

# REWRITING WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY: SOUTH ASIA WORKSHOP 2023-24

## About the Programme

### OUR MISSION

#### Overview

International scholarly publishing is characterised by significant inequalities in terms of authorship and research content. In response, in 2021-22, the British-Academy funded *Rewriting World Archaeology* programme launched a 12-month workshop programme of virtual mentoring events for early career researchers (ECRs) from low- and middle- income countries in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. This was designed to equip participants with the necessary knowledge and skills to access and publish in academic journals, develop and lead bold research agendas, prepare grant applications, and share their results with the public. Following up that programme, we are now organising a new round of workshops focused on South Asia, led by the world archaeology journal, *Antiquity*. The programme seeks to significantly advance the careers of a new cohort of ECRs from South Asia, strengthening their ability to rewrite the archaeology and heritage of the South Asia in order to have a major and lasting impact on world archaeology. During 2023-24, the *Antiquity* Trust has generously sponsored this new South Asia workshop initiative.

#### Background

Our overall project is committed to tackling global inequalities of power, wealth and access to professional networks and academic journals, particularly for scholars across the Global South, and to sharing in the benefits of collaborating in new international research networks and agendas. The Nairobi process, developed by the British Academy and Association of Commonwealth Universities, expressly informs the necessity and timeliness of this project. The continued critique of the colonial and racist history of global archaeology gives added impetus. This has obliged the editors and boards of prominent international archaeology journals to rethink their representativeness and responsibilities. The Society for American Archaeology has led in this direction by regularly updating its statements on diversity and ethics. The Trustees, Board and Editors of *Antiquity*, the UK-based world archaeology journal, are firmly committed to taking an equally bold step, not only in policy but also in practice by sponsoring this project.

### **Programme outcomes and impact**

The intended outcomes and beneficial impacts of our writing workshop programme can be summarised as follows:

**Networks.** We will build on the international partnerships established in the previous round of workshops and work with a new cohort of ECRs drawn from countries in South Asia alongside archaeology journal editors, academics and professionals based in that region and in the UK. This coalition, working together to collectively rewrite world archaeology through dialogue, will benefit all participants—intellectually, professionally and personally—by reshaping their

perceptions and practices of archaeological research in and around developing countries.

**Capacities.** We will help build academic and professional capacity in developing countries across the South Asia, by equipping our female and male ECRs with knowledge, skills and experience: to access and publish in high-impact academic journals, to submit grant applications based on bold research agendas, to share their results with the public, to advance their career prospects, and to become future leaders in academic archaeology and in heritage management. The ECRs will benefit directly; their voices will be heard, nationally and internationally. Their universities and heritage agencies will also benefit, with strengthened capacity to mobilise their research for public benefit.

**Heritage and tourism.** We will enhance efforts to protect and valorise local cultural heritage in developing countries across the South Asia, by helping our ECRs recognise and release the scholarly potential of their research. The beneficiaries of this will be the local communities with which they work, as well as national-level decision makers and tourists, who will increasingly recognise the value of the local archaeological heritage and its potential for cultural tourism and to contribute to sustainable economic growth.

### **Core principles**

Our approach rests on three core principles:

**Partnership working.** Creating an equitable international partnership of mentors, marked by mutual respect, balanced distribution of responsibilities, gender balance, and recognition of diverse interests;

**Network building.** Establishing strong and sustainable networks of mentors and ECRs, benefitting all participants, ranging from ECRs from a variety of developing countries in the South Asia to journal editors and academics based nationally and internationally;

**Promoting ECR research.** Promoting the uptake and visibility of research by ECRs in low and middle income countries in high impact journals, helping to reshape journal editors' and readers' perceptions and understandings of global citizenship, research agendas and world archaeology.

### **SOUTH ASIA WORKSHOP LEADERSHIP GROUP 2023/24**

The *Rewriting World Archaeology: South Asia* programme leadership group will set the example, ethos and agenda for the whole programme and will monitor progress. It comprises:

#### ***Robert Witcher***

PI Dr. Robert Witcher is Editor of *Antiquity* and Associate Professor at Durham University. He combines global editorial and writing workshop experience with expertise in European archaeology.

#### ***Shahnaj Husne Jahan***

Co-I Professor Shahnaj Husne Jahan is Director of the Center for Archaeological Studies, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh. She brings extensive expertise in the archaeology and heritage of South Asia, and in mentoring and reaching new audiences.

#### ***Robin Coningham***

Co-I Professor Robin Coningham holds UNESCO's 2014 Chair in Archaeological Ethics and Practice in Cultural Heritage at Durham University. He has broad experience of archaeological research and heritage practice across South Asia and is also the Chair of the *Antiquity* Trust.

In dialogue with regional professional partners (see below), we will:

1. construct the regional workshop agenda.
2. draw in additional editorial experience, regional professional knowledge and complementary skills.
3. help advertise and select the competitive call for ECRs.
4. construct the regional digital learning resources.
5. deliver the online and in-person workshops.
6. take responsibility for mentoring assigned ECRs by communicating regularly with them and by managing and monitoring their progress throughout the year.
7. evaluate the process.

#### Professional participants

- Professor Shanti Pappu, Founder/Secretary, Sharma Centre for Heritage Education, Chennai, India. She has significant experience in mentoring ECRs in South Asia.
- Professor K. Krishnan, Emeritus Professor, MS University of Baroda, Gujarat, Baroda. He is one of India's leading archaeological scientists.

- Mr Kosh Prasad Acharya, former Director-General of Archaeology, Government of Nepal. He is a leading South Asian heritage consultant for UNESCO.

## **ECRS**

We define ECR broadly, given variability in its constitution across different contexts. As well participants currently studying for a PhD and at post-doctoral level and those in new academic roles (up to five years from PhD), we welcome applications from early career professionals working in heritage organisations (up to five years from appointment).

We intend to recruit a total of 10 ECRs.

Our project Leadership Group and workgroup team has already been offered online unconscious bias training to underpin fair and representative ECR selection processes and ethical and fair mentoring focused on equality of opportunity and recognition of inherent barriers and biases within the discipline. ECRs will be selected with due diligence given to inclusivity and protected characteristics, balancing academic and professional ECR experience. We will obtain confirmation that they are participating with the support of their institutions.