



Introduction

Sudipto Mitra¹ , Megan Robb², Eve Tignol^{3*} and Claudia Liebeskind⁴

¹Department of History, Royal Holloway, University of London, London, United Kingdom,

²Department of Religious Studies, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States of America, ³Department of Asian Studies, CNRS/IrAsia-CESAH, Aix-Marseille Université,

France and ⁴Department of History, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, United States of America

*Corresponding author. Email: eve.tignol@cnrs.fr

This Festschrift celebrates an eminent scholar, teacher, and institution builder, Francis Robinson, whose life's work has been essential to historicising Islam in South Asia. This brief introduction can only gesture at the deep impact Francis Robinson has had on the social and cultural history of South Asian Islam. His career, spanning more than half a century, has marked sea changes in South Asian historiography. His scholarship has established important movements of social and cultural historiography on the nature of religious authority in the colonial and post-colonial periods.

Most scholars of South Asia are unaware of how close they once were to losing this brilliant historian to the field of Italian history! Medieval Italy, not South Asia, was Francis's initial choice of region to research. During his early years at Cambridge, Francis had developed a deep interest in Italy. He had attended the Università per Stranieri in Perugia and learnt Italian. In his third year of study, he set his mind to returning to Italy for research. He approached his teacher Walter Ullman with this idea, only to be advised to work on a fourteenth-century figure called Baldus, whose works were all available at the neighbouring Wren Library. Disappointed at being deprived of his ticket to Italy, Francis met another of his teachers, Anil Seal, then director of undergraduate studies at Cambridge. Seal, thankfully, did not hesitate to understand the problem, and promised Francis 'at least a year' in India if he were to work on the region with him. This attracted Francis and, in the space of just one afternoon, changed the course of his research and his life.¹

The timespan of Francis's career has seen seismic shifts in the historiography of Islam in South Asia. When Francis began his graduate studies in the 1960s, the Cambridge School of historiography was ascendant. The founders of this school were Francis's supervisor Anil Seal and John Andrew Gallagher, both located at Trinity College, Cambridge, where Francis completed his doctoral degree. The Cambridge School of historiography famously focused on tracing political developments in Indian society as the driver of social change and was characterised by an approach to Indian history that deployed English-language colonial sources as a focal point. While Francis's first book, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*,² was a successful outgrowth of this school, he soon came to realise—as the personal reflection by Peter Brown inaugurating this volume demonstrates—that focusing primarily on elite political institutions within the ken of British colonial institutions was insufficient to adequately understand South Asian history. The remainder of his career was characterised by a deep immersion in the world of Islam and the profound influence of networks of

¹ Francis Robinson, 'UO Today 348'. Interview by Steve Shankman, video, 28:51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8111qpPZAw&t=306s> (accessed 1 August 2023).

² Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860–1923* (Cambridge, 1974).

knowledge transmission that saw *‘ulamā*, the ‘guardians of perfection’, and Islamic orthodoxy as central focal points.

As Francis Robinson celebrates more than 50 years of active scholarship, teaching, and institution building, the landscape of South Asian historiography has changed indelibly from the 1960s. The rise of the Subaltern and Postcolonial studies academic movements and, more recently, the shift toward Decolonial studies, have long since nuanced the assumptions of the Cambridge School. These later movements, while diverse, have shared an emphasis on the significance of cultural institutions that lie beyond English-language archives. While Francis is not a scholar of the Subaltern school, the cultural approach he developed contributed to the reassessment of core–periphery interactions in a way that is consistent with some of that school’s aims. Francis’s scholarship attended to the ‘dominance of the West in the Muslim world over the past two centuries, by showing how this has created the opportunity for the key structures of an Islamic society to be rebuilt from below, and by explaining the nature of the shock delivered to the authority of Muslim civilisation by Western power’.³

In light of the celebrated Brass–Robinson debate, Francis reminded us that ‘it would be a mistake, as Arshad Alam has shown, not to acknowledge the role of people’s faith’.⁴ He traced the historical trajectory of Islam in South Asia through networks of knowledge transmission, particularly of Islamic law, which sets the ‘pattern of perfection’ for Muslims.⁵ This emphasis was demonstrated poignantly by his work on Farangi Mahall, *The ‘Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia*,⁶ and, most recently, through his volume commemorating the life of Jamal Mian Farangi Mahalli.⁷ He has been influential in emphasising the legacy of West Asian and Iranian interactions with South Asian thought traditions and has highlighted the central role of the *‘ulamā* in driving social change in South Asia, both in response to and independent of colonial institutions in the late colonial period.

Apart from his monographs and essays, Francis Robinson has also edited multiple books. These have had a significant impact on the study of Islam and South Asia. The ones that stand out among these are the *Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*,⁸ *The New Cambridge History of Islam*,⁹ and *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka*.¹⁰ All three volumes still enjoy a wide presence on bookshelves all over the world. The *Cambridge Illustrated History*, particularly, has run into at least six different translations to date. In addition, there is also his *Atlas of the Islamic World Since 1500*,¹¹ which has been translated into at least ten languages. It remains respected worldwide for its comprehensive scope. In his review of the book, which features 53 maps and over 300 illustrations, Richard Eaton remarked that it was ‘not only a valuable addition to the instructor’s classroom arsenal but an extension of our notion of what an historical atlas can be’.¹² Further, Eaton also stated that the book achieved a rare ‘sophisticated treatment of historical

³ Francis Robinson, *The Muslim World in Modern South Asia: Power, Authority, Knowledge* (New York, 2021), pp. 1–2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵ Francis Robinson, ‘Islam and Muslim society in South Asia: a reply to Das and Minault’, *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 20.1 (1986), pp. 97–104.

⁶ Francis Robinson, *The ‘Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (Delhi, 2001).

⁷ Francis Robinson, *Jamal Mian: The Life of Jamaluddin Abdul Wahab of Farangi Mahall 1919–2012* (Karachi, 2018); also published as *Scholar, Sufi and Politician. The Life of Maulana Jamal Mian of Farangi Mahall 1919–2012* (New Delhi, 2020).

⁸ Francis Robinson (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1996).

⁹ F. Robinson (ed.), *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 5: *The Islamic World in the Age of Western Dominance* (Cambridge, 2010).

¹⁰ Francis Robinson (ed.), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives* (Cambridge, 1989).

¹¹ Francis Robinson, *Atlas of the Islamic World since 1500* (Oxford, 1982).

¹² Richard M. Eaton, ‘Review of *Atlas of the Islamic World Since 1500*, by Francis Robinson’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 43.2 (1984), pp. 299–301.



Figure 1. Francis Robinson with the 1978 Iqbal Centenary Medal, awarded by the Government of Pakistan.

evolution in Islam',¹³ while taking into account not only works from the discipline of history, but from other disciplines as well.

Through these works, Francis Robinson raised public interest in Islam and South Asia across the Western world. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia*, for example, introduced several uninitiated readers to the spatial, geo-political, social, religious, cultural, and even economic features of the Indian subcontinent; and *The Mughal Emperors and the Islamic Dynasties of India, Iran and Central Asia, 1206–1925* familiarised many Westerners with the Mughal rulers and Delhi sultans of India, and the Il Khan, Timurid, Safavid, and Qajar rulers of Central Asia and Afghanistan.¹⁴ One important attribute of these books was their impressive images and illustrations. They extended the books' appeal to younger generations, and helped readers imagine distant worlds in an exceptionally vivid way.

Francis Robinson also made sure that the text of these books remained as widely accessible as possible.¹⁵ This was a feature of his more decidedly academic works as

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Francis Robinson, *The Mughal Emperors and the Islamic Dynasties of India, Iran and Central Asia* (London, 2007).

¹⁵ An extremely rewarding experience can be recalled in this context: one of Francis Robinson's students once met a scholar called Professor Gangatharan, at the Department of History, Banaras Hindu University. His eyesight was specially abled, but on learning about the student's supervisor, he told him that he had read most of Francis Robinson's works, and that Francis was his 'favourite historian'. He further explained that it was Francis's lucid, and at times almost lyrical, prose that made his works extremely attractive to him. After all, he could not read Francis's works with his own eyes, but had to have them read out to him by someone else.



Figure 2. Paul Brass and Francis Robinson at Brass's log cabin in Acme, Washington State, at the foot of Mount Baker, August 2016.

well, where he kept his prose lucid, lively, and welcoming. He may have inherited some of these qualities from teachers such as Richard Cobb, who he acknowledged as his inspiration in his book *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*.¹⁶ Cobb might also have passed on his extraordinary epistolary skills to his beloved student, and encouraged him to develop the mastery over letter-writing that those who keep in touch with him know so well.¹⁷

Francis's service to history has not only had an impact on academic spaces. He has also expressed his opinions on several social and political issues in South Asia in the public domain. For instance, in 1992, following the hideous demolition of the Babri Masjid, he wrote a letter to *The Independent*, echoing the worries of James Chiriyankandath and Shuja Shaikh about the evident decline of secularism in India. In the same letter, he also raised concerns on the vicious beating of Mushirul Hasan, the then pro-vice-chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia, by Muslim students who objected to Hasan's view that the fatwa against Salman Rushdie should be lifted.¹⁸ In recent years too, Francis has expressed his concerns over the rise of religious radicalism in India. He publicly protested the targeting of Tablighi Jamaat members as Coronavirus super-spreaders in the early stages of the pandemic, in an interview with Namrata Ahuja for *The Week*.¹⁹ These public statements have served as nodes in a network of public protests by scholars that mark the rising dangers of the decline of secularism in South Asia; they

¹⁶ Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* (New Delhi, 2003).

¹⁷ For a taste of Richard Cobb's extraordinary letter-writing ability, see Tim Heald (ed.), *My Dear Hugh, Letters from Richard Cobb to Hugh Trevor-Roper and others* (London, 2011).

¹⁸ Francis Robinson, 'Letter: India's declining secularism', *Independent*, 15 December 1992, available at <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/letter-india-s-declining-secularism-1563692.html> (accessed 1 August 2023).

¹⁹ Namrata Biji Ahuja, 'Some elements in India will use any stick to beat Muslims'. Interview with Francis Robinson, *The Week*, 19 April 2020, available at <https://www.theweek.in/theweek/current/2020/04/09/some-elements-in-india-will-use-any-stick-to-beat-muslims.html> (accessed 1 August 2023).

also helped attract attention to the threat that this decline possesses to intellectual debates.

Francis Robinson has also been an educator to multiple generations of students. His books and articles are mainstays in undergraduate and graduate South Asian history syllabuses across the world. In keeping with this commitment to pedagogy, he has advocated for the bolstering of high-quality English education in Pakistan with the aim of encouraging intellectual synergy across boundaries.²⁰ He has regularly reviewed important books for magazines such as *The Times Literary Supplement* and described trends in South Asian historiography for popular forums such as *History Today*. Some of these pieces, along with his other outstanding academic essays, recently have been anthologised in *The Muslim World in Modern South Asia: Power, Authority, Knowledge*.²¹

An important aspect of Francis's legacy is his profound commitment to education and collaboration, in the mode that his *ustād* Jamal Mian embodied. He is the model of scholarly *adab* and an embodiment of intellectual generosity. Masuma Hasan's personal reflection testifies to Francis's investment in connection and conversation over a long life spent committed to the study of cultures into which he was not born. His energy and commitment led to him stewarding the Royal Asiatic Society as president twice. Along with Freda Harcourt he developed the University of London's World History curriculum.²² Much of Francis's work has centred on scholar-teacher relationships, and so has been deeply personal in the sense that it has focused on sustained and deeply human connections. As Norman Gowar's piece illustrates, Francis's outstanding leadership qualities notably rested on his ability to foster a sense of community and mutual respect. Even across intellectual divides he has remained committed to enriching the *maidān* of intellectual exchange above all else. His decades-long friendship with Paul Brass remained strong, even though the two scholars stood on opposite ends of their famous intellectual debate for many years. In 1987, their partnership materialised in the collaborative volume *Indian National Congress and Indian Society*.²³

He shows a deep understanding and practice of etiquette, even in everyday mundane situations. Anyone who has visited his beautiful library and garden, or has had the chance to be his dinner guest, knows how much he appreciates and shares the good things in life. His generosity to his students is also legendary! Having Francis as supervisor is a wonderful experience. He never ceases to share resources, offer support, or guide, while encouraging the freedom of individual thought. He enjoys being presented with new approaches and material, and responds to them with his trademark intellectual curiosity and plain-spokenness. Francis Robinson's supervisory abilities are further elevated by his exceptional, and comforting, power of listening. It almost replicates the old Indian medical tradition of *shushrūshā*, where a doctor would listen to his patient's maladies at length as the first step of treatment.²⁴ This adds to his natural aura of authority, as he then does not hesitate to problem-solve even the smallest practical worries of his students with equal amounts of calmness and firmness.

²⁰ Francis Robinson, 'English language and higher education', *The Express Tribune*, 12 March 2013, available at <https://tribune.com.pk/story/519700/english-language-and-higher-education> (accessed 1 August 2023).

²¹ Robinson, *The Muslim World in Modern South Asia*.

²² He and Freda Harcourt also drafted a select bibliography of twentieth-century world history for this purpose; see Freda Harcourt and Francis Robinson, *Twentieth-century World History. A Select Bibliography* (London, 1979).

²³ Francis Robinson and Paul R. Brass, *Indian National Congress and Indian Society 1885-1985: Social Structure and Political Dominance* (New Delhi, 1987).

²⁴ Young researcher Simool Sen, from Jadavpur University, Kolkata, is to be thanked for suggesting this analogy to one of the authors.

Below, we touch on four major strands emanating from Francis Robinson's rich body of work and the articles in this issue that connect to each. These themes correspond to pillars of Francis's intellectual legacy. One of Francis's greatest achievements is to have supervised such a large number of students with diverse research interests. Beyond the circle of his own students, he also inspired generations of scholars in their pursuit of deeper knowledge of South Asian Islam.

Authority, politics, and Muslim reform

This section of the special journal issue carries forward Francis's interest in the diverse ways that Muslim reformist movements reacted to the legacy of colonial power and the challenges of the post-colonial era after British withdrawal. Sumaira Noreen's article reflects on the complicated relationship between South Asian Muslims and the British with regard to educational policies over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Building on Francis's early observations that reformist movements were forced to grapple with the challenge of British authority, reforming Islam in the process, Noreen turns her attention to new archival sources that demonstrate how educational policies developed through entanglement as well as contestation. Tommaso Bobbio's work highlights the multiple lives and identities of religious monuments in South Asia. It problematises the idea of national heritage, and proceeds to uncover how modern-day nation-states perpetuate convenient myths in order to suit their needs for electoral gain. He also shows how historical monuments, by virtue of their being tangible, easily fall victim to political manipulation.

This tendency of modern South Asian nation-states to reinterpret historical events is a major concern of Ali Usman Qasmi's piece as well. Standing two years adrift of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1971 Bangladesh War, he uses sources mainly produced in Pakistan to shed light on how the country has cultivated collective amnesia about the war. He points out the contrasting ways in which the war is remembered today in Pakistan and Bangladesh. He reads his sources against the grain, contests the apologetic optimisms proffered by some historians on the Pakistani military's role in the war, and explores the intimate nature of the violence it perpetrated.

How the past is remembered and re-evaluated is a question that drives Muzaffar Alam's piece too. His enquiry mainly deals with the *Tazkira* of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (published in 1919), and hones in on its portrayal of the seventeenth-century Naqshbandi saint Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. Historians, over the years, have largely been divided in their opinion on Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. Some appreciated him as the 'turning point' in Mughal religious politics, while others downplayed his ideas as 'conservative' and 'reactionary.' Alam examines Azad's characterisation of Sirhindi as a distinctly political figure in this context.

The final piece in this cluster—Ian Talbot's study of the Unionist Party in pre-partition Punjab—reassesses the author's own previous forays into the subject. Stemming from his research as a PhD student under Francis Robinson at Royal Holloway, University of London, he discusses how new work on the subject has enhanced our understanding of the Unionist Party's support base and mobilisation tactics. He evaluates the merits of understanding the Unionist Party's power-sharing strategies through the model of consociationalism, which, he says, was more 'coercive' in this case than 'voluntary'.

The power of print in Islam

The addition of print technologies to repertoires of oral technologies of knowledge transmission was a turning point in the character of authority in Islam. For Muslims in British

India, the engagement with print resulted in a gradual shift from a view in which print was a mere aid to memorisation in Islam, and humans the sole embodiment of knowledge, to a perspective in which the printed word, distinct from the hand-copied manuscript, held the ability to impart knowledge. Francis's article on the transformative power of print remains a vigorously discussed touchstone for historians of Islam in South Asia.²⁵ Debates fanning out from his intervention have been marked by reflection on how the shift from oral to print media changed religiosity for Muslims in British India even as it demonstrated continuity with tradition.

Articles in this section of the Festschrift attend to the formation of 'new publics and social imaginaries' in the age of print. Justin Jones's article looks at the life-histories of Rashid Ahmed Gangohi as 'literary vehicles' of the Deoband movement. Paying attention to the genre of life history generally, Jones's article illuminates the ways that their production was tightly controlled and made a keystone of Deoband's characteristic modes of shaykh-centred piety.

Two contributions in this volume look at the modes by which printers and reformists engaged in international publics via print. Barbara Metcalf's article attends to the publishing career of Sayyid Muhammad Siddiq Hasan of Bhopal, which offers further proof in favour of Francis's argument that vernacular print fostered 'a new self-consciousness and a new sense of self, rejecting the intercession of intermediaries, and emphasising individual responsibility and achievement'. Metcalf brings to light the way that Siddiq Hasan's Arabic-language publications came to be influential in Ottoman territories for the project of developing modern Arabic literature. His Persian language publications showed the 'unexpected power of print [that] worked in multiple ways', initially bolstering his reputation in the Bhopal court and ultimately providing fodder for his opponent's accusations of sedition. Nile Green's contribution assesses the 'Persian afterlives' of Matteo Ricci's book on China in Mughal Delhi, and eventually as printed texts produced in two of colonial India's print centres. Challenges posed to translators included the need to triangulate Confucian, Latinate Christian, and Islamic Mughal terms, resulting in inevitable distortions and biases. His article captures the hunger for the distribution of translations of European texts in nineteenth-century colonial India and the pragmatism that characterised their publication by Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the publisher Mirza Muhammad Shirazi.

Other works in this section engage with Francis's observation that the character of authority transformed with the arrival of print. Carl Ernst's article reproduces a richly contextualised translation of a Persian exchange featuring two munshis; one of them, Shivaprasad, would go on to edit *Simla Akhbār*, an Urdu-language periodical written in Devanagari script before advocating for the discarding of Urdu in favour of Hindi. The primary source Ernst translates captures how the munshis maintained traditional terms of debate even as they entertained new concerns about the threat of putting arguments in print, well-illustrated by the following phrase: 'One should live as a realiser of truth inwardly, but as a conformist outwardly'. Daniel Jacobius Morgan's work attends to Francis's reflection that the arrival of print challenged the assumption that individuals, not texts, were the primary repository of knowledge. Morgan observes that some letter writers refer to 'the superiority of the letter over physical companionship because it allowed for a coming together of two spirits without the intrusion of the gross material body'. Morgan's work challenges the existence of a stark contrast between modes of authority in the age of manuscript correspondence, and modes of authority made possible by the age of print.

²⁵ Francis Robinson, 'Technology and religious change: Islam and the impact of print', *Modern Asian Studies* 27.1 (1993), pp. 229–251. doi:10.1017/S0026749X00016127.

Centre–periphery relations and the study of modernity

Francis's work has been instrumental in challenging the centre–periphery model of modern history. First, his work demonstrated 'that global history did not necessarily need to be seen from a Western angle'. His work countered assumptions that cosmopolitan Western centres distributed ideas that were then reacted against by inhabitants of relatively peripheral locations outside the West.²⁶ His *Atlas of the Muslim World* drew attention to South Asia as an important centre for Islam in contrast to approaches that saw South Asian Islam as peripheral to the Muslim metropole of the Middle East and North Africa. In this volume, Richard Eaton's critique of Marshall Hodgson's conception of modernity as a European phenomenon and his critique of Hodgson's homogenised notion of Islamic civilisation should be read with these aspects of Francis's legacy in mind.

The remaining articles in this section focus on a few of modern South Asian Islam's distinct developments and their implications. Markus Daeschel looks at the rise in the 1920s and 1930s of a genre of books discussing magic. These books became a staple of publishing houses, and invited readers to deploy magic in their daily lives for profit. As Daeschel writes, there was no inconsistency between magic and modernity. In fact, '[colonial] "modernity" ... helped to create "magic" as a vast new discursive category that collected and reordered a wide range of beliefs and practices that had become unmoored from their original contexts'. In keeping with the theme of studying modernity 'from' and 'with' the margins, Layli Uddin's article argues powerfully for the necessity of attending to the subaltern textures shaping the discourses of Muslim egalitarianism in South Asia. Her article illuminates how the repudiation of elite Muslim titles, centring of subaltern histories and articulation of a 'felt Islam', revealed the potentialities of subaltern Islam in colonial Bengal.

Muhammad Qasim Zaman unearths the tensions between the attitudes of Muslim modernists and the legacy of Shah Wali Allah. Shah Wali Allah approached ritual through the concept of '*sha'ā'ir Allah*, the signs, emblems, or waymarks of God or of religion'. Modernists like Mawdudi both invoked the legacy of Shah Wali Allah and approached ritual as a method of training Muslims in pursuit of 'social and political goals'. For Shah Wali Allah '[though] the social function [was] integral to ritual, the worship of God, as enjoined in the Quran, [was] not reducible to anything else'. Azfar Moin's article about the 1974 heresy trial of the Ahmadis in Pakistan recounts a key moment in the history of Pakistan, a shift from affirming an open-ended definition of Islam to upholding the state's duty 'to define the boundaries of Islam'. The excommunication of the Ahmadi community demonstrates the development of a new approach to political Islam in South Asia that marked a departure from the approach of *sulh-i kul* strategies of the Mughal empire. In contrast, Irfan Habib's piece takes us back to the very heydays of the *sulh-i kul* principle in Akbar's India. He offers a close reading of two versions of Kaikhusray Isfandiyar's *Dabistān* and compares their portrayal of Akbar's religious views, and efforts to establish the *dīn-i ilāhī* sect. Habib also reads the two *Dabistān* versions in conversation with several other texts of the time, further examining the reasons behind Isfandiyar's claim that Akbar's 'policy of religious tolerance' was driven by 'a political objective'.

Everyday life and emotions

Francis has taken seriously the everyday practices that grounded the interactions between colonial institutions and South Asian society, and has displayed a keen interest in what moved people in history. In this vein, Gail Minault's article traces the everyday life and career of the Fraser brothers in the early years of the Raj. Using private archives, her

²⁶ Robinson, *The Muslim World in Modern South Asia*, p. 7.

article highlights how familial ties in Scotland drove the Fraser brothers' Indian careers, and how the familial ties they developed in the subcontinent were obscured even as they directed the course of the brothers' political careers. In the nineteenth century, overlaps and interpenetrations characterised interactions between East India Company officials and South Asians. These engagements happened in international and local familial networks.

Margrit Pernau's piece looks at the rhythms of printing and storytelling for children that translated the principles of the founding of Jamia Millia Islamia to a new generation. She looks closely at the children's journal *Payām-e ta'lim* and its connection with the building of Jamia Millia Islamia. Her article reveals how the lofty goals of nationalism were translated into everyday emotional practices through the children's journal. *Payām-e ta'lim*'s stories encouraged a spirit of experimentation among its readers, praised holistic education over book-centred learning, and emphasised dutiful action over a concern with that action's immediate results. Children, as the future citizens of a post-colonial nation, also occupy an important position in Sarah Ansari's piece. This is because the weekly columns she addresses—from the newspaper *Dawn* from the late 1940s and early 1950s—prominently regarded children as the 'first real citizens of Pakistan', and placed mothers at the centre of the country's nation-building project. The author—a Pakistani female journalist called Zeb-un-Nissa Hamidullah—even tried to blend "modern" ideas about "female respectability" with "religious authenticity", and envisioned the country as a macrocosm of a healthy family household.

Elisabetta Job's piece takes interest in Pakistani womens' everyday lives in the same years (from 1947 to 1962). She uses periodicals like the *Pakistan Quarterly* to study how urban upper-class women reacted to the country's massive socio-political changes, emotionally and behaviourally. She also builds on, and furthers, Francis's studies on the reshaping of Muslim identity in modern South Asia.²⁷ Moving from post-colonial households to medieval royal kitchens, Neha Vermani explores the formation of Mughal elite cuisines from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries. She uses a set of Persian culinary texts and manuals to argue that 'Mughal elite cuisine' expressed imperial identity by remaining rooted in a continuous demand for self-refinement. She demonstrates how Mughal cuisine related to regimes of mental and physical health, and places culinary knowledge at the intersection of two other forms of Islamic knowledge systems—namely ethics (*Akhlāq*) and bodily humoral balance (*Yūnānī Tibb*).

Acknowledgements. Only the support of many people made this Festschrift possible. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Sarah Ansari who germinated the idea for this special issue, contributed an article, and offered essential guidance at all stages of the project. We are grateful to Daud Ali, the editor of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, who inherited this mammoth project with good humour and grace. We are grateful to Susan Brass for her loan of the photograph of her late husband Paul Brass for this introduction. We are immensely grateful to the scholars who each contributed a stellar article for this volume and who were patient with us as we learned the art of editing a peer-reviewed Festschrift. We owe one of those contributors, Layli Uddin, a special note of thanks for offering commentary that productively shaped the character of the collection as a whole behind the scenes.

²⁷ Francis Robinson, 'Religious change and the self in Muslim South Asia since 1800', in *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*, pp. 105–121; Francis Robinson, 'The British empire and Muslim identity in South Asia', in *Islam, South Asia, and the West* (New Delhi, 2007), pp. 124–145; Francis Robinson, 'Islamic reform and modernities in South Asia', *Modern Asian Studies* 42.2 (2008), pp. 259–281.

Cite this article: Mitra S, Robb M, Tignol E, Liebeskind C (2023). Introduction. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 33, 803–811. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S135618632300041X>