Professors Davinder Bhowmik and Heidi Pauwels have published their latest research. Bhowmik's work is devoted to issues of the depiction of homeland and the notion of Okinawan literature as genre. Pauwels explores the relevance of two Hindu goddesses to women today in modern India.

### Ghosts of conflict loom in Okinawan literature

While the battles for physical control over the islands of Okinawa have largely passed, traces of the contention over this idyllic tropical paradise continue to haunt the imaginations of its writers. Davinder Bhowmik, a professor of Japanese language and literature, explores not only the issues that dominate depictions of homeland but also the notion of Okinawan literature as a genre in her first book *Writing Okinawa: Narrative Acts of Identity and Resistance* (Routledge, 2008).

Bhowmik originally became intrigued by Okinawa through her exposure to Japanese literature as a child in Okinawa. Even though she lived in Japan, the mainland landscapes and society described in the books she read were alien. From this dissonance, she began to consider the fraught relationship Okinawa has historically held with the main islands of Japan.

Bhowmik's research traces the complexity of the space of Okinawa in Japanese fiction from the late Meiji period (1868-1912) to the present day. Through her study of several major Okinawan writers and a handful of mainland authors who devote significant text to Okinawa, she subtly exposes issues of history, identity, language, nostalgia, and culture and suggests a new framework from which to read the region's literature.

### Hindu goddesses still hold sway over Indian women

Heidi Pauwels, a professor of medieval and modern Hindi language and literature, Hinduism, and Sanskrit language and literature, examines the transformation and function of myth in modern day India in her newest book *The Goddess as Role Model: Sita and Radha in Scripture and on Screen* (Oxford U Press, 2008). In particular, she traces the portrayal of the female goddesses Sita and Radha through the classical, medieval, and modern periods. Pauwels seeks to understand role models that mark the moral landscape navigated by young Indian women today.

Pauwels attributes the seed for this work to a desire to answer students' expressed skepticism of the relevance of medieval texts. Through a comparison of the depictions of Sita and Radha, Pauwels not only answers skeptics but increases the appreciation of the nuances and variants of Hindi film. More particularly, her work sheds light on the nature of messages embedded within popular media. She finds that, contrary to expectation, these messages to women are surprisingly conservative.
