"Meter and metal: Visvakarma's Bengal, past and present."

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The talk will discuss the relationship between verse meter and metal work in colonial and modern Bengal. The key element is the ritual figure of Visvakarma, the so called engineer-god of metal work, celebrated in medieval verses and local domestic and household rituals. As Visvakarma is invoked through ritual worship, caste, familial, and other networks, oral-literate histories deliver important local histories of metal and metal craft. I will use oral histories and writings from 18th century (revivalist) texts of medieval Bengali poetry to visual materials such as local "pat" (scroll) paintings as well as imperial and colonial writings and memoirs to trace the histories of metal craft from the 18th to 19th centuries. The importance of this genealogy lies in figuring out the critical histories of metal repair work in industrial capitalism since the 19th century. The ritual of Visvakarma continues to bear on this kind of work in informal economies of repair-work in industrial and post-industrial capitalism in South Asia.

Ort: Südasien-Institut, Raum 316
Zeit: 18 Uhr c.t.