

## *South Asian Studies* 25, 2009

### Editorial

*South Asian Studies* does not have a tradition of Editorials, but there are two compelling reasons to write one for this issue. The first is that it is Volume 25: the journal celebrates its first quarter-century. When Volume 1 appeared, the journal's predecessor, *Afghan Studies*, which it incorporated, had been through seven annual issues. If all this seems not particularly venerable, it should be recalled that those were the days when half the Council of the Society had knighthoods and wrote one another laudatory notes in Latin inside the journal's front cover for their eightieth birthdays. The context that prompted the metamorphosis of the Society for Afghan Studies into the Society for South Asian Studies, and the corresponding transformation of the journal, was one that, sadly, has a more contemporary resonance. Volume 1 of SAS is prefaced by a note from Basil Gray, the Society's President, stating that the Society 'has been unable for political reasons to operate within Afghanistan since the arrest and expulsion of our Director of the Institute in Kabul, Mr Ralph Pinder-Wilson, in 1982. In the current situation, where there is no prospect of a resumption there within the foreseeable future of these activities, the Council of the Society with the support of the British Academy under whose auspices it was founded, has decided to widen the scope of its interests to include similar fields of study in the geographical area of South Asia.'

With Volume 1, SAS got its red cover, and its lotus logo from Sanchi. Its Editor, Dr Bridget Allchin, had edited *Afghan Studies*, and the journal owes its success largely to her vision and energy. Despite the forced birth of *South Asian Studies*, the important names in its suddenly broadened field, not only from this country but from South Asia and worldwide, were filling its pages from the beginning. This must have been partly because its progenitors were no strangers to South Asia, and partly because SAS filled a gap, immediately becoming the only major journal outside the subcontinent focusing on South Asian visual and material culture. Comparable journals, even ones with Latin names, took in the whole of Asia and did not embrace archaeology as well as art, nor so easily accommodate historical, religious or literary studies impinging on art and material culture.

Two further prefatory notes have appeared since the first: an obituary for Basil Gray by Ralph Pinder-Wilson (Vol 6, 1990), and an Editor's note to Volume 13 (1997), a bumper edition marking the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Ten years later SSAS merged with BASAS, the British Association for South Asian Studies, to become the new BASAS, and the journal has enjoyed continuing support alongside a sister journal, *Contemporary South Asia*. If no Editorial marked the latter event, only I am to blame; but in Volume 25 there would be no excuse for omitting one, as the silver jubilee must be marked and exciting developments for the future must be announced. These are themselves twofold: the appointment of a distinguished editorial team, and the agreement with Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group), who will publish SAS from 2010.

The new Editorial Board, reflecting something of the journal's range of interests and geographical spread, is made up of the following: Prof. Hans Bakker (University of Groningen), Prof. Robin Coningham (Durham University), Prof. Bruno Dagens (Professor Emeritus, Université Paris III/Sorbonne nouvelle), Prof. Vidya Dehejia (Columbia University), Prof. Tapati Guha-Thakurta (CSSSC, Kolkata), Prof. Jyotindra Jain (Member Secretary IGNCA, Delhi), Prof. Deborah Klimburg-Salter

(University of Vienna), Prof. Partha Mitter (Professor Emeritus, University of Sussex), and Kamil Khan Mumtaz (Architect, Lahore). Dr Crispin Branfoot will continue to act as Associate Editor for Reviews, and we are joined by a new team of Associate Editors: Dr Rebecca Brown (John Hopkins University), Fiona Buckee (Cardiff University), Dr Raminder Kaur Kahlon (Sussex University), Dr Jason Hawkes (Cambridge University), Dr Elizabeth Lambourn (De Montfort University), and Dr Deborah Sutton (Lancaster University).

Under the new publication arrangements, *South Asian Studies* will from now on appear twice a year. It will include colour illustrations, which previously were rare and only possible when sponsorship could be found. In due course an online version of the journal will be published, and all articles from earlier issues will be available online. Needless to say, all these developments are certain to enhance the quality of the journal, greatly increase its circulation, and strengthen its reputation internationally.

I still have the SAS box file that Bridget entrusted to me at the dawn of the millennium. Now most submissions arrive through wires or the aether. *Sic transit...* Another glorious twenty-five years are assured, and one may even hope for a message in Latin.