

## South Asian Studies Center Seminar: Beyond Boundaries

Date: 6 April 2024 (Sat), 13:00-15:45

Venue: Room 304 (Multimedia Conference Room), Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (Ajia Afurika Gengo Bunka Kenkyujo), Fuchu campus, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies / online (hybrid)

<http://www.aa.tufs.ac.jp/en/about/access>

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\* If you would like to attend the seminar online, please register from the following site by 3 April 2024.

Registration site: <https://forms.gle/Qz7xANazRHHV3zBw1A>

### Speakers:

Dr. Simon Leese (University of Amsterdam) 'Bombay Cinema in the Egyptian Press: reimagining Indian Ocean cross-cultural connections in the age of Non-Alignment'

Dr. Alaka Chudal (University of Vienna) 'What shall we speak about?: Indian prisoners of the First World War in Germany'

### Discussants:

Dr. Fuko Onoda (Osaka University)

Dr. Taeko Uesugi (Meiji Gakuin University)

Chair: Dr. Riho Isaka (University of Tokyo)

### Abstracts:

Dr. Simon Leese (University of Amsterdam) 'Bombay Cinema in the Egyptian Press: reimagining Indian Ocean cross-cultural connections in the age of Non-Alignment'

Recent years have witnessed a burgeoning scholarly interest in historical processes of migration, trade, and cultural exchange across the Indian Ocean. Within this larger arena, connections between South Asia and the Middle East have constituted one important channel of transfer. This talk will explore cultural relations between India and Egypt during the early period of the Cold War when they took on a renewed and urgent

significance. It focuses on Egyptian literary and cultural journals in the 1950s and 1960s, which provided a forum for a range of writers to reinterpret cultural connections in a radically new context. Although writers in previous centuries had long reflected on the connected history of the two regions, trajectories of colonialism, struggles for independence, and postcolonial politics in the twentieth century inevitably cast cultural relations in new terms.

The talk will draw on a variety of voices represented in these journals, including the Egyptian film critic and later documentary filmmaker Salah El-Tohamy, the political geographer Gamal Hamdan, and Indian scholars living in Egypt such as Mohiaddin Always. These writers wrote on topics ranging from shared histories of anti-colonial struggle to how Bombay Cinema might provide inspiration for Egyptian national cinema. Alongside this, some writers drew on older Arabic-Islamic geographic knowledge to frame contemporary non-alignment solidarity and cooperation. By considering these diverse perspectives together, this talk will show how geographic imaginings of third-worldism and non-alignment not only appealed to shared colonial histories but actively and imaginatively reinterpreted pre-colonial histories of cultural exchange.

Dr. Alaka Chudal (University of Vienna) ‘What shall we speak about?: Indian prisoners of the First World War in Germany’

A large number of soldiers from South Asia —India (before partition) and Nepal—who fought for the British on the battlefields of Europe during the First World War in 1914 and 1915, were captured and imprisoned in Germany in early 1915. In the same year, the Royal Prussian Phonetic Commission was set up in Berlin to create a sound archive of all the languages in the world by recording the voices of those prisoners of war. This talk tunes in to the selected voices of those imprisoned South Asian soldiers to uncover their agency, their self and the purpose of their fighting, if they were aware of it, in the songs, poems and stories they sang, recited, and told for the Phonetic Commission. These archival documents from the first half of the 19th century serve as valuable primary sources for the study of various features of South Asian culture at the time.

Hosted by: Center for South Asian Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Co-hosted by:

Center for South Asian Studies, University of Tokyo

Joint Research Group “Dynamism of Cultural Contact in South Asia”, Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa

Center for Indian Ocean World Studies, Osaka University (HINDOWS)