

Neilesh Bose

Travel Grant Abstract

“Periodization and the Twentieth Century: Grappling with the Pre-Histories of Bangladesh”

Bose’s paper at the 2014 Annual Conference on South Asia discusses the first and second partitions as well as the history of Pakistan movement in Bengal within a larger twentieth century history of Bangladesh. As one of the nation-states formed partially, but not completely, out of the colonial structures of power embedded within the British Empire, it invites reflection about the nature of nineteenth century political change as well as comparisons with other regions of South Asia, namely Sri Lanka. Bose’s paper begins with a review of the relevant historiography on both the first (1905-1911) and second (1947) partitions of Bengal. Second, the paper offers thoughts on how the first and second partitions point not to the result of Bangladesh, but to multiple points in a broader regional history, including a history of connections with the Indian Ocean and a history of the trans-regional world of modern Islam; both of these histories demonstrate the search for political community outside the nation form. Finally, his paper offers thoughts on how to situate the comparability of Bangladesh with other South Asian states like Sri Lanka and the fates of the Indian location of West Bengal. The paper offers points for reflection about the current revisions to Bangladesh’s history via periodization as well as reflects on recent work in the field by Andrew Sartori, Kris Manjapra, and Dilip Menon.