

**AHONA PANDA**

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Department of History, Claremont McKenna College  
850 Columbia Avenue  
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**EMPLOYMENT**

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Assistant Professor in History, Claremont McKenna College	July 2022-present
Visiting Assistant Professor in History, Claremont McKenna College	2021–2022
Humanities Teaching Fellow, South Asian Languages and Civilizations & the College, Faculty Affiliate, Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality, University of Chicago	2019–2021

**EDUCATION**

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PhD in South Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago, 2012–2019  
*Philology and the Politics of Language: The Case of Bengali, 1893-1955*  
(Won the 2020 Sardar Patel Award for best doctoral dissertation on modern India in the humanities, education, fine arts, or social sciences, UCLA Center for India and South Asia)

Probationary research student (towards the DPhil), 2011–2012  
Department of English, University of Oxford

MA in English Literature, Jadavpur University, 2009–2011

BA in English Literature with Film Studies and History, Jadavpur University, 2006–2009  
(First in the first class, awarded the Krishna Kripalani Award and the University Medal)

**RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS**

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South Asia; British empire; social history; environmental history; legal history; philology and translation; religion; gender, caste and race; Hindustani classical music, Sanskrit literature; poetry.

## PUBLICATIONS

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### Book Project

In progress *Bengal Undivided: Language and the Limits of Nationalism*

### Articles and Book Chapters

- 2023 ‘From fascism to famine: Complicity, conscience, and the narrative of “peasant passivity” in Bengal, 1941–1945’. *Modern Asian Studies* 57, no. 5 (2023), pp. 1551–1584. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X2200021X>
- 2023 “*Sābityer Communitas: sīmānter āḍā āḍi bāṅgālī.*” *Samayer kuyāsāy: Dipesh Chakrabartyr sammāne prabandha guccha* (“The Communitas of Literature: Bengalis across Borders” in *Mists of Time: Essays in Honor of Dipesh Chakrabarty*), edited by Ahmed Kamal, Nusrat Sabina Chowdhury, Nazmul Sultan, Thomas Newbold, Taimur Reza and Sabbir Azam, 162-178. Dhaka: United Press Limited, 2023. (*In Bengali*)
- 2021 “How to Be Political without Being Polemical: The Debate between Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore over the *Kṛṣṇacaritra*,” in *Many Mahābhāratas*, edited by Nell Shapiro Hawley and Sohini Sarah Pillai, 279-304. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021.

### Articles in Progress

- Under Review “A Language of Unity, A Language of Loss: Kazi Nazrul Islam’s Bengali.”
- In progress “A Life in Politics Across Two Nation-States: What Language Meant to Abul Mansur Ahmed in Twentieth Century Bengal.”
- 2027 “The Bengali *Ṭappā*: On the Translation and Invention of Classical Hindustani Musical Forms”. *The Routledge Handbook of Indian Music*, edited by Anna Morcom and Daves Soneji. London: Routledge.
- 2025 Translation of Ahmad Sofa’s *Bāngālī Musalmāner Man* (collaboration with Asif Iqbal, Calynn Dowler and Sourit Bhattacharya), commissioned for a volume edited by Meher Ali and Aliya Ram. Bloomsbury Literatures, Cultures and Translation Series. London: Bloomsbury.

## Reviews and Short Essays

- 2024 Review of Prachi Deshpande, *Scripts of Power: Writing, Language Practices, and Cultural History in Western India* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2023), *Indian Economic and Social History Review*.
- 2022 Review of Partha Chatterjee, *I am the People: Reflections on Popular Sovereignty Today* (Columbia University Press, 2020), *South Asian History and Culture*, 248-251.
- 2021 Review of Sanjib Baruah, *In the Name of the Nation: India and Its Northeast* (Stanford University Press, 2020), *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 58:2 (2021): 283-6.
- 2015 “The Religious History of the Hindus and the Liberal Present of India,” an essay on Wendy Doniger’s *The Hindus: An Alternative History*, trans. into Hebrew by Eilat Maoz, *Theory and Criticism (Teoria U’vikoret)* 44 (2015): 303-10.

## Public Writing

- 2022 Review of Wendy Doniger, *Winged Stallions and Wicked Mares: Horses in Indian Myth and History* (Speaking Tiger Books, 2021), *The Telegraph*, February 4.
- 2021 Review of Bihani Sarkar, *Classical Sanskrit Tragedy: The Concept of Suffering and Pathos in Medieval India* (I.B. Tauris, 2021), *The Telegraph*, September 3.
- 2021 “Radio, Ghazals and Islami Gaan: What Nazrul’s Shift to Music said about his Syncretism” *Daily Star*, Dhaka, September 2.
- 2020 “Bāṅglār Jugpuruṣ Anizuzzaman”, *Kali O Kalam*, Dhaka, July 20.
- 2020 “In Memory of Professor Anisuzzaman, a Scholar of Bengals Past and Present,” *Daily Star*, Dhaka, May 22.
- 2018 “‘Kaikeyi to Dasharath’: How Michael Madhusudan Dutt’s Radical Poetry Reworked the Narrative: A translation by Ahona Panda of the Bengali poet and playwright’s most anthologized poem,” *Scroll.in*, March 18.
- 2015 “What Karna and Kunti Talked about the Night before the Battle of Kurukshetra: A New Translation of the Poem ‘Karna Kunti Samvad’, Recreating a Meeting between Them,” *Scroll.in*, November 8.

## FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

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2023-2024	Faculty Research Grant, Claremont McKenna College
2022-2023	Selected as one of six “Emerging scholars in Political Theology”, Political Theology Network and Center for Political Theology, Villanova University
2022	2020 Sardar Patel Award for best dissertation on modern India in the humanities, education, fine arts, or social sciences, UCLA Center for India and South Asia.
2021	Faculty Research Grant, Claremont McKenna College
2020	Mellon PATHS grant for “Digital Scholarship for South Asian Studies”, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago
2018–2019	Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Franke Institute for the Humanities, University of Chicago
2017–2018	International Dissertation Research Fellowship, Social Science Research Council
2017	Dissertation Support Fellowship, Committee on Southern Asian Studies, University of Chicago
2016	Graduate Fellowship Award, Nicholson Center for British Studies, University of Chicago
2015	Pre-Dissertation Research Fellowship, Committee on Southern Asian Studies Graduate Fellowship Award, Nicholson Center for British Studies
2012–2017	Graduate Aid Initiative Fellowship, Division of Humanities, University of Chicago
2009	Krishna Kripalani Award and University Medal, Jadavpur University

## INVITED TALKS

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2023	“ <i>Not Diwali, Just Kali: A Talk on Not Really Celebrating Diwali?</i> ”, Athenaeum, Claremont McKenna College, November 1.
2023	“Bengal Divided and Connected: Popular Music in the Mid Twentieth Century”, Guest lecture for Professor Anna Morcom, <i>Ethnomusicology 46W: India through Music</i> , Department of Ethnomusicology, UCLA, October 30.

- 2023 “On Literary and Political Realisms: The Pakistan Movement in Bengal” at “Rethinking Nationalism”, Center for Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania, August 10.
- 2023 “Popular Sovereignty and the Bengali Language Movement in East Pakistan”, Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs and the South Asia Center, Syracuse University, April 6.
- 2022 “*Bengal Undivided: Language and the Limits of Nationalism*”, Friends of the Sardar Patel Association, Sardar Patel Award for 2020, UCLA, October 10.
- 2021 “The Muslim Periodical: Print and Identity in Twentieth Century Bengal” in *Rethinking the Politics and Practices of Print in Comparative Colonial Perspective* (January 8-9), Edinburgh Center for Global History.
- 2018 “Kazi Nazrul Islam and the Partition of Bengal,” South Asia Seminar Series at the British Library, London, November 20.

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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- 2025 “Armenian Calcutta: Between Memory and History” at 2025 AAS in Asia Conference, June 1-4, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- 2024 “Literary and Political Realisms: Pakistanism in Bengal, 1940-1947” at *The Global Forties: Perspectives from Late Colonial Bengal*; “On Language and Reform: Bengal’s Long Nineteenth Century” at *From the Bengal Renaissance to Bangladesh*; panelist at *What is the matter with Bengal?: The Possible Futures of a Historiographic Field*, 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual South Asia Conference, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 30-November 2.
- “Armenian Calcutta: Between History and Memory”, at *Armeno-Indica: Four Centuries of Familiarity and Friendship Conference*, Yerevan, Armenia September 12.
- 2023 “The Outsider in the Bengal Renaissance” at *Armeno-Indica: Four Centuries of Familiarity and Friendship Conference*, Department of History, UCLA, March 17.
- 2022 Chair and discussant, “The O-bhodromohila in Calcutta: Gendered Mobility, Labor and Caste in the Colonial City”, 50th Annual South Asia Conference, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 20.
- “Twilight of the Subcontinental Imagination”, Panel with Anustup Basu, Amit Rahul Baishya, Rochona Majumdar and Amir Mufti, 50<sup>th</sup> Annual South

Asia Conference, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 21.

- 2022 "Postcolonial Partitions and Borders", Beyond Partitions Working Group Annual Conference, Royal Holloway, June 11.
- 2021 "Fifty Years of Bangladesh: Tracing Law, Literature, and Liberty in Transition," Panel Organizer and Presenter, American Historical Association Virtual Colloquium, March 30.
- 2021 "Politics Through Other Means: Moral Sovereignty and Citizenship Practices in South Asia," *Mutations of Sovereignty: Perspectives on Sanjib Baruah's "In the Name of the Nation"* (pre-conference symposium), 49<sup>th</sup> Annual South Asia Conference, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- 2018 "A Language of Hunger: Representing World War II and the Bengal Famine," *Rethinking World War II in South Asia* (pre-conference symposium), 47<sup>th</sup> Annual South Asia Conference, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 11.
- 2017 "How to Be Political without Being Polemical: The Fallout of Rabindranath Tagore and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee over the *Mahābhārata*," *Many Mahābhāratas* (pre-conference symposium), University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 26.
- 2016 "*Dobhāshī*, or the Case of an Obdurate Category: Philology and Politics in Twentieth-Century Bengal," *MESAAS* Graduate Students Conference, Columbia University, February 25-26.
- 2014 "From *Sikṣā* (Education) to *Vidyā* (Wisdom): Rabindranath Tagore's Construction of Knowledge and Selfhood, 1901-1941," South Asia Graduate Students Conference, University of Chicago, April 17-19.
- 2013 "From *Nabyatā* to *Ādbunikatā*: Nostalgia and the Various Forms of the Modern," South Asia Graduate Students Conference, University of Chicago, April 4-5.

## WORKSHOPS

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- 2023 Discussant, Book manuscript workshop, Stanford University, November 11.
- 2022-2023 Workshop presentation, Emerging Scholars in Political Theology, Villanova University.
- 2021 Participant, Dissertation to Book Workshop, American Institute of Indian Studies, October 20-21.

- 2018 “A Language of Unity, A Language of Loss: Kazi Nazrul Islam’s Bengali,” Theory Practice of South Asia, University of Chicago, November 1.
- 2014 “Towards a Genealogy of Play: Rabindranath Tagore and Aesthetic Education,” Brown Bag Talk, Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago, April 15.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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### Department of History, Claremont McKenna College and the Claremont Colleges Consortium

AY 2021- present

*Introduction to Modern South Asia* (Survey)  
*Makers of Modern India and Pakistan* (Seminar)  
*Sex and Censorship in South Asia* (Special Topics/Research Seminar)  
*Caste, Race and Equality* (First-year Humanities Seminar)  
*Gender and History in South Asia* (Seminar)  
*History from Below* (Advanced Research Seminar)

#### *BA advising*

Mayin Hinduja, Claremont McKenna College, “Women Factory Workers of the Great War” (co-adviser with Lisa Cody, 2023)  
 Noah Roskin Frazee, Pomona College, “On Australia’s Governmental Stereotyping of Queer Pakistani Refugees” (primary adviser, 2024)  
 Anjali Bhagat, Pitzer College, “Queerness and Kinship in Colonial India” (primary adviser, 2025)

Organising South Asia related talks for students at the Claremont Colleges and CMC, with speakers such as Vinay Lal and Aditya Balasubramanian.

### As Humanities Teaching Fellow, University of Chicago

AY 2019-2021

(undergraduate and graduate courses crosslisted across South Asian Languages and Civilizations, History, Sociology, Global Studies, Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality, Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge, Divinity School/History of Religion)

*Race and Caste in South Asia* (graduate)  
*The Other Woman: Sexual Deviancy in South Asia* (graduate/undergraduate)  
*Can Women Think? The Female Intellectual in South Asia* (graduate/undergraduate)

*Sex and Censorship in South Asia* (graduate/undergraduate)  
*Readings in World Literature I: The Epic* (undergraduate)

## ORGANISATION/SERVICE

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### *Selected Referee Work*

2021–present *International Journal of Asian Studies, Philological Encounters, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and Middle East, Global Intellectual History, and Czech Fulbright Commission*

### *Institutional Service*

2023–present Joint coordinator, Stasneck Oral History Fellowship, Claremont McKenna College

2023–present Member, Assessment Committee, Claremont McKenna College

2022–2023 Humanities Lab at Claremont McKenna College on *Caste, Race, and Diaspora*

2016 Conference Organizer, *Dying in South Asia*  
Annual South Asia Graduate Student Conference, University of Chicago, March 3-4.

2014–2015 Representative, Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, Humanities Division Graduate Student Council, University of Chicago

2013–2014 Humanities Representative, Graduate Council, University of Chicago

## LANGUAGES

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Bengali	Native language
Hindi	Near-native fluency
Urdu	Reading and speaking proficiency
Sanskrit	Reading proficiency
French	Reading proficiency
Persian	Beginner

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

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American Historical Association  
American Association of Asian Studies



## REFERENCES

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Dipesh Chakrabarty

Lawrence A. Kimpton Distinguished Service Professor of History, South Asian Languages and Civilizations, and the College, University of Chicago

[dchakrab@uchicago.edu](mailto:dchakrab@uchicago.edu)

Anna Morcom

Mohindar Brar Sambhi Chair of Indian Music

Department of Ethnomusicology, University of California Los Angeles

[afmorcom@schoolofmusic.ucla.edu](mailto:afmorcom@schoolofmusic.ucla.edu)

Rochona Majumdar

George V. Bobrinskoy Professor, Department Chair

Departments of South Asian Languages and Civilizations; Cinema and Media Studies

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Wendy Doniger

Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor Emerita of the History of Religions; Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, the Committee on Social Thought, and the College

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Robert Kendrick

William Colvin Professor in Music, Romance Languages and Literatures, and the College, University of Chicago

[rkendric@uchicago.edu](mailto:rkendric@uchicago.edu)