

Dr. Sureshkumar Muthukumar
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Employment History and Work Experience

Early Career Development Postdoctoral Fellow, Yale-NUS College, 2017-2020

- Literature and Humanities I
- HI/ History Module: The Amarna Letters: Diplomacy in the Late Bronze Age (Autumn 2019)
- Capstone supervision (Josh Ragbir: Religious unorthodoxy as a political strategy in the Mauryan Age)
- Supervisor for Independent Reading and Research Module (Zhu Tianrui: Religion of the pre-Mosaic Hebrews)

Postgraduate Teaching Assistant, Department of History, University College London, 2013-2015

Taught seminars for survey courses on the ancient Middle East (c. 3000 – 300 BCE) and a skills-based module focused on writing, editing and presentation.

8th Singapore Armoured Brigade, Singapore Armed Forces, 2006-2007

Trained in basic combat warfare, managed administrative tasks, coordinated brigade events and held responsibility for internal publications and circulars.

Freelance Teacher, 2006-2007

Taught International History (1945-1990) to A-level students.

Education History

Heidelberg University (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität) and Würzburg University, Spring 2019

Lived Sanskrit Cultures in Varanasi

University College London, 2012-2016

PhD History

Thesis Title: An Ecology of Trade: Tropical Asian Cultivars in the Ancient Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean.

- Attended 'Archaeobotanical Analysis in Practice' (MSc Environmental Archaeology MG 101).
- Acquired Biblical Hebrew at the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies (2013-14) and Intermediate Greek at the Department of Greek and Latin (2013-14).

Heidelberg University (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität), Summer 2014

Summer School in Spoken Sanskrit, Südasiens-Institut

Yale University, Spring-Summer 2013

Exchange Scholar (Yale-UCL Collaborative), Department of History, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

School of African and Oriental Studies, 2013-2016

Sanskrit at the SOAS Language School (Beginners - Advanced)

University of Oxford (Merton College), 2011-2012

M.St Greek and/or Roman History, Faculty of Classics

Grade: Distinction

-Assessed coursework included two 5000-word essays on the ecology, agriculture and settlement history of the ancient Mediterranean and a dissertation of 10,000 words on the subject of commercial interactions between the Hellenistic world and South Asia.

-Acquired Classical Greek and attended extra-curricular classes for Akkadian.

University College London, 2008-2011
BA History, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences

Grade: 1st Class

-Assessed coursework included two 10,000-word dissertations, a shorter 2nd year dissertation of 7500 words and eleven 2500-word essays.

-Acquired Latin at the Department of Greek and Latin.

Birkbeck College, University of London, 2010-2011
Introductory Akkadian, Department of History, Classics and Archaeology
Short course with a certificate in Ancient Near Eastern and Aegean Studies

Alliance Française de Singapour, 2007
French Language
Course with Diplôme d'Etudes de Langue Française A1 Qualifications

Anglo-Chinese Junior College (Singapore), 2004-2005
A levels: Geography (A), History (Southeast Asian and International History) (A), History Special Paper (Merit), English Literature (A), Economics (C), Tamil Language (A), General Paper (A).

Academic Awards, Scholarships and Grants

Dean of Faculty and Divisional Director Discretionary Travel Fund (Yale-NUS College) 2018
with a value of \$2500 for fieldwork in southeastern Myanmar

George Grote Prize in Ancient History 2014 (Institute of Classical Studies: Ehrenburg Fund) in recognition of outstanding PhD thesis chapter with a value of £3,000.

Joint Faculty Institute for Graduate Studies (UCL) Postgraduate Research Studentship for the academic year 2014/15 with a value of £5,000.

Merton College Prize (University of Oxford) in the year 2012 in recognition of good academic performance in the M.St Greek and/or Roman History.

UCL Global Excellence Graduate Scholarship (2011) with a value of £5,000 offered for one year of postgraduate study at UCL. I declined the scholarship in order to pursue postgraduate study at the University of Oxford.

Dean's List 2011 (UCL) in recognition of outstanding academic achievements at UCL in the Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences.

Margaret Elizabeth Dale Cast Prize (UCL) in the year 2010-2011 in recognition of best overall result among single-honours history finalists with a median mark of 76.

West Prize (UCL) in the year 2009-2010 in recognition of good academic performance.

Dolley Prize (UCL) in the year 2008-2009 in recognition of good academic performance.

Certificate of Achievement in the year 2006 awarded by the Tamils Representative Council (Singapore) in recognition of good academic performance in the 2005 GCE A Level Examination.

Academic Excellence Award in the year 2006 awarded by the Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA) for good academic performance in the 2005 GCE A Level Examination.

Publications

The Tropical Turn: Agricultural Innovation in the Ancient Middle East and the Mediterranean (book manuscript under review with CUP).

The Language(s) behind the Indus Script: The evidence from Mesopotamia, genetics and substrata in Indo-Aryan. In Gopal, N (ed.) *The Word and the Image*. Singapore: Indian Heritage Centre (forthcoming, 2020).

Singapore's pre-colonial ties with India. In Koh, T. and Pillai, G. (eds.) *India on our minds*. Singapore: World Scientific (forthcoming, 2020).

Paṅṭaiyat tamiḷarīṅ puttāṅṭu taiyā cittiraiyā āvaṇiyā? (The new year among ancient Tamils: Tai, Cittirai or Āvaṇi?). *Karuttaraṅkam* Issue 1 (Centre for Singapore Tamil Culture e-publication) (2020) 2-17.

The Tamil Diaspora in Pre-Modern Southeast Asia. In Mahizhnan, A. and Gopal, N. (eds.) *From Sojourners to Settlers – Tamils in Singapore and Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies and Indian Heritage Centre, 2019, 26 – 44.

The Antiquities of Rāmaññadesa. Fieldwork Report, 5–18 February 2018, Singapore: Yale-NUS, 2018.

Literary evidence for taro in the ancient Mediterranean: A chronology of names and uses in a multilingual world with I. Grimaldi et al. *PloS one* 13, no. 6 (2018): e0198333.

Review of R. Darley, *Indo-Byzantine Exchange: Fourth to Seventh centuries*. *Dissertation Reviews Online* (January 11, 2016): <http://dissertationreviews.org/archives/13157>.

Tree Cotton (*G. arboreum*) in Babylonia. In Foietta, E. et al (eds.) *Cultural and Material Contacts in the Ancient Near East*. Florence: Apice Libri, 2016, 98 – 105.

Review of R. Mairs, *The Hellenistic Far East: archaeology, language, and identity in Greek Central Asia*. *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 136 (2016) 1-2.

Between Archaeology and Text: The Origins of Rice Consumption and Cultivation in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*, 24(1) (2014) 1-7.

Conference Papers, Lectures and Talks

Oxford Postgraduate Conference in Assyriology, Wolfson College, University of Oxford, 22-23 February 2013

Contact and Commerce between Mesopotamia and South Asia in the 1st millennium BCE

Symposia Iranica: First Biennial Iranian Studies Graduate Conference, University of St Andrews, 13 – 14 April 2013

The Achaemenid Empire and South Asia

Proto-Globalisation in the Indian Ocean World (Sealinks Project Conference), Jesus College, University of Oxford, 7-10 November 2013

Literary evidence for the spread of South Asian cultivars in the 1st millennium BCE:

The case of *Cucumis sativus*

Eating Anatolia: Remembered Histories and Forgotten Foods, Department of Archaeology and History of Art Graduate Student Symposium, Koç University, Istanbul, 3 May 2014

Between Archaeology and Text: The origins of rice consumption and cultivation in the Middle East and the Mediterranean

Cultural and Material Contacts in the Ancient Near East: Movements of People, Objects and Ideas, Università degli Studi di Torino, 1-2 December 2014

Crop Movements between the Middle East and India in the First Millennium BCE

University College London Tamil Society Lectures, late 2015 – 2016

A History of the Tamils: Beginnings to the 9th century CE (a four-part lecture series)

Queer Asia 2016: Diversity, Contestations and Developments, School of African and Oriental Studies, London, 14 October 2016

Sources for a Queer Tamil History

Ancient Worlds Lunch Talks, Yale-NUS College, 20 September 2017

Persian Apples: a New History of Citruses in the Ancient Middle East and the Mediterranean

South Asian Studies Programme Seminar Series, NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, 6 October 2017

Indian Cheese at the Persian Court: South Asian Gastronomy in the Ancient Middle East

The Word and the Image Conference, Asian Civilisations Museum, 3 March 2018

The Language(s) behind the Indus Script: The evidence from Mesopotamia and the Vedic substrates

Singapore Tamil Language Month Lecture, Indian Heritage Centre, 28 April 2018

The Tamil Diaspora in Pre-Modern Southeast Asia (c. 100 CE – 1500 CE): Archaeological, Epigraphic and Literary Testimonies

Talk for Idli Collective, Red Box (Youth Corps Singapore), 18 August 2018

Tamils abroad from Rome to Southeast Asia

Lecture for NHB museum docents, Istana Kampong Glam, 4 September 2018

South and Southeast Asia: Early Interactions in the Indian Ocean World

“Speaking of” series talk, Yale-NUS library, 25 October 2018

On palm-leaf and paper: selections from the collection of Dr. Sureshkumar Muthukumar

Lecture at the Alice Boner Institute, Varanasi, India, 25 February 2019

Before Śiva: Sacred spaces in ancient Kāśī (early 1st millennium BCE – early centuries CE)

Lecture at the Alice Boner Institute, Varanasi, India, 1 March 2019

Viśālākṣī: Śiva's queen at Kāśī - a temple and its afterlives

“What’s in a New Year?” guest lecture, National Library of Singapore, 31 March 2019

The Indic Solar New Year

Centre for Singapore Tamil Culture lecture, Bishan Public Library, Singapore, 18 May 2019

New Year tradition(s) in the ancient Tamil country: Tai, Cittirai or Avani? (in Tamil)

Lecture for the Indian Heritage Centre and Singapore-India Partnership Foundation, Indian Heritage Centre, 3 August 2019

The Ramayana in Southeast Asia

Liberal Arts and Climate talk series, Elm College, Yale-NUS College, 4 October 2019

Climate change and anthropogenic ecologies in Eurasian antiquity

Yale-NUS roundtable talk, 5 November 2019

Why Sanskrit? Thoughts on utility and positionality: A lunchtime conversation with Profs. Malcolm Keating, Amber Carpenter and Sureshkumar Muthukumaran

3rd Asian Consortium of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, 22 – 23 November 2019

Indic faiths in Mesopotamia and Iran from the Seleucid to the Sasanian periods (3rd century BCE – 7th century CE)

Keynote Lecture, Sojourners to Settlers: Tamils in Southeast Asia and Singapore conference, Asian Civilisations Museum, 6 December 2019

Lords of the Waves: The Pallavas and Southeast Asia (2nd - 9th centuries CE)

Curatorial experience: events, exhibitions and concerts

On palm-leaf and paper: selections from the collection of Dr. Sureshkumar Muthukumaran, Yale-NUS library, June - December 2018 (co-curator with Joy Lynn Wheeler)

Saṅgītarāmāyaṇaṃ: A Musical Rāmāyaṇa, an evening of Rāmāyaṇic musical compositions in the Carnatic style with artists from the Traditional Music of Tanjore, Singapore, Yale-NUS Performance Hall, 24th August 2019, 19:00 – 20:30

Yale-NUS Ancient Egypt and Middle East History evening, Saga Lecture Theatre, 11th October 2019

Media appearances

Exhibition documentary (released November 2019), From the Coromandel Coast to the Straits, Indian Heritage Centre, Singapore, Director: K. Rajagopal.

Ceaseless Waves, a documentary on diasporic Tamils in Singapore (in Tamil), episode 1 (released January 2020), Vasantham, Mediacorp, Director: Lakshmi Venkat.

Disciplinary service - refereeing

Refereed articles for the following journal:

Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts (SPAFA) Journal

Interests and Other Activities

I am a bibliophile and collector of artworks and antiques ranging from Cirebonese *wayang golek* puppets to 15th century Vietnamese porcelain. I have assembled a personal library of over 1000 titles in the areas of art, literature, archaeology and history including manuscripts and pre-modern prints like Batak divination texts, illustrated Shahnama manuscripts from Persia and India and Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts dating from the 15th century to present. I have travelled extensively and this has created a keen appreciation for cultures as wide-ranging as the First Nations people in British Columbia to the Karen on the Thai-Burmese border. While I was a student at Anglo-Chinese Junior College, I had the opportunity to work on archaeological digs in Singapore (Fort Tanjong Katong and St Andrews Cathedral). I was a participant of a Model United Nations Conference (2005) organized by Lycée Français de Singapour and the Creative Arts Programme (2004) at the National University of Singapore. I also operate a blog dedicated to South Asian literature (<https://dakshinapatha.wordpress.com>).