

## **Fabricating Social Worlds: Women's Embroidered Kantha from Colonial Bengal**

Final Fieldwork Report for AIBS Senior Fieldwork Grant

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Narrative Report on Results of Fieldwork:

Due to the difficulties of working in Bangladesh earlier in the year, my AIBS fieldwork grant was re-allocated for work in India. The award allowed me to complete final research for my book project in New Delhi and Kolkata where I worked with museums, private collections, and conducted ethnographic research among contemporary makers of kantha; both the more traditional as well as newer innovative practices. In Delhi I examined three collections: that of Prof. K. C. Aryan, now housed at the Museum of Folk, Tribal and Neglected Arts in Gurgaon; the National Crafts Museum; and the Chhote Bharany Collection. In the area of Kolkata I have examined the collections of the Asutosh Museum of Calcutta University, Kala Bhavan, Vishwa Bharati University, Shantiniketan, the Victoria Memorial Hall, and Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture. This body of material allowed me to establish some parameters for the study of specific motifs. Second, I was able to compare visual elements including style and techniques. I was also with the contemporary embroidery of Chamba rumal from the modern region of Himachal Pradesh. And finally I have been able to assess the work of individuals who have left their names on their work. These include the Aryan collection's large rectangular textile signed by its maker, Bindhubashini, and dated to 1875, and bearing

specific embroidered commentary on near-contemporary events that allows me to supplement the historical record.

**Outcomes:**

Presentation on Folk Art from South Asia at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, April 2018.

**Publications:**

*Fabricating Social Worlds: Women's Embroidered Kantha from Colonial Bengal.* (Under preliminary contract with University of Washington Press, Global South Asia Series).