GENERAL SEMINAR

Prof David Curley
Professor Emeritus at Western Washington University

will give a talk titled:

“The Ghoshals of Kidderpur: literary genres and archival practices in Bengali and English and ‘representation’ in ‘social’ history”

Abstract

The subject of this lecture is reading and using different kinds of sources for a social history based upon three generations of the Ghoshal family of Kidderpur over a time period from 1761 to 1822. I begin with the idea that every source of history is based upon memory, and memory itself is selective, its light and focus, to use a photographic analogy only partly appropriate, depends both upon a process of forgetting, and upon a process of configuration that associates events with characters and puts them into a temporal narrative, and upon the power relations that made their production and preservation possible. In this lecture I will focus first on Tirthamangal as a work of ‘literary’ history, and second on letters to, from and about Gokul preserved in Verelst’s papers. I will argue that taken together these sources suggest a new descriptive term for similar Calcutta families: they were not ‘scribal’ but ‘managerial’ Brahmans. They also suggest a practice that may have been new, the use of discussions of Sanskrit knowledge in Brahman councils to quality and introduce newcomers to Brahman networks of highly capable men. Finally, I will suggest that using other sources to extend a history of the Ghoshal family’s wealth and power beyond Tirthamangal, reveals events that the Ghoshals could not predict or control.

Date: Thursday, 06 February, 2020; Time: 3 – 5 pm

Venue: CSSSC Seminar Room 2, Patuli Campus

Maidul Islam
(Convener, Seminar Committee)
All are welcome to attend.