

Call for papers for a special issue of the *Medieval History Journal* edited by Sumit Guha,

**Literary cultures at the frontiers:
literature and identity in the early modern world**

In a special issue of *Public Culture* published in 2000, several leading scholars proposed that 'the nature of late-twentieth-century nationalism, multiculturalism, and the globalization of late liberalism has created a historical context for reconsidering the concepts of cosmopolitanism'. They also drew our attention to diverse ways in which cosmopolitan languages (Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Arabic, Persian, classical Chinese and others) had related to the vernaculars. These were the languages that early developed a self-conscious literary cultures, marked by the distinctions of genre, style, lexical and grammatical correctness. Their cultural power extended beyond regional or imperial frontiers. In the modern era, however the study of literary cultures has all too often succumbed to the self-validating assumptions of national territorial frameworks, with scholars devoting themselves to the identification of the roots of modern languages and ignoring the multicultural and multilingual milieus in which they had functioned. Modern states and education systems did succeed in generating a certain monolingualism world-wide.

Globalization—especially in recent decades—has radically ruptured that fragile homogeneity and created people who perform partake of many cultures

simultaneously. Historically viewed these processes are not altogether new; rather they are variations on themes that have always been present in cities and regions where diverse peoples met in past time. Powerful rulers drew on a wide range of literati skills to run their kingdoms and give luster to their courts. A comparative study of literary production and scholarly culture in such settings will tell us much about cultural coexistence and cross-fertilization in past time and enable us to better understand the irredeemably hybrid modern present. The planned special issue of *MHJ* is seen as a contribution to this project. We therefore welcome contributions from every part of the world where literary cultures met and mingled in the broadly defined 'medieval' period.

English-language papers submitted for this special issue should not exceed 10,000 words in length. They should be original, unpublished work not under consideration by any other journal or book.

Translations of articles that have appeared or will appear in other languages will be considered but preference will be given to original submissions. All submissions will be refereed. If possible, editorial assistance will be offered to contributors who do not usually write in English.

SCHEDULE:

Brief abstracts due by September 30, 2009.

Authors whose articles are approved will be informed by October 31, 2009.

Complete papers formatted in conformity with the Journal's style-sheet will be due by April, 2010

Refereeing will be completed by June 30, 2010. The finished versions of papers should be submitted by October 31, 2010.

The complete issue will go to press on December 1, 2010 and appear as Volume 14.1 in Spring 2011.

The *Medieval History Journal* is now in its twelfth year and publishes work on all aspects and on all parts of the medieval world. For more information and to review its archives please visit: www.medievalhistory.org.in.

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