


South Asia Organized Panel Session

(4) - Taking Marriage into Account: Legal Complaints and the Matter of Money in Early Twentieth-Century South Asia

 Friday, March 22  11:15 AM - 1:00 PM

 Location: Governor's Square 12, Plaza Bldg, Concourse Level

What was marriage worth in British India? How much money did it take to support a wife? A family? What did a husband need to offer to provide for his family and secure his rights as head of household? How much was enough and what happened when his support fell short? Drawing upon a range of legal sources, from marriage registers showing the amount and kind of property promised in the marriage contract, to *fatwā* requests from abandoned women seeking permission to remarry for the sake of support, to exacting accounts from husbands prosecuting adultery cases before British magistrates, this paper considers the multiple types of accounting that went into the making and unmaking of households in early 20th-century South Asia. Such sources not only provide a detailed account of how much money—in cash and domestic effects—it took to keep a household running but also demonstrate some of the ways in which detailed analyses of family finances supported women's claims for legal intervention and reprieve. Although the sums cited in these cases are in most cases quite meager, the insistence with which petitioners and complainants deployed financial accounts to bolster their claims of support—or lack thereof—offers a unique portrait of non-elite household accounting and expectations about the legal rights and duties that went into the making of domestic life.

Speaker(s)



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