



MIFS NEWSLETTER 14

December 2025

Editorial

The world is increasingly subject to turbulence, ranging from wars that affect all continents to identity conflicts that impact on various formations, such as nations or religious groups, including those in South Asia, to climate change, which causes increasing disasters across the planet. In this growing chaos, it is comforting to observe that in the field of Sindhi Studies, a new trend is nevertheless observed: the rise of translations, of works composed in Sindhi that are translated into English, but also, for the first time, the translation of Shah Abd al-Latif's Risalo into Hindi. One can only welcome this trend, whose objective is to better acquaint an increasingly wide audience with the mystical poetry in Sindhi. Indeed, it is still not appreciated enough when compared with the corpora composed in other South Asian languages, such as Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi.

Michel Boivin

Edito

In conversation with Rita Kothari.....	2
By Michel Boivin	
Books.....	6
PhD(s).....	9
Academic events.....	10
70 Years on, why Sindhis still need to prove they belong.....	22
By Natasha Raheja and Uttara Shahani, <i>The Times of India</i> , November 30, 2025	
New Research Project.....	23
Obituary	24
Monique Kervran (1942-2024)	
About us.....	30

In Conversation: Rita Kothari with Michel Boivin



Rita Kothari is professor of English and the head of the department of English at Ashoka University, and co-director of the Ashoka Centre for Translation at Ashoka University. She earned her M. Phil and her PhD in Literary Studies and Translation from Gujarat University, Ahmedabad. She previously taught at St. Xavier's College (Ahmedabad), MICA (Ahmedabad) and the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar). Professor Kothari has translated extensively from Gujarati and Sindhi into English, and occasionally vice versa.

Professor Kothari is a multilingual scholar and translator whose work spans different disciplines such as literature, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology and history. Her questions stem from observations of regions and communities in the western part of the Indian subcontinent – Gujarat, Kutch and Sindh. Her ethnographic research on marginal communities – through religion, caste, occupation and gender – focuses on narratives of identity, raising questions about both linguistic and cultural translation. Professor Kothari has translated extensively from Gujarati and Sindhi into English, and occasionally vice versa. Her translations, as well as her edited volumes, have made significant contributions to the field of language politics and translation. Her teaching interests include language politics, caste and communalism, Bollywood, Indian literature, translation studies, Partition, border studies, Gujarat studies, and Sindh studies. Movement across languages, contexts and cultures forms the core of her interests, forming the lens through which she interprets the Indian context.

Despite a very busy schedule, Professor Kothari agreed to answer a few questions.

MB: What is your academic training?

RK: I was an MA student in the early nineties, studying at the University of Poona. I had begun to understand and speak Marathi reasonably well. My friend Kamalakar heard me speak Marathi on the phone and told me that I was 'such a natural'! And that I should think of doing translation work. The thought stayed with me. I married soon after my MA and came back to Ahmedabad. In the course of my master's in philosophy, I decided to take up translating from Hindi into English. I was faced with many difficulties because this was a totally alien subject at Gujarat University. I had to take some guidance from Professor Bholabhai Patel from the Hindi department and had to undergo a number of changes of advisor to be able to follow this degree. So that's how far back my professional interest in translation goes. After my master's, I wanted to pursue doctoral studies. I was initially keen on working on drama, especially the plays of Girish Karnad. However, once again, something else emerged from a conversation with another friend. She heard me one day while I was describing something, and she said: you're very observant regarding the politics of translation. I knew then that this field was

beckoning me again. The seed was planted during that very conversation for writing the book *Translating India* (Routledge, 2003). My academic training is in literary studies. I learnt to read in a very attentive manner, to notice silences, to understand the relationship between words and meanings in a more nuanced way. In my work, that is ethnographic work on the Sindhi migrant experience, this training became very useful. It was also helpful, and perhaps even more so, when I worked in the region of Banni, Kutch.

MB: For you, why does Shah Abdul Latif occupy the place he does in Sindhi literature and culture?

RK: Shah Abdul Latif is the foundation of the edifice called Sindhi. If we want to understand this edifice, however undefined it is, we have to understand Shah. As a translator of Shah Jo Risalo, I found myself approaching this text with far more affection and acceptance than any text I have translated. I would suggest that translators submit themselves fully, if the text requires that of them.

MB: In the *Kahe Latif*, what was more challenging?

RK: *Kahe Latif* is a very personal journey. It's not a mere translation project. I always found Latif missing from all reckonings of Bhakti poets. Translation was an attempt to bring Latif into the oral traditions of India. To have his work sung and passed down. The challenge was to understand eighteenth-century Sindhi! It's different from what I grew up speaking. It was also challenging to understand the Quranic context. Words that are used for a sect or a caste have been of huge interest to me in the act of translating. It shows how the vocabulary that we assume to be about religion is often really about caste. Words like *zat*, *sampradaya*, *panth* – we use them across different contexts, and they often blur categories of religion, caste and sect. This overlap has become a major area of interest for me, especially in translation.

I selected about 450 of his poems. The translation felt like a lifetime wish – something I didn't have enough confidence to take on for a long time. It's been published by Vani Prakashan. As you know, Sindhi is one of India's important literary languages, with a 600–700-year-old tradition. This is almost unknown in India, even amongst Sindhis. If you ask anybody in the street to name a Sindhi writer, they won't know anyone. Popati Hiranandani¹ may be translated, but how many have heard of her? And there are so many other fine writers writing on a range of themes. So my *Kahe Latif* is another attempt at reclaiming our literary tradition. It's a Hindi translation, done directly from Sindhi – not from English, and not as prose, but in poetic verse. There are many English translations of Shah Latif, but we don't have versions that remain faithful to the alliteration and rhythm of the original. Hindi allowed me to do that. I hope people will read it aloud in Hindi, quote it the way Latif is meant to be quoted.

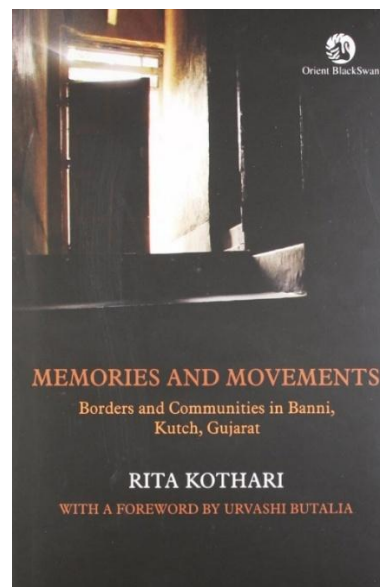
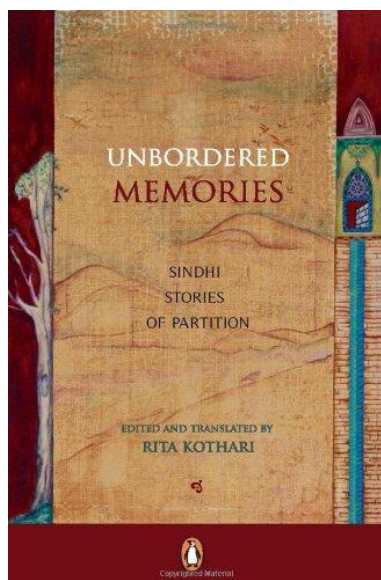
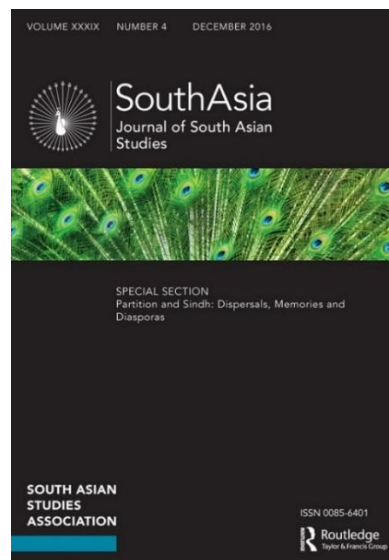
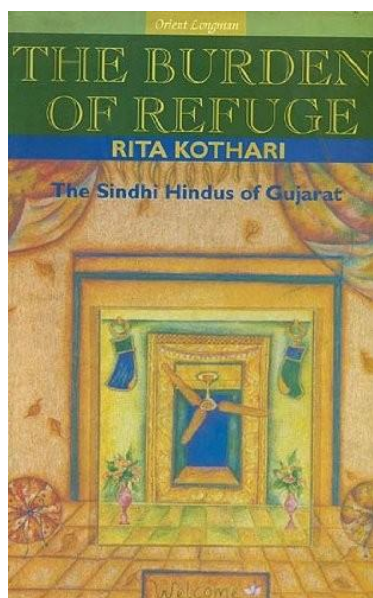
MB: What should be the priorities in Sindhi studies today? In other words, what are the blind spots that doctoral students and researchers should study as a priority?

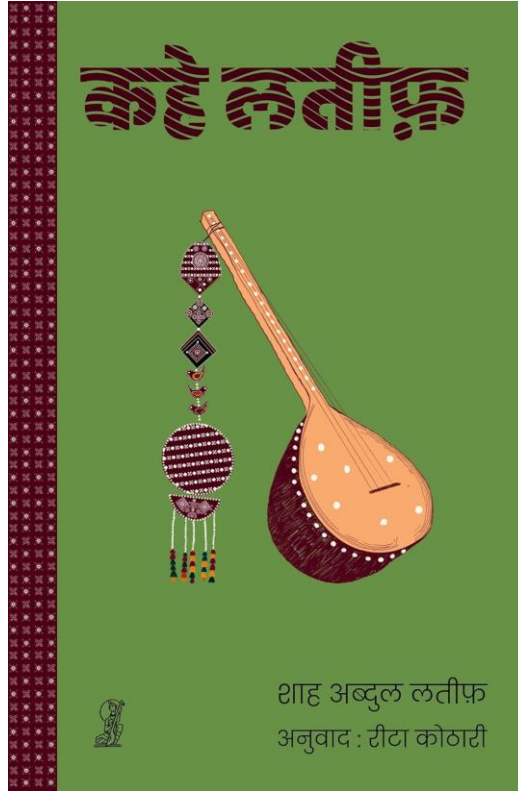
RK: Sindhi scholarship today is already raising new questions and exploring emerging directions. I am quite hopeful that it will expand and open up fresh intellectual horizons in the years ahead.

PS: Professor Kothari gave several interviews about her work. Most of them are available online. Some parts of this interview have been taken, with her authorisation, for the most part from here: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/books/rita-kothari-the-vocabulary-we-assume-is-about-religion-is-often-about-caste-101762174156436.html> (3 November 2025)

¹ Popati Hiranandani (1924–2005) was a Sindhi litterati born in Hyderabad, Sind. She migrated to Bombay where she taught literature in a college. She penned about 60 books in Sindhi, including short stories, novels, poems, criticism, essays, autobiography and translations.

Partition and Sindh: Dispersals, Memories and Diasporas. Guest Editors: Priya Kumar and Rita Kothari





Thanks to Rita Kothari's recently published translation of the *Risalo* as *Kahe Latif*, Latif's and the Sindhi idiom of Sufism is now available in free verse style, everyday Hindi. Kothari has been working on Gujarati and Sindhi literature and translations largely into English. With *Kahe Latif*, she bravely takes a step towards bringing two Indian languages – Sindhi and Hindi – closer to each other, compared with any previous attempts to bring Sindhi into the larger Indian linguistic space.

(...)

Against this background of an uneven exchange, Kothari's translation of the work of the most revered Sindhi poet, Shah Abdul Latif, into Hindi as *Kahe Latif* should be seen as a much-needed signpost for Indian translators on their journey towards a sustained, invigorated and equitable handling of translation as a form of power. *Kahe Latif* deserves to be seen as something more than a text. It is a statement on the silences around certain languages in the subcontinent – and is a challenge to translators, particularly Sindhi ones, but also in general, to take the courage to bypass English as a norm for canon-making.

Soni Wadhwa

Soni Wadhwa teaches literature studies at SRM University, Andhra Pradesh. Her digital archiving work includes PG Sindhi Library, the Sindhi Halchal Archive and Sindhi Sanchaya.

<https://thewire.in/books/kahe-latif-shah-abdul-latif-rita-kothari>

Books



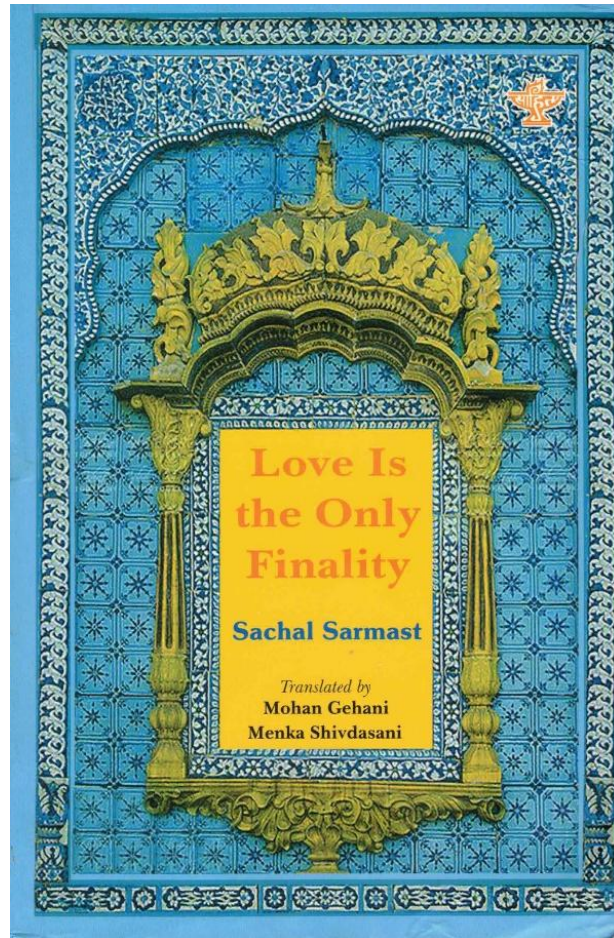
ARCHITECTURE OF CASTE IN PAKISTAN

DALIT ASSERTIONS IN A CULTURE OF DENIAL

Ghulam Hussain

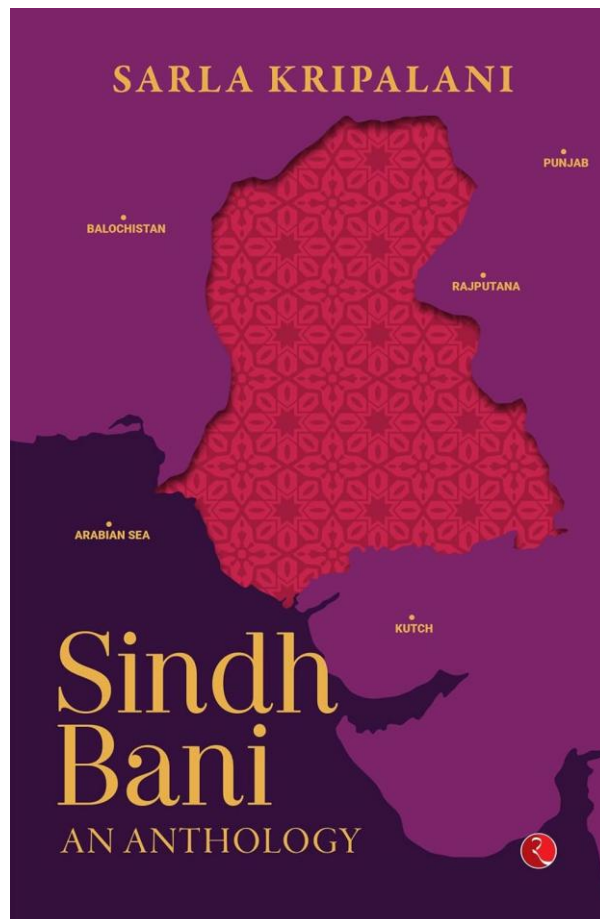


This book is a groundbreaking original contribution to understanding the intersectionality of caste, race and class in South Asia. Grounded in rich ethnographic fieldwork, it situates its analyses in Pakistan to reveal how caste – often denied or obscured by nationalist, religious and liberal-progressive discourses – continues to shape everyday hierarchies, moral imaginaries and political structures. It unravels how both privileged and oppressed caste groups invoke the past to construct identities and contest histories in the present, showing how systemic discrimination has pushed Scheduled Castes and Pasmanda communities to the lowest rungs of the social, economic and political hierarchy. Moving beyond the familiar frames of Indian caste practices, the book demonstrates that caste in Pakistan is not a relic of the past or a “Hindu problem”, but a transreligious and deeply entrenched social structure sustained across Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities alike. Foregrounding caste as an analytical category and a fundamental marker of identity, the book questions the role of hegemonic actors – religious, nationalist and secular – in strategically denying or reasserting caste to preserve structures of privilege. Combining theoretical sophistication with moral and ethnographic engagement, *Architecture of Caste in Pakistan* prompts us to rethink caste, religion and equality in Muslim societies.



Published by the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, the book is a translation of Sachal Sarmast's Sindhi *kalam* into English, with the Sindhi text facing the English translation. It is no doubt the first English translation of the whole Sindhi *kalam*. To date, only Shah Abd al-Latif's *Risalo* has been fully translated into English several times. There is no information to suggest the origin of the text the translators have used, but since they mention Nimano Faqir's edition, it is probably borrowed from it. The English translation is elegant, although the translators are somewhat too involved in showing that Sachal was influenced by the Vedanta. It is especially obvious in the translation of some terms, such as *lahuti* (p. 202), which definitely belong to the Sufi lexicon. The book is an example of translation being not only a process of translating from one language to another, but also a process of transposing from one cultural regime to another. The latter requires making choices that can sometimes depart from the framework in which the original text was composed. In this case, it is actually the principle of accessibility that applies: to make the text understandable for the intended readership.

MB



Sindh Bani is a poignant and compelling anthology capturing life in Sindh before the region was severed from India at the time of Partition.

Who was Dewan Dimal Doulatram, who foresaw the Partition as early as 1934? How does the story of the fragrant banknotes from a nautch girl unfold? The first part of the book features delightful and evocative stories from the author Sarla Kripalani's childhood – of her family and friends, of bonding and betrayals, of honour and dishonour.

Why did the Pirs come to Sindh, and the Mirs run away? The second section, with Aaya Pir, Bhagga Mir and other Sindhi proverbs, is a lively compilation of proverbs that captures the wit and wisdom of Sindhis. Collected by Sarla over many years, these were passed down from her mother, Guli, and her mother-in-law, Sarsati. To ensure that younger generations can understand them, each proverb is presented in both Sindhi and Hindi scripts, alongside its English equivalent – bridging cultures and revealing timeless shared truths.

What secrets and burdens did the Sindhworki apprentices silently carry? The third part is Sarla's remarkable translation of T.K. Mirchandani's Sindhi book which uncovers the famed Sindhworki apprenticeship system instituted by the Sethias – a practice that built global fortunes but came with a heavy, yet often unacknowledged, human price.

Sindh Bani is a treasure trove for anyone seeking to rediscover the heart and soul of Sindh.

PhD(s)

Alexandre Houdas, *Water management during the Indus civilization (2500-1900 BCE): techniques, environments and societies*, PhD in Archaeology, University of Paris 1, Dec. 2024.



This doctoral thesis focuses on water management during the Indus Civilisation (2500–1900 BCE). This major cultural complex of the Bronze Age, spanning present-day Pakistan and northwest India, was instrumental in the emergence and development of the first cities in South Asia. Spanning a geographical area that presents a wide variety of ecosystems and contrasting water resources, these settlements were associated with a wide array of agricultural and urban hydraulic techniques implemented by ancient populations. Although a considerable amount of research has recently been carried out on the

environment and water resources, hydraulic structures have only been investigated at a few sites (Mohenjo-daro, Dholavira). Based on an examination of ancient excavations and new fieldwork carried out at Chanhudaro, Sindh, this research has made it possible to establish a corpus detailing 597 hydraulic structures in a systematic manner. Covering twelve sites and five distinct regions, this corpus provides the basis for the first comprehensive overview of hydraulic structures in Indus civilisation, analysing their contexts, typologies, materials and, above all, their functions (water supply, water storage, water use and sanitation). By examining the spatial distribution of these structures (intrasite, intersite) and their chronostratigraphy, this study aims to provide new insights into how they emerged and spread throughout the 'Greater Indus Valley', while exploring their implications for urban processes. Finally, by investigating the complex relationships between techniques, environments and the social dynamics of the various regions that comprise the Indus basin, this research seeks to contribute to ongoing debates on the cultural diversity and identity of this civilisation.

Academic Events

Research Fest 2025 | Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Sindh

Abdul Razaque Channa



The Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, organised the Research Fest 2025: Post Fieldwork Seminar on 25 November 2025, celebrating the spirit of discovery, dialogue and student-led research. The event showcased final-year undergraduate students' post-fieldwork thesis projects, reflecting on the intersections between anthropology, archaeology, culture, heritage, gender, development, health and the human experience.

Dr. Abdul Razaque Channa, Chairman of the Department, presented the concept brief on the Research Fest. He emphasized the importance of post-fieldwork research in strengthening research culture and developing analytical and professional skills among students. He remarked that such academic practices prepare graduates for future careers in academia and beyond by nurturing inquiry, documentation, and interpretation skills rooted in field experience.



The presentations included a range of ethnographic and archaeological topics that addressed contemporary social, cultural, gender and environmental issues.

Some notable student research topics included An Ethnographic Study of Mahwari: Myths, Taboos and their Impact on Mental Health by Ms. Savera Abbasi, Construction of a Beauty Standard via TikTok Videos and its Impact on Women's Mental Health by Ms. Sumaiya Khanzadi, Knowledge and Understanding of Climate Change among Graduate Students of the University of Sindh, Jamshoro by Ms. Mehtab, The role of STEVTA Organisation Empowering Youth by Mr. Arjun Mania, the Impact of Industrial Pollution on Health and the Lives of the Local Community, SITE area Hyderabad by Mr. Mubashir Hussain, Drug users and Drug Rehabilitation Centers' Effectiveness and Cultural Perception by Hassnain Memon, Socio-Cultural and Environmental Impact of Tourism on indigenous communities: A Case Study of Tharparkar by Rajveer Singh, Livestock as a Lifeline: Human Dependence on Cattle for Survival in Rural Communities of Tharparkar, Sindh by Mr. Sohail, An Ethnographic Study of Shah Diwano by Mr. Abdul Wahab, Psychiatric Services: Priority and Response to Mental Health Care: Case Study of Sir Cowasjee Jahangir, Institute of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Hyderabad by Mr. Vikram, Allah Jurio Khoso – Newly Discovered Site by Mr. Khalid Hussain, Architectural Importance of Jam Nizamuddin II tomb by Mr. Mumtaz Jamari and Religious and Cultural Symbolism in the Iconography of Talpur Funerary Architecture at Hirabad Hyderabad by Ms. Saira.

Faculty members, including Dr. Muhabat Shah, Dr. Rafiq Wassan, Dr. Sunil Kumar, Madam Zahida, Madam Umbreen Soomro, and Quratulain shared their insights. Dr. Shah appreciated the confidence and clarity shown by students in presenting their field-based research. Dr. Wassan commended the relevance of the students' research topics, noting their meaningful connection with pressing social issues in contemporary society. Dr. Sunil praised the depth of field engagement, remarking that the students' strong presentations reflect the quality of their fieldwork. Madam Zahida encouraged students to value their efforts during fieldwork and advised them to prepare their thesis in accordance with the best academic practices.



Dr. Abdul Razaque Channa concluded the event, praising the efforts made by the coordinator of the event, faculty and students, highlighting that such initiatives help cultivate a vibrant research culture

within the department – one that bridges classroom learning with community engagement and an understanding of the real world.





Political Science Seminar Series

AJMER AND KARTARPUR

Shared Sacred Sites Under Pressure

Ajmer Dargah Sharif exemplifies the dargah culture, which combines the spiritual and transactional dimensions, explaining the way Sufi places attract devotees from different religions. The Kartarpur temple combines transboundary and religious/spiritual dimensions, making it a multicultural site in multiple ways: Sikhs from Pakistan, India, and the diaspora meet and interact, cultivating Punjabiya, while also engaging with followers of Baba Farid and Nanakpanthis. In India and Pakistan, these plireligious sites are under pressure – but resilient.



Dr. Christophe Jaffrelot

Dr. Christophe Jaffrelot is Senior research fellow at CERI-Sciences Po/CNRS, Professor of Indian Politics and Sociology and President of the French Political Science Association.



Wednesday,
December 10, 2025



11:30 AM
Onwards



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Department of Anthropology and Archaeology
University of Sindh, Jamshoro



Let's explore Urban Hyderabad through

Our Heritage Walk

14 NOVEMBER 2025

TIME: 09 AM

START POINT: 1. PAKKA QILLA
2. MUKHI HOUSE 3. HASRAT MOHANI LIBRARY

https://www.instagram.com/anthro_archeo/

Step into the cultural history –
observe, explore and experience the
living heritage of our cities.

This Heritage Walk is organised as part
of the Urban Anthropology course.

Urban Heritage Walk– Department of Anthropology & Archaeology University of Sindh Jamshoro

Abdul Razaque Channa

As part of the Urban Anthropology course, the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, organised an Urban Heritage Walk in Hyderabad to explore the historical and culturally rich heritage of the city on Friday, 14 November 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

The walk was led by the course convenor, Madam Zahida, accompanied by third-year students of Urban Anthropology, as well as faculty members. A limited number of students from other years were also invited to benefit from this learning opportunity. The group visited two important heritage landmarks: Pakka Qila and Mukhi House.

Anthropological Purpose of the Walk

The purpose of the Heritage Walk was to help students understand living heritage, the relationship between place and people, and how urban spaces are shaped by history, memory, identity and cultural continuity. Urban Anthropology emphasises how cities are not simply built environments, but social worlds infused with meaning – shaped by power, politics, migration, social networks and collective memory. This walk offered students a first-hand experience of how heritage sites function as cultural texts, revealing layers of the past embedded in the present.



Learning at Pakka Qila

Mr. Naqash Sahito, anthropologist and staff member of the Department of Culture and Antiquities, posted at Pakka Qila, welcomed faculty members and students and briefed them on the site's history. He explained that Pakka Qila was built in the 18th century by Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhora as a secure administrative and military fort, which played a major role in Hyderabad's early political history. It later became the battleground of the 1782 conflict between the Kalhoras and the Talpurs, led by Mir Fateh Ali Khan Talpur, marking the end of Kalhora rule in Sindh. Much of the fort has since been destroyed, leaving behind only the restored Mir Harem, conserved by the Culture Department, while the former museum building was destroyed. Mr. Naqash also showed the group the recently conserved large wooden gate with its original iron spikes, a distinctive feature of defensive architecture in Sindh.





Learning at Mukhi House

At Mukhi House, Madam Zahida, Dr. Rafique Wassan, Dr. Muhabat Shah and Dr. Abdul Razaque Channa briefed students about the Mukhi family, their social role, and the significance of indigenous custodians and their residences in understanding class, mobility and influence in colonial and post-colonial Sindh. The heritage guide indicates that notable political figures of the subcontinent – including Jawaharlal Nehru – once stayed at Mukhi House, demonstrating how such homes served as intersections of power, diplomacy and social prestige.



Faculty Insights During the Walk:

Faculty members – Dr. Abdul Razaque Channa (Chairman), Dr. Rafique Wassan, and Dr. Muhabat Shah—guided students in analysing Hyderabad’s urban landscape through an anthropological lens. They discussed the meaning of the past in the present, how people lived historically, how communities remember their heritage, and how these memories influence urban identity today.

They encouraged students to see heritage sites not as mere physical structures but as symbols of cultural meaning, reflecting:

- power and hierarchy
- community belonging
- political history
- social networks
- urban transformation over time.

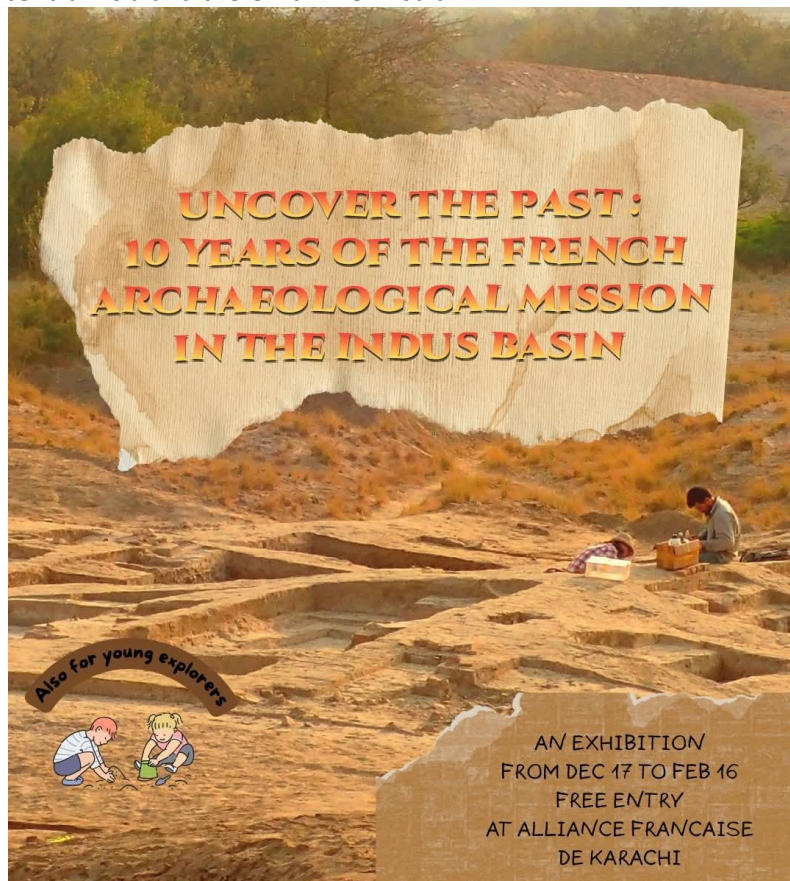
Faculty members also highlighted contemporary challenges such as encroachment and a lack of heritage protection and of community engagement. Students were introduced to community-led approaches including stakeholder engagement, advocacy, mobilisation and the awareness initiatives essential for urban heritage preservation.

At the end of the heritage walk, Dr. Abdul Razaque Channa expressed his sincere gratitude to Mr. Naqash Sahito as member of the department’s alumni for his help in facilitating the visit and making the urban heritage walk a meaningful learning experience. He also thanked the course convenor, faculty members and students for their active participation, enthusiasm, and commitment to connecting classroom learning with real-world experiences.



Retrospective of French Archaeology in Sindh Exhibition at the Alliance Française in Karachi (17/12/2025–15/02/2026)

The French Archaeological Mission of the Indus Basin (MAFBI) was created in 2013 after the meeting of two pioneering research programmes on the protohistory of Pakistan: The Archaeological Mission of the Indus (MAI), which was headed at the time by Jean-François Jarrige (1940–2014) (CNRS), and the French Archaeological Mission at Makran (MAFM), founded by Roland Besenval (1947–2014) (CNRS). For nearly 45 years of uninterrupted work in the field, first in Sindh (1958–1962), then in Balochistan (1962–2002), the MAI concentrated its studies on the genesis and development of the civilisation of the Indus (2500–1900 B.C.), considered to be the very first major urbanisation phenomenon in South Asia. In Makran (southwest of Balochistan, Pakistani), a region that had long remained on the sidelines of archaeological research, multidisciplinary studies of the MAFM (1987–2007) revealed the dynamism of a sedentary population dating back to the 5th millennium BC and the richness of Chalcolithic material culture testifying to links with the southeast of the Iranian Plateau, the Indus Valley, central Asia and the Omani Peninsula.



BIOARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES IN CHANHU-DARO (SINDH, PAKISTAN)

ARCHAEOMALCOLOGY and the TECHNOLOGICAL STUDY OF SHELL PRODUCTIONS

Laura Manca & Marjan Mashkour

The study of shell remains was supported by the EXAMS project, funded by the Alliance Sorbonne University and MAFBI. Malacological remains from 2017 and 2019 excavations were studied in relation to their archaeological contexts.

These research activities involved several students of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (Sakrand) who realised their workshop-cum-internship.



Approximately 1150 shell remains were found during the 2017 and 2019 excavation campaigns. Bivalves and gastropods, mostly from the Indus river were taxonomically identified. Only one bivalve, belonging to the family Veneridae comes from a marine environment.

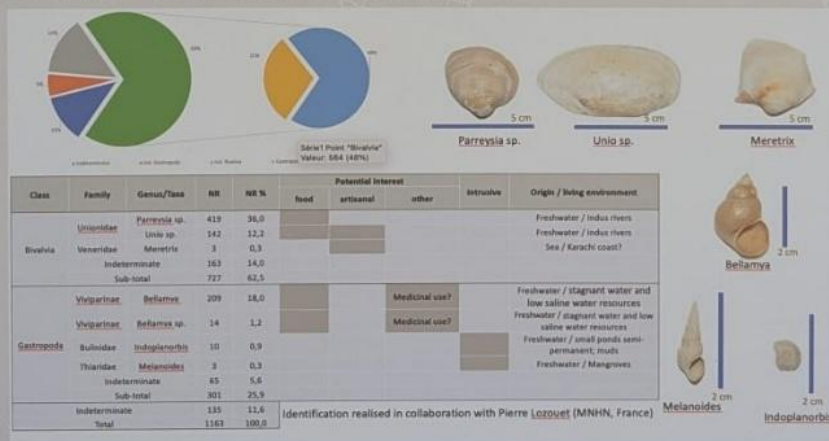


Preliminary results of the shell remains of Chanu-daro

Bivalve species were potentially exploited for their food and artisanal value. The *Bellamyia*, although small in size, could equally contribute to the food supply of the Chanhu-daro inhabitants due to their high protein concentration. These mollusks are also traditionally exploited in medical settings for their curative properties.

The *Indoplanorbis* and *Melanoides* seem to be intrusive species probably transported to the site via other raw materials of plant or mineral origin that came from their original habitat: stagnant water and low saline water resources.

The presence of these shells confirms and characterizes the relationship that these populations had with the shores of the Indus and the coastal areas for the procurement of food and raw materials. Further research will help to better define this economic system and its evolution in relation to data obtained from neighboring sites.



THE MAFBI TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Co-direction: Aurore Didier and David Sarmiento-Castillo

Cooperation: CTA&AD, Government of Sindh / DOAM, Government of Pakistan

THE FIELD-TRAINING PROGRAMMES AT CHANHU-DARO

The MAFBI fieldwork in Sindh includes training programmes dedicated to students in archaeology from various universities in Pakistan (Quaid-e Azam University-Islamabad, Shah Abdul Latif University-Khairpur, University of Sindh-Jamshoro, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto of Veterinary and Animal Sciences-Sakrand, University of Balochistan-Quetta, Hazara University -Mansehra), and young archaeologists, field-officers, assistant curators and other professionals in cultural heritage from various institutions (CTA&AD, Government of Sindh, National Museum of Karachi, Endowment Fund Trust for Preservation of the Heritage of Sindh, Department of Archaeology, Government of Balochistan). Since 2016, more than 70 students and trainees participated to Chanhu-daro excavations. The MAFBI team organized trainings in excavation techniques, material registration and curation, photography, mapping, archaeological drawing photogrammetry, data processing/mining, and introduction to zooarchaeology and archaeobotany.

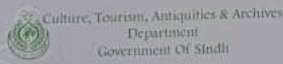


SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS IN PAKISTAN, TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN FRANCE

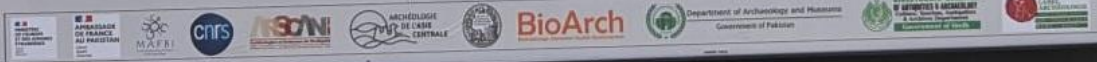
The team also organized teachings, seminars and workshops in Pakistani Universities and provided with some logistic and scientific support to young archaeologists carrying out new fieldwork. With the financial support of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of France in Pakistan, more than 25 M.Phil students, Ph.D students and young researchers obtained scholarships for research stays in France (1 to 6 months). The MAFBI team organized specialized trainings at the laboratory ArScAn (UMR 7041, Nanterre) and in other partner institutions of MAFBI (UMR7209, BioARCH, Paris; EPHE; Musée Guimet; National Institute of cultural heritage ...).



COLLABORATIONS



A. DIDIER, D. SARMIENTO CASTILLO / PHOTOS: MAJ-MAFM



6 Feb | 6 - 9.30 pm | Horniman Circle

Sindhi Viraasat

REDISCOVERING A LIVING HERITAGE



18:15

Welcome

A brief introduction to Sindhi Viraasat.
BARKHA KHUSHALANI

Roots and Routes: A Brief History of Sindh

An overview of Sindh's civilisational past and the journeys shaped by Partition.
NANDITA BHAVNANI

Proverbially Sindhi

Sindhi pahakas – wit, wisdom, and social insight distilled into everyday language.
ATUL KHATRI

Food in Sindhi Homes

A visual and cultural journey through Sindhi culinary memory.
DEEPA CHAUHAN

18:55

From Shopfronts to Storylines: Sindhi Business Histories in Print

SONI WADHWA

Centres of Cultural Revival

Presentation on the *Lost Homeland of Sindh* gallery at the Partition Museum, New Delhi.
ARUNA MADNANI

Linking the Fireflies: Sindhi's Artistic Legacy

A visual overview of Sindh's art history, from ancient to contemporary.
SAAZ AGGARWAL

Bhagat: Devotion in Movement

A rare devotional dance form from Sindh.
KISHAN RAMNANI, HERO PARWANI & HARSH PESWANI.

What We Create Defines Us

Reimagining Sindhi language and culture through everyday storytelling.
SIMRAN AHUJA & DIRVEN HAZARI

20:00

The Spiritual Heart of Sindh

Nandita Bhavnani will felicitate MOHAN GEHANI and launch his English translations of Kalyan Advani's books: *Shah Abdul Latif*, *Sachal Sarmast*, and *Sami*.

Selected readings in English by
ANJU MAKHIJA, MENKA SHIVDASANI & GAYATRI CHAWLA

20:20

Raag jo Rang

Sufi music inspired by Sindhi mystic poetry.
DRSHIKA ADVANI, GIRISH SADHWANI & KAAJAL CHANDIRAMANI

Chhej: Carrying the Circle Forward

A rare Sindhi circle dance, performed by a troupe from Ulhasnagar dedicated to reviving the tradition.



GAZEP 18:45 | 19:00

Pahinjo Five charming recitals opening windows onto lost but vital worlds of Sindhi life.

Directed by NIKHIL KATARA
Enacted by DEESH MARIWALA,
BARKHA FATNANI, VARUN VAZIR &
MONICA MAHENDRU



presented by
Sindhi Saaz Foundation



70 years on, why do Sindhis still need to prove they belong?

BY INVITATION



**NATASHA
RAHEJA**



**UTTARA
SHAHANI**

In Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and several other parts of the country, Sindhis have been gathering in anger and solidarity, sharing videos, holding rallies, and flooding social media

with messages of unity. The target of their ire is Johar Chhattisgarh Party leader Amit Baghel who hit a raw nerve last month when he reportedly said that Sindhi Hindus who worship Jhulelal could leave for Pakistan and perform their puja there.

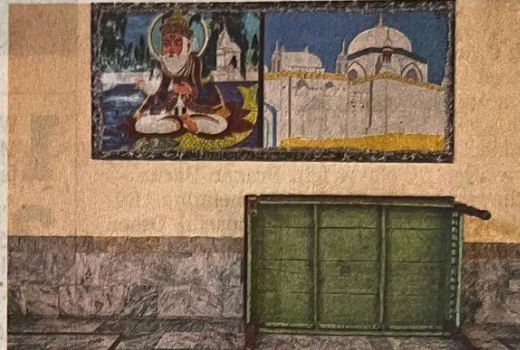
Jhulelal, a bearded, riverine deity is often depicted with a book in his hand and seated either on a pallo fish (also known as hilsa or ilish) or astride a horse. Also known as Udero Lal, he looks like a cross between Guru Nanak, a Sufi pir or a faqir, and a Vaishnavite saint. He also bears a resemblance to Vishwakarma and when on horseback, to some representations of Lal Beg. Jhulelal's birthplace lies along the banks of the Indus in what is present-day Pakistan.

After Partition, Sindhi Hindu refugees left the areas that became Pakistan and settled all over the newly defined territory of India (and, indeed, all over the world). In the absence of a state to call their own (unlike the refugees of Punjab and Bengal), Sindhi leaders in India like Ram Panjwani hoped that Jhulelal would unite a displaced, stateless community. The Sindhi intelligentsia aimed to preserve what they called Sindhyat (Sindhiness) at a time when their cultural and religious practices were often disparaged. Scholars such as Rita Kothari, Michel Boivin, and Dominique Sila-Khan have shown how Sindhi refugees in India faced stigma for their syncretic Hindu, Sufi, and Nanakpanthi practices. To fit into states across India, Sindhis learned new scripts, spoke new languages, changed their diets, and sometimes dropped their surnames.

Yet despite their attempts to fit in, the 'otherness' of Hindu Sindhis rears its head every so often.

In contemporary political rhetoric, labelling someone 'Pakistani' has become a routine way to cast doubt on their loyalty. For Sindhis — a displaced community whose memories, geography, and heritage are linked to regions now in Pakistan — such slurs cut especially deep. Having spent more than seven decades trying to belong, being told to "go to Pakistan" reopens the wounds of Partition.

Baghel's remarks are not an isolated outburst. They reflect a broader pattern in which nationalism pits communities against each other, as if belonging were a zero-sum competition. Calling for Baghel's arrest will not put an end to this perpetual questioning of their loyalty. In the past, right-wing activists have vandalised Sindhi-owned bakeries named after Karachi or demanded that the word



STATELESS HERE, SECOND CLASS THERE: The shrine of Udero Lal, also known as Jhulelal, in Sindh, Pakistan

Sindh be removed from the Indian national anthem.

The recent protests reveal a community tired of being told, in hackneyed terms, that they are "anti-national" or "Pakistani." The very symbols being mocked — the fish, the river — evoke a deep, shared geography that predates the modern borders of India and Pakistan. The question now is will yet another incident denigrating Sindhis for their connections to Sindh, to Pakistan, push them to further assimilate and 'Hinduize', distancing themselves from the mixed practices and lands that define their heritage? Or will this lead some Hindu Sindhis to question their participation in a nationalist politics that continually interrogates their belonging?

Sindh is leveraged not just within India's domestic politics, but in the ongoing conflicts between India and Pakistan. In recent remarks possibly spurred by this controversy, India's defence minister Rajnath Singh suggested that Sindh may "return" to India. Parliamentarians in Pakistan such as Sherry Rehman swiftly retorted that Sindh was the first province to vote for Pakistan. This exchange reduces Sindh to a geopolitical pawn while overlooking the history of colonial majority-minority politics in the region. Sindhis are stateless in India and often treated as second-class citizens in Pakistan, where the province of Sindh has suffered from upstream dams and poor development. Sindhis would do well to question their absorption into nationalist politics that leverages their pain and displacement for strategic gains.

As the last generation with direct memories of Partition passes away, the shared history of the subcontinent is at risk. What might a different path forward look like — one that refuses the exclusions demanded by nationalist politics? Perhaps, instead of constantly trying to squeeze themselves into rigid boxes of belonging, Sindhis can reclaim the fluidity that has always defined them like the flowing waters of the *Sindhu dariya* — the Indus River — from which Jhulelal is said to emerge. ■

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New Research Project

The Socio-economic Impact of Climate Change in the Southern Indus Valley: the Jogis and other peripatetic communities

The Department of Anthropology, University of Sindh, the Centre for South Asian and Himalayan Studies (CNRS–EHESS), and the Centre for Social Sciences, Karachi (CSSK) have framed a new research project led by Michel Boivin (CESAH, CNRS) and Abd al-Razaque Channa. It will focus on “The Socio-economic Impact of Climate Change in the Southern Indus Valley: the Jogis and other peripatetic communities,” and it is scheduled to last for three years (2026-2028).

Project Summary

Despite the denial of some prominent politicians, climate change is now confirmed as a reality by almost all researchers specialising in this field. In many parts of the world, they observe an increase in violent climatic phenomena, such as hurricanes and storms, while the melting of polar glaciers is causing sea levels to rise, already threatening certain island states. On the other hand, temperate regions are experiencing a significant increase in temperatures, causing drought and the depletion of water reserves, which in turn leads to huge fires that are difficult to control. In South Asia, Pakistan is a country that is particularly vulnerable to climate change, as evidenced by the increasingly frequent dramatic floods. In the south of the country, which corresponds to the southern part of the Indus Valley, including its delta, the dominant climate change issue is drought, which is also the result of a general rise in temperatures.

Numerous NGOs are very active among sedentary populations and have published reports on their vulnerability to climate change. Scholars specialised in the climate also started to observe radical modifications in the delta area, also due to climate change. Nonetheless, there is a blind spot regarding the study of the consequences of climate change in Pakistan: the semi-nomadic minorities who roam the province of Sindh. Due to their characteristics, these populations do not always fit into official classifications and their mobility makes them difficult to characterise. Their ancestral mobility is linked to their economic activities, which are varied. This project aims to analyse how climate change has brought about changes in their way of life, including both their economic situation and, above all, the social structure of these groups. By focusing on how authority is exercised within these groups, the study sets out to determine how group members seek to redefine their relationship with authority both within the group itself and with external authorities.

Among semi-nomadic communities of Sindh are the Jogis. They are well-known because they are to be found everywhere, walking along the road with their bags or playing the flute to make the snake dance. Several PhDs have been devoted to some subgroups of the Jogis in India (Joncheere 2016). In Sindh, the academic literature devoted to them is almost nonexistent, although local writers have published books (Qaimkhani 2015). The Jogis are said to be snake charmers and belong to Hinduism and Islam. A first step would be to map the major localisations of the Jogis, the areas of Sindh where they stay. It would allow the team to identify the decisive fields for research and, as a second step, to characterise the nature of the climatic change they are facing. The third step would be to develop a case study to identify how the change affects their economic activities, for example, whether they have had to alter their usual travel plans. The fourth step would be to focus on the internal structure of the jogis, and the fifth and last step to focus on their religious affiliation. Does climate change make them vulnerable and challenge their liminal religion, between Islam and Hinduism?

Obituary

Monique Kervran (1942–2024)



Michel Boivin, CESAH (CNRS-EHESS)

It is with deep sadness that the MIFS team learned of the death of Monique Kervran on 6 October 2024. She was admitted to France's National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) where she became senior researcher before she retired. This internationally renowned archaeologist, who worked in Sindh from 1989 to 2002, was indeed an extraordinary personality. The members of MIFS will long remember the informal 'meetings' that Monique organised at her home in Paris, in her office cluttered with cards, books and sketches, around a cup of tea or while enjoying small cakes. In 2009 she accepted to do an interview that was published in the second issue of the MIFS Newsletter (<https://sindh.hypotheses.org/files/2011/06/MIFS-Newsletter-n%C2%B02-2009.pdf>). Monique or Monik Kervran was of Breton ancestry, as reflected in her name: *ker-vran*, *ker* meaning village, and *vran mean* raven, in Breton, a Celtic language spoken in the northwest of France. A disciple of Janine Sourdél-Thomine, professor of the Chair of History of Art and Islamic Archaeology at the Sorbonne

University, Monique's archaeological experience was acquired in countries of Islam, from 1970 to 1975, from Tunisia to Iran, passing through Libya.²

Monique paved the way for Islamic archaeological research in Iran, at the site of Susa, as of 1972, within the French Archaeological Delegation in Iran. Having discovered a colossal statue of Darius I, the Achaemenid king, bearing a quadrilingual inscription, at the Apadana Gate of the palace of Susa, in the Islamic levels, she acquired an international reputation at a very young age. This major discovery had an immense impact on philologists, Egyptologists and Iranologists throughout the world and earned her the highest distinction of the French Republic, the Légion d'honneur. In this capital of Khuzistan, she studied categories of housing from the beginning of Islam, baths, sugar factories, the great mosque, a second mosque and a maristan, thus revealing the magnitude of this Islamic city. Monique turned again to Iran in 2004 to conduct excavations at Nishapur and to take a close interest in Siraf.

She initiated excavations on the other shore of the Persian Gulf, in Bahrain as early as 1977, at the site of Qala'at al-Bahrain, then in Oman in 1980, at the Sohar site, two trading posts of capital importance for understanding trade from the Arabian Gulf to China. She also conducted a study of the Omani mosques and tried to safeguard them. Her scientific curiosity for the history of maritime exchanges led her to Pakistan in 2002 where she significantly expanded multidisciplinary research on the Indus delta and even sought, thanks to Nearchus, the trace of Alexander in the meanders of the Indus. The responsibility for excavations at Banbhore fell to her in 2011. At the beginning of 2017, she was still active on an excavation campaign at this famous site. From then on, she devoted all her time, until her dying day, to the publication of the results of her research on this city and the Indus Valley.

If the history of the trade exchanges along the Silk Road, both by land and by sea, was the favourite theme of her research, the deep understanding of key monuments oriented her efforts just as much. She endeavoured to establish precise chronologies for the cities, monuments and structures that were relevant to her investigations, relying in particular on the in-depth study of archaeological ceramics. New aspects of pre-Islamic and Islamic history have thus been unearthed, studied and published. Monique used to explain how she came to end up in Sindh. When she was working in Bahrain, she found so many coins minted in Sindh. This is what drove her to visit Sindh. There, her work can be chronologically divided into three sections, corresponding to the different areas of the province where she conducted fieldwork: the Indus Delta, Sehwan Sharif and Bhanbore. It is fascinating to see how Monique attempted to identify some cities of the delta area with the help of the Macedonian and Greek historian, who wrote some two millennia before she visited those sites.

Monique's interests were vast and, although trained as an archaeologist, she was also deeply interested in medieval history and art history, particularly architecture. In this respect, I'd like to take a look at two articles she published on mausoleums, which serve as models of her methodology. She often attempted to understand how a material culture was constructed, always through the merging of other different cultures from which it had borrowed elements. This issue is a running theme in her work. I was always fascinated to see how Monique had a facility of reading the different cultural components that make up a style of architecture, how they merged and also differentiated to give birth to a new cultural identity. More than merely reading, she in fact interpreted the architectural elements, mostly the structure of space and ornaments, to understand how a material culture was constructed. To provide evidence of her interpretation, I focus on two examples she published in French: the mausoleums of the Indus valley (Kervran 1999) and another mausoleum devoted to a Chagatay princess, settled today in Uzbekistan (Kervran 2002).

² This part was inspired by <https://www.orient-mediterranee.com/disparition-de-monik-kervran/>.

The first article is on four mausolea in the Indus Valley: two of them are in northern Sindh and the other two are located in Southern Punjab, near the Panjnad,³ an area included in Sindh in the medieval period when Multan was the capital. She started by observing that in Sindh the model of the great mosques of the Arab world is to be found, with a hypostyle hall and courtyard with porticoes, for example, in Daybul, Mansura and Muhammad Tur, today on the site of Shah Kapur, to which she added another city of the delta for which she was unable to find the name. She consequently called it 'the city with no name' (Kervran 1999: 4). For her, the architecture of Sindh can be understood because in the medieval period it was linked to three cultural eras: Iran, Transoxiana and India.

The two groups of mausolea don't date back to the same period: the two in al-Rur in Sindh are from the 10th–12th century, whereas the two of Multan are later. Monique stated that this period is when Central Asian hegemony in architecture declined and left more room for Indian architecture. Nevertheless, the basic structure of the al-Rur shrines is borrowed from Transoxiana: a structure made of a cubic base with four identical facades pierced by a decorative entrance framed by niches and surmounted by a dome, and an entrance with an *iwān* or a *pishtaq*.⁴ Monique discusses the kinship of these monuments with the structures she saw in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan dating to the 11th and 12th centuries (Kervran 1999: 140). She nonetheless identified three specific elements in Sindh: plain coating outside the decorated parts, ornamental niches, and the pedestal effect produced by the base.

In Multan, despite the proximity, the scene is rather different. As stated by Kervran, 'the mausoleums drew from another repertoire of forms and patterns' (Kervran 1000: 157). She depicts in detail each element of the built structure. Although the inclusion of this repertoire creates a lack of balance between the two sites, she refers for both to what she calls the 'Hindo-Buddhist' repertoire, with two main characteristics here: on the one hand, the capitals borrowed from the representation of the sacred vase Purnagatha, which contains the liquor of immortality and, on the other hand, the trilobate arch, but only in Multan. Monique devoted an exemplary analysis to these built elements, and was able to identify the basic structure of Islamic mausolea in Sindh, which were copied for centuries, not only for the tribal chieftains of Sufis, but also for regional Hindu deities such as Jhulelal and others. The main contribution shows how the making of architectural style and material culture results from the circulation between different cultural areas.

Monique devoted another magisterial study to the so-called mausoleum of 'Aysha Bibi at Taraz, in the south of Kazakhstan, which is commonly dated to the 11th-12th century (Kervran 2002). A new analysis of its decoration, based on precise drawings, shows its close resemblance (in plan, elevation and composition of its façades) with the mausoleum of the Samanids, built in Bukhara in the 9th century. Four different traditions influenced the decoration of the mausoleum of Taraz. The Islamic tradition is revealed in the composition of the facades and the use of star-shaped terracotta tiles. The artists working on this mausoleum borrowed the technique of covering the walls with ornamental tiles from the Buddhist tradition. From the Chinese tradition, they borrowed a peony pattern to decorate the capitals. Finally, the inner ornamentation of the tiles covering the monument is reminiscent, in a very stylised way, of motifs of the Art of the Steppes.

Monique explained that one of the characteristics of the Aysha Bibi mausoleum is the coating on its facade and its corner columns made up of sculptured fired clay plate latticework, separated by bricks laid along the edge, either vertically or horizontally. This type of coating has no equivalent in Islamic architecture dating before the 14th century, when polychrome tiles coated the facades of monuments. Forming continuous decorations, these tiles are no longer separated from each other. The latticework

³ The Panjnad River is formed by the successive confluence or merger of the five main rivers in Punjab: the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej.

⁴ The *iwān* is a single-vaulted arch walled on three sides and opening directly onto the outside on the fourth side. The *pishtaq* is a monumental arched niche.

decoration seems to have originated from the rows of plates carved with scenes or characters, which adorned the walls of temples from the Gupta era, such as that of Bhithargaon in the Ganga basin. These historical plates, separated at intervals by plain plates with no scenery, might be reminiscent of the alternating metopes and ornamental triglyphs entablature of Greek temples. This principle of ornamentation continued over the following centuries in Indo-Buddhist art where rows of decorative plates adorned, on one or two registers, the base of temples and stupas.

The best conserved are found in present-day Bangladesh, at the sanctuary of Mainamati (v. s., Deva period) or at that of Paharpur (10th century, Pala dynasty). The plates are to be found there with carved representations of the Buddha, or characters, animals and patterns associated with his legend. Of lesser quality but of an interesting provincial style, the plates of the today's now lost stupa from Mirpur Khas, in Sind, have fortunately been kept. The same arrangement of decorated plates, separated by vertical bricks, is to be found in the decoration of a tomb from the Wei-Jin period (220–419) near Dunhuang. It constitutes a valuable milestone on the journey of this decorative process from India to China.

Last but not least, it is worth mentioning how Monique was a pioneer in many fields. In this respect, it is enough to refer to a study she devoted to the caravansarais in Sindh, in an article she published in 1999. The caravanserai in Sindh is a kind of blind corner, although it was a main issue that specialists of the Middle East dealt with for years. They have highlighted how these built structures play a seminal role in the making of the trade networks throughout the Muslim world and beyond. Although Sindh occupies a key location in the south of the Indus valley, the delta area is replete with ports of Sindh. Thanks to her first-hand knowledge of caravansarais in the Arabian Peninsula and in Iran, Monique wondered if caravansarais had played a similar role in Sindh, knowing the particularly advantageous situation of the province, open to both the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea.

The few lines above are more than a simple tribute to Monique. They are in fact a testimony to the admiration she inspired among many colleagues, due not only to the quality of her work but also to her unique personality. Her ability to decipher the intertwined legacies in Muslim monuments deserves to be transposed to other fields of the Social Sciences. Monique's demise leaves a great void, and many researchers and students who had the privilege of knowing her continue to feel a deep sense of loss.

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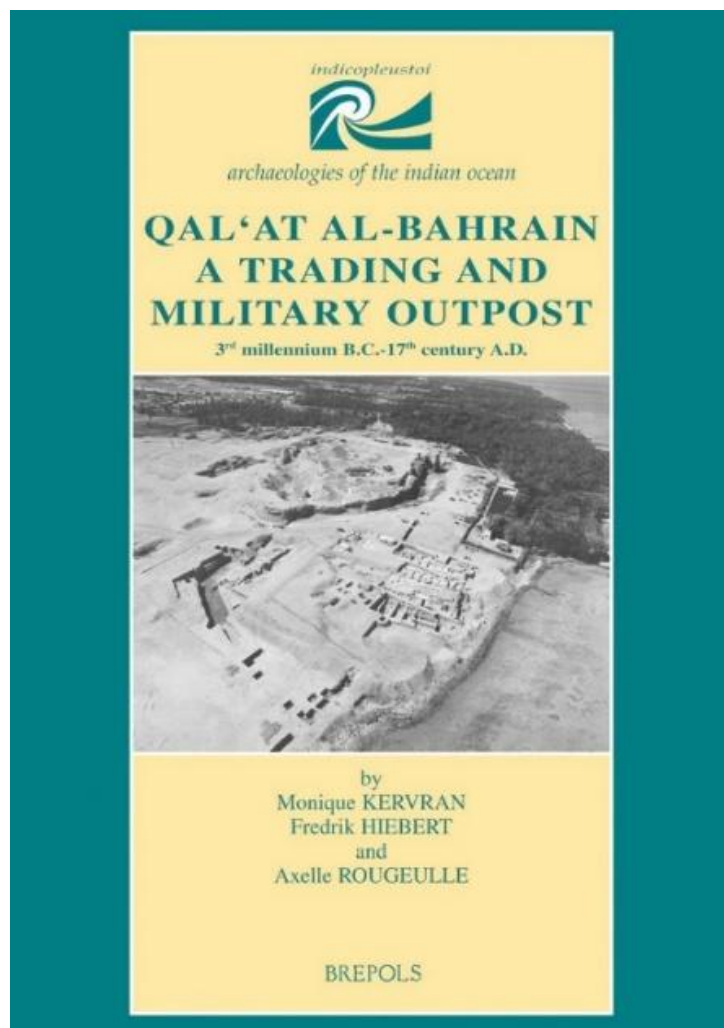
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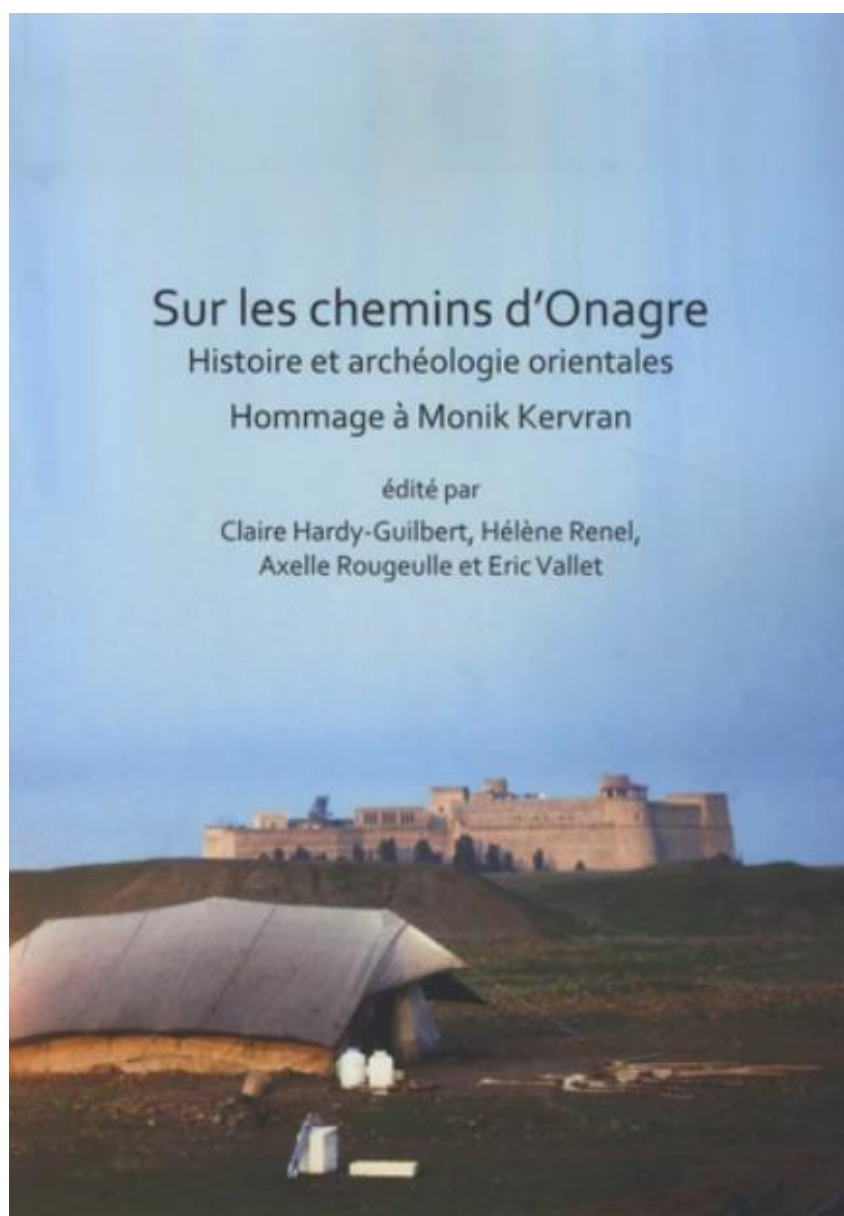
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