

Notes on Contributors

Max Stille, After a volunteer-service in Bangladesh, Max Stille studied South Asian History and Middle Eastern Studies at Heidelberg University. His interests in contemporary developments of religiosity and philosophy lead to participation in a research-group on new media and contributions to the understanding of rituals in post-modernity as well as conducting a reading group on Foucault's approach to the history of ideas. After completing his M.A. on Medieval Bengali literature, he joined the Centre for Transcultural Studies in a research project on the rhetoric aspects of Islamic sermons within which he focuses on Bangladeshi wa'z mahfils.

Masahiko Togawa is Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Hiroshima University, Japan. He has written several books and papers on religion and society in West Bengal and Bangladesh. He is the author of *An Abode of the Goddess: Kingship, Caste, and Sacrificial Organization in a Bengal Village*; *Syukyō ni Kōsūru Seija (The Saint who resists 'Religion', in Japanese)*; *Syncretism Revisited: Hindus and Muslims over a Sainly Cult in Bengal (Numen)*; *Women within the Hierarchy* (Journal of the Japanese Association for South Asian Studies), and co-editor of *Gram Bangla: Itibas, Samaji o Artniti* (in Bengali). He is a member of the executive board of the Japanese Association for South Asian Studies (JASAS).

Clinton B. Seely, Professor Emeritus of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at The University of Chicago. He obtained his Ph.D. degree in 1975 from the University of Chicago with his thesis entitled *Doe in Heat: A Critical Biography of the Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das (1899-1954) with Relevant Literary History from the Mid-1920's to the Mid-1950's*. His professional life began with his appointment as a Peace Corps Volunteer to East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) from 1963 to 1965 and ended, so to speak, as a professor in the University of Chicago's Bangla Department from 1975 onward until his retirement. He has received worldwide acclaim for his compilation of a textbook for Bangla language education, and has obtained mastery in the Bangla language, research of literary works, and translation. His published works include *Rain through the Night* (1973) (revised by the author); *Translation of a novel by Buddhadeva Bose; A Poet Apart: A Literary Biography of the Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das (1899-1954)* (1990); *Intermediate Bangla* (2002); *The Slaying of Meghanada: A Ramayana from Colonial Bengal* (2004).

Keith E. Cantú first arrived in Bangladesh five years ago on a Fulbright teaching fellowship that he received along with intensive training in the Bangla language following the completion of his undergraduate studies at Pepperdine University near Los Angeles California. After completing several internships in international policy, he decided to switch gears and wholeheartedly pursue a career in academia, specifically in the field of religious studies. He completed an M.A. in International Studies: Comparative Religion at the University of Washington, and this term will finish a second MAIS in South Asian Studies. Next fall he will begin a Ph.D. program at the University of California at Santa Barbara, where he aims to focus on the intersections between the Bāul tradition and other Tantric and Sufi sects across South Asia. One specific focus will be how the exact sciences of antiquity (e.g. astrology and alchemy) and alphabet mysticism can help to illuminate the process by which Sufism engaged with indigenous cosmologies in mediæval Bengal. As a practicing Thelemite and affiliate of the O.T.O. and A.'.A.', Keith also has a keen personal and academic interest in the writings of Aleister Crowley and "Western" forms of esoteric practice more generally.

Bertie Kibreah was raised in the American Midwest by expatriate Bangladeshi parents. His fascination with music and theology led him to complete a double B.A. in Indian and Religious Studies from Indiana University, after which he immersed himself in the study of classical music at the Ali Akbar College of Music in San Rafael, California. He then pursued an M.A. and Ph.D. in the ethnomusicology program at the University of Chicago. His dissertation examines the contemporary relevance of bhab sangeet, the lengthy tradition of mystical poetry and song in Bengali. He has recently submitted the article "Negotiating Musical Routes of *Baulness* in Bangladesh" in the forthcoming edition *Resounding Transcendence: Transitions in Music, Religion and Ritual* (eds. Jeffers Engelhard and Philip Bohlman, Oxford University Press). Bertie has studied guitar and violin, as well as tabla and harmonium, and is passionate about the dotara. In his spare time, Bertie also sings and explores the cultural connections between Bengal and Assam with his colleague Rehanna Khesghi, and together they also perform in the classical music group Sur Musafir with Ameera Nimjee (kathak dance) and Rakae Jamil (sitar).

Sirajul Islam is the chairman of the Board of Editors of *Banglapedia*, the national encyclopedia of Bangladesh. A professor of history at the University of Dhaka, the oldest and largest university in Bangladesh, Islam gave up his day job five years before the formal date of retirement, to make time for *Banglapedia*, in 2000. A corresponding fellow of the Royal Historical Society, Islam was a Senior Commonwealth Staff Fellow at the University of London (1978–79), a Senior Fulbright Scholar at Urbana Champaign (1990–91), and a British Academy Visiting Professor (2004). In 2002, 10 volumes of *Banglapedia*, published by Asiatic Society, came out in his editorship. In 1991, 3 volumes of the *History of Bangladesh* (political, economic and socio-cultural), published by Asiatic Society, came out in his editorship. For the Society, he is working on the *Children's Banglapedia* and the *Cultural Survey of Bangladesh*. He also is in charge of the *National Online Biography* project of the Society and the *Banglapedia* Trust. While at his 34-year-long stint at the University, he wrote major seminal works like *Permanent Settlement in Bengal* (1978), *The Bengal Land Tenure* (1990) and the *Rural History of Bangladesh* (1990). He also edited the 4 volume *Bangladesh District Record Survey*.

Hanne-Ruth Thompson is one of the world's leading specialists in Bangla linguistics and language pedagogy. She did her Ph.D. and SOAS in London where she also taught Bengali for many years. She is the author of *Bengali: A Comprehensive Grammar* (Rouledge, Oxford, 2010) and developed two *Bengali Dictionaries* published by Hippocrene (2010). She also wrote *Bengali* for Oriental and African Language Library (John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 2012). All of her works offer an exciting, modern and consistent approach of Bangla language structure. Her works are equally important for all ages of learners of Bangla as a foreign language and for scholar researchers and linguists dealing with Bangla language. She currently lives in Sierra Leone, West Africa, with her husband who works in support of Sierra Leone government tackling poverty and promoting economic development. She has taken this opportunity to apply her linguistic skill in KIRO, besides continuing with her research on Bangla.

Nurunnabi Shanto is a Bangladeshi short fiction writer, freelance journalist, translator and development researcher. He is a case study specialist in the field of non-government development arena. His specific area is quality education for building informed citizens who are active in the civil society movement for establishing universal right to education for all to reach a peaceful world free of poverty. His books of Bangla short-fictions are *Gramey Procholio Golpo* (Maola Brothers, 2009), *Raasta* (Maola Brothers, 2011) and *Megher Oporey Akash* (Isamoti Prokashon, 2014). Care Bangladesh published one of his case study collections, *Life- a Good Samaritan*. He is a renowned cultural activist involved with *Swanan Dhaka* and *Vabnagar Foundation*. He is also a senator of the online movement *Reverine Preople* active in advocating for keeping rivers pollution-free, full of depth, current, flora and fauna.

Hans Harder is the Head of Department and Professor of Modern South Asian Languages and Literatures (Modern Indology) at the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University. His research interests include primarily Modern South Asian literatures, especially Bengali and Hindi, but also Marathi, Urdu and Tamil; Intellectual history of colonial and independent South Asia; Religious developments, particularly Bengali Islam and modern Hinduism; Satirical traditions in South Asia. He is engaged in two sub-projects in the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context": Gauging Cultural Asymmetries: Asian Satire and the Search for Identity in the Era of Colonialism and Imperialism and Engaging with Transcultural Public Spheres: The Case of Tamil Speaking Muslims in Colonial Singapore. In the last five years he has published almost 20 works, among them three books: *Verkehrte Welten. Bengalische Satiren aus dem kolonialen Kalkutta. Zweisprachige Ausgabe: bengalisch-deutsch* (2011), *Sufism and Saint Veneration in Contemporary Bangladesh: The Majjhandaris of Chittagong* (2011), *Literature and Nationalist Ideology: Writing Histories of Modern Indian Languages* (2010).

Saymon Zakaria, a visiting scholar of the University of Chicago, USA (from 2011-12 and 2013 Academic year). As a prominent folklore researcher intimately digging through the customs and traditions of Bangladesh for more than 20 years, Zakaria has introduced and demonstrated a distinct way of engaging with indigenous communities for research in ethnographic context, in the areas of evolving culture and theatrical performances which, has never been explored before him to his extent. He is the Founder organizer and Chairman, Bhabnagar Foundation, Dhaka, Bangladesh; and Assistant Director of the Folklore Department at Bangla Academy. As a renowned playwright his writings are appreciated not only in Bangladesh but world over. Zakaria has also given lectures at University of Washington, Seattle, USA (2012). He was also a lead researcher of 'Action Plan for the safe guarding of Baul Song' conducted by jointly UNESCO and Bangladesh government from April 2008 to 2010. He has written articles and books on the literary history and historiography of Bengali traditions. He has also published fiction and plays exploring political, historical and literary themes from Bangladesh's rich past. Major Publications : *Pronomohi Bongomata: Indigenous Cultural Forms of Bangladesh*, Foreword by Professor Tony K. Stewart, (2nd Edition 2013), *Abonagabon: Contemporary lyrical Translation of Old Charyapad*, (2010), *Prachin Banglar Buddho Natok* (The Buddhist Theatre in Ancient Bengal), (2007), *Bangladesher Lokonatok : Bisoy o Angik-Boychhitra* (Folk-Theatre in Bangladesh : Variation of Content and Phenomenon), (2008), *Banga sabhyer alikbhita Itibas* (An Unwritten History of Bengali Literature) (Co-write), (2010), *Nataksangraha*, 1 and 2 volume (a collection of play), (2010)