



2018

## WORKSHOP

# Surrounded by water -- Bangladesh then and now

12. 11. 2018

Olomouc, Czech republic

Sinophone Borderlands – Interaction at the Edges,  
reg. no. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16\_019/0000791

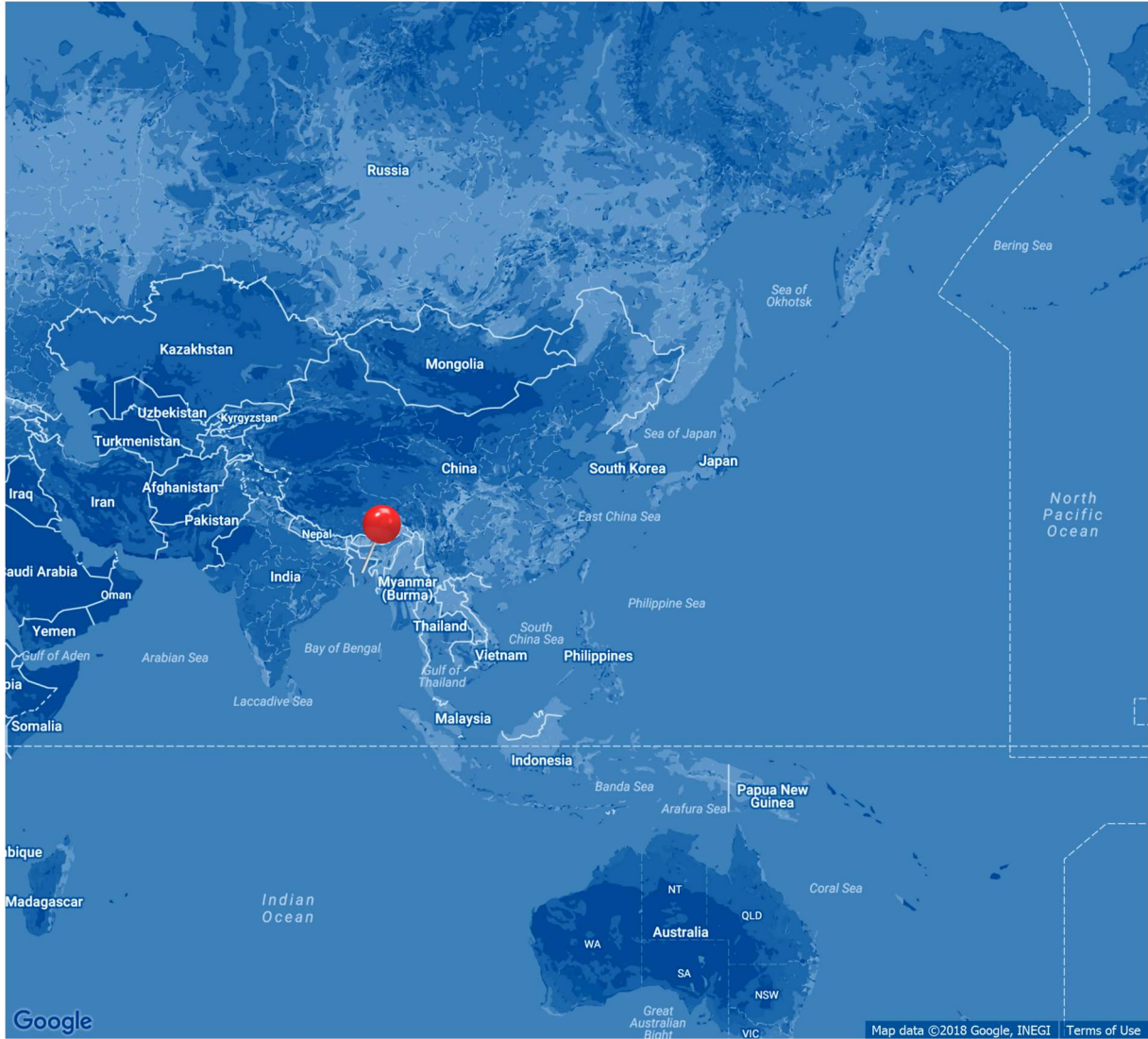


EUROPEAN UNION  
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Palacký University  
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# Surrounded by water -- Bangladesh then and now

Location	<b>Palacký University   Faculty of Arts</b> Department of Asian Studies Křížkovského 10, Olomouc, Czech Republic
Date	Meeting room 2.25
Time	12. November 2018 09.00 – 17.00

**Welcome and have a pleasant time!**

The workshop on topics around Bangladesh and the Delta of the Ganges River is aimed to spread information on Bangladesh and South Asia around in Czech academia. Current issues like climate change, changing livelihoods, Islam and society in Bangladesh, the Ganges delta as a habitat and slums in Dhaka are the topics that are frequently addressed by the scientific community. The department of Asian Studies is happy to have some of well-known scientists in Palacky University in Olomouc

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<b>Hasan A. Shafie</b>	<b>Key-Note Speaker</b> <i>Professor and Chairperson, Department of Anthropology, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh</i>
<b>Robert Stojanov</b>	Plenary Speaker <i>Assistant Professor, Department of Informatics, Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic</i>
<b>Tibor Aßheuer</b>	Plenary Speaker <i>Lecturer, Department of Development Studies, Universität Wien, Austria</i>
<b>Zbyněk Mucha</b>	Plenary Speaker <i>Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Indology, Charles University Prague, Czech Republic</i>
<b>Olaf Guenther</b>	Plenary Speaker <i>Assistant Professor, Department of Asian Studies, Palacky University, Czech Republic</i>
<b>Carmen Brandt</b>	Plenary Speaker <i>Junior professor, Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies, Universität Bonn, Germany</i>
<b>Abantee Harun</b>	Plenary Speaker <i>Assistant Professor of Anthropology, University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh</i>
<b>Blanka Knotková-Čapková</b>	Plenary Speaker <i>Head of the Department of Asian Studies, Metropolitan University Prague, Associate Professor Department of Gender Studies, Charles University, Czech Republic</i>

# TRADITIONAL AND TECHNICAL RISK REDUCTION AGAINST NATURAL CATASTROPHES IN BANGLADESH

Hasan A. Shafie

*Department of Anthropology, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Bangladesh sustains significant progresses as a developing economy over the years but such escalating growth is being recurrently intercepted by multitudinous natural disasters and socioeconomic processes. The economy of Bangladesh is highly dependent on agriculture and, at large, natural calamities of different types have made the farmers vulnerable to crop failures and food scarcities accelerating poverty in the country. Climate change threatens to undermine recent economic development in the country. The livelihood base of the people significantly suffers erosion resulting from recurrent and exposure of diverse natural hazards. People, especially poor and marginal, suffer most from these hazards due to high degree of base vulnerabilities and over exposure to natural hazards. The world community unanimously agreed that Bangladesh is the country most vulnerable to climate change impacts. However, the situation calls for immediate attention from both national and international communities to develop and undertake measures in counteracting the likely impacts of climate change in Bangladesh.

# CLIMATE CHANGE, RESILIENCE AND POPULATION DYNAMICS IN SOUTH ASIA

Robert Stojanov

*Department of Informatics, Faculty of Business and Economics, Mendel University in Brno,  
Czech Republic*

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## **ABSTRACT**

For the last few decades, several regions such as coastal areas, low-laying islands in South Asia and others has been seen as being at the forefront of addressing climate change impacts. Bangladesh is one example where environmental changes have long been amongst the multitude of reasons for migrating, with contemporary climate change suggested as a major impetus towards more migration. This presentation contributes empirical evidence toward understanding complex relations among environmental challenges, climate change, migration and resilience strategies in South Asia. Many perceive future climate change impacts to be a serious challenge and accept that migration from the affected areas within Bangladesh or to other countries might be a potential option. For others, conversely, out-migration it is not perceived as being one of the possible adaptation strategy. They prefer to be more resilient, stay and adapt.

# SLUM DWELLERS IN DHAKA, ASPECTS OF RESILIENCE AND FACTORS THAT PREVENT SLUM DWELLERS FROM " GETTING AHEAD "

Tibor Aßheuer

*Department of Development Studies, Universität Wien, Austria*

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## **ABSTRACT**

In our research project (2008-2010) we considered the ability of slum dwellers in Dhaka to adapt to effects of climate change. Slum dwellers are extremely vulnerable to disasters like floods and droughts, however, they are also used to struggle for survival and they are very flexible. I want to focus on aspects of resilience and factors that prevent slum dwellers from "getting ahead".

# MIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH TO EUROPE

Zbyněk Mucha

*Department of Indology, Charles University Prague, Czech Republic*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The paper deals with the contemporary topic of international migration to Europe, namely the phenomenon of migration from Bangladesh to Europe. While the media and academic literature have paid attention to the migration of residents of the Middle East and Africa to Europe, the issue of migration from Bangladesh to Europe has not been frequent and well-elucidated. This presentation aspires to answer the following research questions: 1) What are the major reasons and factors inducing migration from Bangladesh in the present day; 2) What are the main points of supply of information having an influence on the decision making of migrants; 3) What are the major trends of migration between the source regions and the final destination. To answer these questions, I conducted in-depth and semi-structured interviews with fifteen experts, who were interviewed in Bangladesh between January and February 2018.

# THE AREA OF THE DELTA – A RESOURCE AND NICHE FOR MINORITIES AND THEIR ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

Olaf Guenther

*Assistant Professor, Department of Asian Studies, Palacky University, Czech Republic*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since English Ethnographic records from the 19th century the Delta of the River Ganges is known in Europe as a place for social experiment, ethnic division of labor and economic niches. This is continuously so until today but rarely presented to the outside world. The paper wants to give an overview on some specific groups that are known to only a few people outside the Delta: Wild Honey pickers in the Mongrove forests, Pig herding nomads, reed collectors and fishing bootsmen.

# OF DISAPPEARING ROUTES, CUSTOMERS AND IDENTITIES: THE CHANGING WORLD OF THE 'BEDES', THE 'RIVER GYPSIES' OF BANGLADESH

Carmen Brandt

*Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies, Universität Bonn, Germany*

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## ABSTRACT

Various itinerant groups known collectively as 'Bedes' (Bengali: *bede*) to the wider society in the Bengal regions are also known as 'river gypsies' in Bangladesh. Their travelling by and living in boats is often romanticized in popular culture, whereas more recently the 'Bedes' have attracted the attention of journalists and NGOs due to their marginalized socio-economic position. While the reasons for their alarming economic situation can be found in the recent past, their generally low social status can be traced back to the nineteenth century. To understand the complex situation of 'Bedes' in present-day Bangladesh, this presentation will give an overview on the role of 'Bedes' in Bengal in past and present, their categorization from the nineteenth century onwards, and the more recent factors which have contributed to their further socio-economic decline. Additionally, it will present strategies that 'Bedes' in Bangladesh have been adopting for the last decades in order to escape their low socio-economic status and to challenge their 'spoiled identity'.

# ISLAM AND SOCIETY IN BANGLADESH: REVISITING 'MADRASSAH EDUCATION'

Abantee Harun

*Assistant Professor of Anthropology, University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Historians and social scientists have extensively written how Islam played a major role in the formation of Muslim community in Bengal. In this connection, madrasas or Islamic education institutions have become a sensitive issue because of the pervasive religious sentiments and the exercise of polarized political environment where secular and religious politics are intermingled as well as diametrically opposed. In the aftermath of September 2001, and also because of many other political turbulence and social rupture, madrasas or Islamic education institutions gained familiarity in the public discourse and academia, mostly due to the perception that the madrasas are the nurseries of reproducing Islamic 'fundamentalism' and preaching 'extremism while Islam is perceived as a religion that remained static, to some extent 'fundamentalist' in the contemporary world. Empirical studies of Muslim societies, and more particularly the Islamic teachings, can be a rich source for evaluating and testing the validity of some of the major propositions of social theory that have been formulated in the past. Through systematic and comparative studies of modern anthropological scholarship, which has much possibility in Bengal studies, can lay the foundations for a more informed understanding of the social reality of the Muslim world. This paper would offer scope to be critically engaged with the issues pertaining to Islam and modernist discourses.

**BENGALI WOMEN ABOUT BENGALI WOMEN:  
FEMALE IDENTITIES IN TASLIMA NASRIN AND MALLIKA SENGUPTA'S POEMS**

Blanka Knotková-Čapková

*Department of Asian Studies, Metropolitan University Prague, Czech Republic  
Department of Gender Studies, Charles University, Czech Republic*

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**ABSTRACT**

If speaking about Bengali female writers (especially poets), one cannot leave out the names of the outstanding personalities of the same generation – Bangladeshi Taslima Nasrin (b. 1962) and West Bengali Mallika Sengupta (1960-2011). Both entered literature as poets although later on, both also wrote prose. Apart of being writers, both were also specialists in other fields – Taslima was a physician, Mallika a sociologist. Both were social and political activists and both openly declared being feminists. We can add that both have been radical in some respects – especially in their sharp criticism of masculine dominance within their societies. Taslima is even more radical as far as religion (in her case, Islam) and especially religious practices is concerned; in that regard, her discourse would correspond with that of the feminist theorists like Kate Millett or Mary Daly who concluded that all of the so called world religions were influenced and interconnected with patriarchy to such an extent that women should rather search for a spirituality out of their frame. Mallika was not so categorical – she criticized the traditional gender hierarchy in Hinduism very explicitly but still found a space for reinterpretations within. Both of the authors, however, did not write only political or socially critical texts; in their lyrical or epico-lyrical poems, they also focused on the issue of female identities which they figured in various ways – metaphorically, symbolically, or with (mostly subversive) references to traditional archetypes. In this paper, I will suggest interpretations of some of their poems.



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