial to recent times in how these photographs are perceived in popular publications and media? Debojyoti replied that The India Office played a key role in editing many of his publications and papers on the expedition. These are recorded in the India Office: British Library archives, particularly the debate on editing his paper that appeared in the *Geographical Journal*. He commented that Elwin's photos from the 1940s of Gond and Baiga villagers reproduced in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* were far more empathetic than those of F-H. (as noted by Ramachandra Guha).

Sarit Chaudhuri answered questions on how to escape the representation of tribal communities as an 'exotic other' and the relative efforts of different international museums in representing those communities in their curation. He also talked a bit about the mode of display and forms of curation. He discussed his role in assisting village communities in setting up archives and exhibitions. He also mentioned the setting up of food festivals and cultural traditions.

Asked about the Don Bosco Musuem in Shillong, Sarit admitted that in Arunachal, some museums are sites for making the indigenous people as 'Hindu' subjects. In Lower Dibang Valley district, one such museum's goal is to integrate the Idu Mishmi tribes of Arunachal into the heritage of mainland peninsular culture – thereby distinguishing them from the Idu Mishmi of Tibet– a direct response to Chinese claims on this territory

Overall the three days of the conference seem to have highlighted **ten broad issues:**
1/. As many suspected, Indian Anthropology continues to be dominated by the prejudices and methods of physical anthropology from the colonial era (as outlined in Bates 1995). There is thus still a widespread belief that endogamy is not merely an ideal, but ineluctable, and that caste and tribes are therefore physically, in appearance, and genetically distinct. This was shown by Kriti Kapila, in the more recent trend towards genomic research (under the guise of migration studies), the relevant social categories continue to be conceived and assumed in advance rather than empirically derived. Remarkably this practice is either unconscious or otherwise vigorously normalised and defended.

2/. The discipline of anthropology is dominated by Brahmin (as described by Aya), whose have allowed their subject position to over-determine their conclusions – much like British colonial researchers, who were convinced of the superiority of the knowledge and methodologies. The voices of dalit anthropologists such as C.

Parvathamma continue to be relatively ignored.

3/. In the case of N.K. Bose, nationalist and anti-Muslim prejudices were very much to the fore (as is shown in the presentations of Anirban and Arunima), sometimes clouding their conclusions and recommendations.

4/. Anthropology in the service of the state could have a curious effect of reproducing the paternalistic and counter-insurgency practices of colonial soldier administrators and ethnographers (as seen in the presentation of Bhangya Bukhya). In the case of social work studies on vagrancy, the suggested outcomes could be authoritarian, eugenicist, and cruel (Gould) and driven entirely by economic objectives rather than the welfare of individuals.

5/. The early history of Indian anthropology is nepotistic, with just a handful of individuals (and their relatives) running all the journals and departments and setting (or responding to) the intellectual trends (as shown in Sumahan Banerjee's presentation on *Man in India*). This is perhaps similar to anthropology elsewhere in the world, which remains deeply conflicted over its methodologies (as was shown in the presentation by Arko Longkumer), and easily influenced by the ideas and agendas of a handful of charismatic individuals. This seen in the careers of Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, M.N. Srinivas and, more recently, Veena Das. This can be seen as a strength: as a way to strengthen and perpetuate anthropology when it was seen as a minority discipline within the social sciences. However, there are clearly hazards in this too.

6/. There seems to be absent a constellation of competing approaches, and an acknowledgment of the role played by subjectivities in the academic discipline of anthropology. Thus Indian Anthropology seems to have escaped entirely a (1986) 'Writing Culture' type moment of introspection (even though this has clearly impacted several museums). This was possibly a result of importance of patronage and a determination by anthropologists for their discipline to be seen as a scientific practice, producing results that are useful in policy deliberations by the state, and hence worthy of funding and inclusion in the nation building project. This perception of anthropology as only worthwhile when in the service of the state (whether it be the anthropology of development or counter-insurgency) might once again be considered a legacy of colonialism, as first highlighted by Talal Asad (*Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, 1973) which Indian anthropology has yet to escape. An important exception to this may lie in the sub-discipline of museology and the activities of contemporary anthropology museums in India – one of the subjects for discussion in day three of the workshop.

7/. The domination of anthropology by Brahmins (point 2 above) has potentially had it effects in the forms of representation that have taken place in ethnographic and anthropological museums. Here, too, the relative lack of representation and curation

from the position of 'subject' communities can be viewed as a problematic theme. This was brought out in the papers of S. K. Chaudhuri, Vibha Joshi and in the Q and A.

8/. There is a complex relationship that plays out in museum exhibitions between pedagogy and curation. Clearly museums were at the root of anthropological education and therefore the politics of representation that played out within them connected to forms of training and also to anthropologists' relationship with instruments of government (Eg. Via the Anthropological Survey). This was made clear from S K Chaudhuri's presentation and that of Vibha Joshi, who showed that the roots of this relationship lay, too, in European pedagogies.

9/. There is an important relationship that we need to teased out between photographic representation and text as an instrument of colonial domination and rule (Debojyoti Das). Equally, as V Joshi's paper showed, these representations of power have been reconfigured in the modes adopted by the larger scale 'national' museums in India.

10/. The big theme that really emerged from day 3 was that of how anthropological and ethnographic museums in India have (or have not) confronted the challenging of decolonisation of collections and repatriation. This relates to point 7 above, but there are some interesting themes that emerge when we compare the different collection and curation practices in India and elsewhere (V Joshi). A conclusion of the participants was that this large and important theme ought perhaps to become the subject of a subsequent workshop.

[1] A Biological Comparison of Eight Endogamous Groups of the Same Rank [and Comments and Replies]. I. Karve, K. C. Malhotra, J. Lawrence Angel, Charles F. Bennett, Vijender Bhalla, M. R. Chakravarti, R. C. Connolly, J. Hiernaux, John Huizinga, Frederick S. Hulse, Kenneth A. R. Kennedy, Mary M. Kennedy, R. S. Khare, T. N. Madan, David C. Rife, Satish Saberwal, L. D. Sanghvi and J. C. Sharma. *Current Anthropology*, [Vol. 9, No. 2/3 \(Apr. - Jun., 1968\)](#), pp. 109-124