

Editor's Preface

This volume brings together the papers presented by Polish scholars at the ECSAS 2016 (European Conference on South Asian Studies 2016) – the 24th conference of the European Association for South Asian Studies (EASAS) that took place from 27 to 30 July 2016 at the University of Warsaw. It was co-organized by the Polish Oriental Society (PTO) and the University of Warsaw (Chair of South Asian Studies of the Faculty of Oriental Studies). This biennial event, the largest and most prestigious European conference concerned with research on South Asia, was held in Poland for the first time. The conference programme, including 49 panels¹ and the keynote lecture entitled *Asia, Europe and America in the Making of 'Caste'* by Professor Sumit Guha (Frances Higginbotham Nalle Centennial Professor in History) from the University of Texas at Austin attracted scholars from almost 40 countries. Thus, the event not only proved to be an exciting forum for academic interaction but also an excellent opportunity for Polish scholars, especially younger ones, to be more visible and audible than on other occasions when the ECSAS is organized abroad. In Warsaw, 35 out of 449 delegates were from Poland, which was the largest Polish participation ever in this series of conferences. The ECSAS 2016 also enjoyed higher participation than usual from other Central and Eastern European countries (15 delegates) and attracted a significant number of South Asian scholars – more than a hundred – representing Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Nepali as well as European academic institutions. This was – to a great extent –

¹ All the conference panels, the names of their participants and titles of their papers are available on the conference website: <http://nomadit.co.uk/easas/ecsas2016/index.shtml>, as is other information on the Warsaw ECSAS.

possible thanks to the generous grant of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland for the PTO within the framework of 'Collaboration in the Sphere of Public Diplomacy 2016.' The conference also benefited from the support of BGK – Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego, the partner of the University of Warsaw, who also actively participated in the event by giving a panel. I hereby extend my gratitude to the MFA and BGK for their support, and likewise to all those who helped in different ways to make the ECSAS 2016 a successful academic event introducing the University of Warsaw as a congenial venue for the scholars of South Asia.

Nine, out of twelve, papers read at the ECSAS 2016 by Polish delegates, are being published now in this volume entitled *Polish Contributions to South Asian Studies*. Taken together, they are meant to mark an improved Polish presence in European research on South Asia by presenting the substantial range of interests covered by South Asianists associated with Polish academia. Among the contributions, articles based on indigenous South Asian sources – both classical in Sanskrit, as well as modern in Hindi or Panjabi and early modern sources in Braj or Rajashtani – constitute the majority.

The volume opens with Danuta Stasik's article, 'A Polish Perspective on South Asian Studies,' in which a historical outline of Polish academic interest in South Asia is drawn. This is the only contribution in the whole volume that is not based on a paper read at the conference and has been added as an introduction to the volume. The remaining contributions have emerged from the papers presented at ECSAS 2016.

The first two articles concern Indian performative arts that in their original form were presented in Panel 02 'The Performing Arts in the Ritual Context,' convened by Bożena Śliwczyńska from the University of Warsaw. She is also the author of the paper 'Kūṭiyāṭṭam Theatre: The Aesthetic and Ritual Experience of the Performance,' in which she argues that the ancient Sanskrit theatre of Bharatamuni's *Nāṭyaśāstra* has survived in the form of Kūṭiyāṭṭam theatre and discusses it in terms of a refined and sublime combination of the aesthetic and ritual experience. The other Panel 02 paper is now published as Katarzyna Skiba's article 'Performing the Sacred in Kathak Dance,' in which its author, exploring the religious dimension of Kathak dance, demonstrates that an increasing tendency to spiritualize this dance tradition since the 1930s is a result of the appropriation of Kathak by Brahmin elites and urban middle classes, fostering its Hinduization and nationalization.

Olga Nowicka's article 'In the Footsteps of Śaṅkara: Mapping a Pan-India *Digvijaya* in the Local Space of Kerala' was originally presented in Panel 41

‘Spatial and Visual Dimensions of Pilgrimage in South Asia’ convened by Jörg Gengnagel (University of Heidelberg) and Vera Lazzaretti (Università degli Studi di Milano). It explores a specifically Keralan hagiographical tradition of Śaṅkara’s conquest of the quarters of the land (*digvijaya*) and the process of constructing the physical space in which the pan-Indian legendary map of Śaṅkara’s life can be relevant to a new geographic location and a peculiar local tradition.

Piotr Borek’s ‘Deification in a Secular Text. On Some Functions of Religious Content in Bhūṣaṅ’s *Śivṛājbhūṣaṅ*’ (1673 AD) and Aleksandra Turek’s ‘Hostility or Solidarity? The Rājput̥s and Jāts in the *Chāvalīs* from the region of Śekhāvāṭī’ evolved from papers presented in Panel 24 ‘Secular Knowledge Systems in Early Modern Literary Cultures,’ convened by Richard David Williams from the University of Oxford and Stefania Cavaliere from the University of Naples “L’Orientale”. The first of these contributions is concerned with the *Śivṛājbhūṣaṅ*, a late 17th-century poem, usually seen as a panegyric on Marathas’ leader Śivājī. In his article, Piotr Borek argues that the poem was part of a planned enterprise meant to constitute the royal power of the newly consecrated king. The contribution by Aleksandra Turek, based on the *Chāvalīs*, rhymed works, transmitted orally, composed in Shekhavati, a Rajasthani dialect, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, demonstrates that these regional works composed on the outskirts of the mainstream literature prove to be a good source for reconstructing the social reality of nineteenth-century Rajasthan.

A paper by Agnieszka Kuszewska (University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw) was originally presented in Panel 29 ‘Security Challenges in Contemporary India-Pakistan Relations’ that was co-convened by her and Liladhar Pendse (University of California, Berkeley). Basing her article on the assumption that security challenges and conflicts remain central issues to the study of international relations, while examining the unresolved, protracted Indo-Pakistani conflict, she also demonstrates the crucial position of Afghanistan in the rivalry between New Delhi and Islamabad.

The three final contributions in the volume stem from Panel 17 ‘Self in Performance: Contemporary Life Narratives in South Asia,’ convened by Monika Browarczyk from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and Alaka Atreya Chudal from the University of Vienna. Justyna Wiśniewska-Singh in her article ‘First-Person Narrative in the Early Hindi Novel,’ having observed that the first-person narrative was absent during the initial period of novel writing in Hindi – i.e. in the last decades of the nineteenth century

– analyses this technique as implemented in a novel *Mādhavī-Mādhav vā Madan-Mohinī* by Kiśorīlāl Gosvāmī, published in 1909. Maria Skakuj-Puri in her paper ‘Writing the Self: Literary Strategies in Dalip Kaur Tiwana’s Autobiographical Writings,’ while scrutinizing the writings of a Punjabi contemporary writer Dalip Kaur Tiwana, explores the narratives in her autobiographical works that start from women-centred, real life situations and are ultimately transformed into literary masterpieces, novels written in the first person. Monika Browarczyk in her paper ‘*Sobti Meets Haśmat. Ham Haśmat* by Krishna Sobti as an Experiment with Life Writing Form’ based on *Ham Haśmat*, reminiscences of Sobti first published in 1977, addresses multiple readings of ‘the self in performance’ present in it and proves this work to be a unique creative experiment with a life writing form.

Lastly, it has to be noted that in view of the fact that the contributions to this volume have a number of words transliterated and transcribed from several languages, the Editor has not attempted to devise a unified system that might be used throughout this publication. Instead, care has been taken to maintain consistency within individual papers.

Danuta Stasik

Warsaw, January 2017