

Obituaries

ROBERT I. CRANE 1920–1997

The death of Professor Robert I. Crane in Syracuse, New York, removed from our midst one of the last of a generation of academic pioneers who established the study of modern South Asia in North American universities. Born in India of American missionary parents at the start of Gandhi's national noncooperation campaign, Crane's adult life was dominated by two intertwined convictions: that the peoples and civilizations of Southern Asia were of immense importance in the world's past and present, and that American understanding of South Asia was vital to the United States' future.

Obtaining his B.A. from Duke on the eve of America's entry into World War II, Crane joined the Office of Strategic Services and served mainly in the China-Burma-India theater of operations. His postwar career in government cut short amidst the general flurry of recriminations and investigations of American activities in Asia, Robert Crane went to Yale where he obtained his Ph.D. in 1951—probably the first American doctorate in modern South Asia history. During the next decade his rise through the academic ranks was meteoric: instructor at Chicago, associate professor at Michigan, and professor at Duke when still forty. In 1965 he began a five-year term as editor of *The Journal of Asian Studies*, and his appointment as Ford-Maxwell Professor of South Asian History at Syracuse University in 1968 seemed a fitting further step in his career. Everywhere he taught he was instrumental in creating vibrant graduate programs in South Asian history, always including Hindi-Urdu language instruction.

His contribution to the development of the study of South Asia transcended these specific institutions, however. Wherever resources for South Asian studies were being determined, Robert Crane was intimately involved: in the evolution of the Fulbright-Hays Title VI programs, the formation of the American Institute of Indian Studies, the library books and materials program under the Library of Congress and PL 480, the South Asia Microfilming Project, and the continuing struggle to fund the teaching of South Asian languages in American universities. He was passionately committed to promoting Asia within the general educational curriculum, and wrote the American Historical Association's monograph on teaching South Asian history, as well as dozens of articles on Indian topics for encyclopedias and yearbooks, in addition to more academic journals articles and edited books. The lengthy struggle with glaucoma which marred the last two decades of his life did not reduce his academic functions, largely due to the unstinting support of Lakshmi Crane. Robert Crane's enthusiasm for teaching, for working tirelessly with graduate students, and for expanding the awareness of India and its civilization among this generation of Americans never diminished. His incisive mind, dry wit and commitment to India studies will be sorely missed.

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