

Christian thought. Together with the Paris and San Francisco Ricci Institutes, the Taipei Ricci Institute will do its best to continue in the same path.

BENOIT VERMANDER  
*Taipei Ricci Institute*

### OM PRAKASH SHARMA 1930–1998

Om Prakash Sharma died Wednesday, 23 September 1998, at University Hospital, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Om was born in India on February 7, 1930, the son of Ram Lal and Durga Devi Sharma. He spent his youth in the Punjab and endured the terrible days of 1947 when that province was partitioned between the new nations of India and Pakistan. He remained in India to earn advanced degrees in history, Punjabi, and Urdu, then left for England, where he received a Masters in Library Science at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Subsequently he attended the University of Chicago and received his Ph.D. in 1970 for the dissertation "Forces behind the Indian Public Library Movement, 1858–1892." He began his professional career as a librarian at the Library of Congress in the early 1960s. While there he helped inaugurate the PL480 program. He had a hand in defining the content of much of the research material from South Asia coming into the country. He became the Bibliographer for South Asia at the University of Michigan Library in 1966 and retired in 1996, after thirty full years of service. In addition, he was an Associate of the University of Michigan Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies.

Om was bibliographer during an era which, in retrospect, one may say was the most productive period of South Asian collection development in United States history. When Om came to Michigan, PL480 acquisitions there had just begun. He was confronted with over 400 unopened boxes of books gathered in a warehouse. His first year at the University was spent figuring out how to handle this mass of raw material efficiently. Over the next three decades, the South Asian language collection grew from almost nothing to over 60,000 volumes. In response to faculty needs, Om initiated the acquisition of Punjabi (both in Arabic and Gurmukhi scripts), Kashmiri, and Tibetan materials. He also began to acquire sound recordings in all major Indic languages. He had a large personal collection of books and often brought them, when read, as gifts to the Library as well as sending them overseas to South Asian libraries.

Om had an excellent sense of why a particular monograph or journal might be significant. Often he would say, "Well, it may be mediocre, but it is the only one from that region (or: from that corporate body)." Or, an editor might be important.

When Om was young, his father asked him to stop reading Urdu and spend more time on Hindi. He did so in part, but he always enjoyed a good piece of Urdu writing, particularly the stories of Saadat Hasan Manto. Om also knew several other South Asian languages well. He had been a Pali, Prakrit, Gujarati, and Sanskrit cataloger for the Library of Congress, and he considered Sanskrit books the most difficult to catalog: one day was acceptable, he would say, because "no one really knows Sanskrit."

Om had a friendly approach to all faculty and students of South Asia at the University of Michigan. He encouraged visits to his office and loved to talk about South Asia, about which he had immense knowledge. He read four or five South Asian newspapers daily and consumed countless biographies of South Asians, many of whom he knew personally (some indeed from his boyhood in West Punjab). He also enjoyed

discussing American politics and personalities. His life had been enriched by his three countries of residence, India, England, and the United States, and his conversation reflected his diverse background. He was an excellent host, as the many guests at his home over the years will attest with fond remembrance.

Om is survived by his wife, Vimla Sharma, a former editor of the *Bibliography of Asian Studies*, and his son, Vinod Sharma, both of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Memorial tributes may be made to the Kidney Foundation of Michigan, 2350 S. Huron Parkway, Ann Arbor MI 48104.

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### WILLIAM SMALLEY 1923–1997

William Smalley, 75, died in New Haven, Connecticut. He had lived in Hamden, Connecticut. The headline in the *New York Times* obituary page of December 26, 1997, proclaimed his major contribution, "Linguist for the Hmong." Together with the Catholic priest Yves Bertrais, and fellow missionary-anthropologist Linwood Barney, he developed a Latin orthography for the Hmong language. Today this written form appears, among other places, on Hmong Web sites on the Internet and, more broadly, it is used by the approximately 200,000 Hmong from Laos who settled in the U.S. after the Indochina War. Thus while most anthropologists are memorialized for their work within the profession, Smalley's career followed a path. Its major focus was defined by his parents who were missionaries in Jerusalem and where he was born in 1923. He received his undergraduate degree from Houghton College and his doctorate in anthropological linguistics from Columbia University in 1955. Smalley then worked for the American Bible Society. In 1978 he joined the faculty of Bethel College, St. Paul, Minnesota where he served as a professor of linguistics, retiring ten years later. His doctoral work was on the Kammu language spoken in the area of Luang Prabang in northern Laos, where he was associated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. His dissertation was published as a monograph by the American Oriental Society in 1961.

His fieldwork began in 1948–49 with research on Comanche phonology and morphology. Additionally, from 1950–54, he worked in Vietnam and Laos on the Vietnamese and Sre languages in addition to beginning his lifelong work on Hmong. From 1955–72 he was a translations consultant in Haiti and Africa. He continued this work while resident in Thailand. In 1955 he helped found and edited the journal *Practical Anthropology* (to 1968) which was designed to provide anthropological perspectives to missionary work. Of more general interest to anthropologists was his *Mother of Writing, The Origin and Development of a Hmong Messianic Script*, which he wrote with Hmong colleagues, published by the University of Chicago Press in 1990. His last book, *Linguistic Diversity and National Unity, Language Ecology in Thailand*, was issued by the same press in 1994. He also coauthored, again with Hmong colleagues, the monograph, *The Life of Shong Lue Yang: Hmong "Mother of Writing,"* for the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs of the University of Minnesota. To further his research and publication in the 1980s he had received a number of grants from NEH as well as from the SSRC/ACLS subcommittee on Indochina Studies. He was generous in sharing his field notes and helped this writer, who succeeding him