



Partha Pratim Shil

Assistant Professor of History

Bio

BIO

I am an historian of modern South Asia, specializing in nineteenth and early twentieth century eastern India, with a developing research interest in the late eighteenth century. My work is located at the intersection of the fields of histories of state formation and labour history. I am particularly interested in the histories of government workers and how this labour history intrinsic to the state apparatus recasts our understanding of state formation.

I am currently working on the manuscript of my first book, provisionally entitled 'Sovereign Labour: Constables and Watchmen in the Making of the Modern State in India, c. 1860-1950'. This monograph is a study of police constables and village watchmen in Bengal from the promulgation of the Police Act in 1861 until the upheavals of decolonisation in the mid-twentieth century. It reframes the history of constables and village watchmen, usually represented as government functionaries, as the history of a distinctive form of labour.

The most important methodological innovation of this study is to bring methods from the historiography of labour in South Asia in conversation with the vast archive of the colonial police and to demonstrate how we can rewrite police history as labour history. Sovereign Labour charts the contours of the market of security labour in eastern India and locates the emergence of colonial police workforces within the rhythms of this labour market. It reveals the patterns in the history of constabulary recruitment; examines the implications of the conditions of police work for the nature of police power; delineates the internal segmentation within the world of police labour, and the defining role of caste in shaping modern policing apparatuses in colonial India; and brings out fresh evidence about the myriad modes of politics devised by police workers in this region. More broadly, my aim is to clear a conceptual ground for the study of forms of labour within the apparatuses of the modern state as well as demonstrate how the history of the labouring lives of government workers can provide a fresh entry point into the nature of the modern state in South Asia.

Before joining Stanford, I was a Junior Research Fellow in History at Trinity College, Cambridge.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Assistant Professor, History

Teaching

COURSES

2025-26

- Global History Colloquium & Pedagogy Workshop: HISTORY 306D (Aut)
- Graduate Colloquium in Modern South Asian History: ANTHRO 397H, FEMGEN 397, HISTORY 397 (Spr)

- Police Power in World History: ANTHRO 106P, CSRE 206P, CSRE 306P, HISTORY 206P, HISTORY 306P, INTNLREL 106P, SOC 206P, URBANST 206P (Spr)
- The Structure of Colonial Power: South Asia since the Eighteenth Century: ANTHRO 197C (Aut)
- The Structure of Colonial Power: South Asia since the Eighteenth Century: ANTHRO 97C (Aut)
- The Structure of Colonial Power: South Asia since the Eighteenth Century: ASNAMST 197C (Aut)
- The Structure of Colonial Power: South Asia since the Eighteenth Century: ASNAMST 97C (Aut)
- The Structure of Colonial Power: South Asia since the Eighteenth Century: HISTORY 197C (Aut)
- The Structure of Colonial Power: South Asia since the Eighteenth Century: HISTORY 97C (Aut)

2024-25

- Graduate Colloquium in Modern South Asian History: FEMGEN 397, HISTORY 397 (Spr)
- Police Power in World History: HISTORY 206P, HISTORY 306P (Win)
- Resisting Empire: Anti-colonial Nationalism, Popular Politics & Decolonization in Modern South Asia: ASNAMST 196C, ASNAMST 96C, FEMGEN 196C, FEMGEN 96C, HISTORY 196C, HISTORY 96C (Win)

2023-24

- Decolonial Thought: ESF 21 (Aut)
- Decolonial Thought: ESF 21A (Aut)
- Global History & Pedagogy Workshop: HISTORY 306D (Spr)
- Graduate Colloquium in Modern South Asian History: ANTHRO 397H, FEMGEN 397, HISTORY 397 (Aut)
- The Structure of Colonial Power: South Asia since the Eighteenth Century: ANTHRO 197C (Win)
- The Structure of Colonial Power: South Asia since the Eighteenth Century: ANTHRO 97C (Win)
- The Structure of Colonial Power: South Asia since the Eighteenth Century: HISTORY 197C (Win)
- The Structure of Colonial Power: South Asia since the Eighteenth Century: HISTORY 97C (Win)

2022-23

- Core Colloquium in South Asian History: FEMGEN 397, HISTORY 397 (Win)
- Decolonial Thought: ESF 21 (Aut)
- Decolonial Thought: ESF 21A (Aut)
- Doing Labor History: FEMGEN 200LB, HISTORY 200LB (Win)
- Graduate Workshop: Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity: CSRE 301C (Spr)
- Graduate Workshop: Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: ARTHIST 499, FEMGEN 299 (Spr)
- Resisting Empire: Anti-colonial Nationalism, Popular Politics & Decolonization in Modern South Asia: FEMGEN 196C, FEMGEN 96C, HISTORY 196C, HISTORY 96C (Aut)

STANFORD ADVISEES

Orals Evaluator

Julia Fine

Doctoral (Program)

Bhavya Chauhan, Mahishan Gnanaseharan, Karventha Kuppusamy