About the Speaker

Annamma Spudich did her Ph.D and postdoctoral work in molecular and cell biology at Stanford University and was a biomedical researcher for two decades. For the past 20 years, she has focused on how Ayurvedic Ashtavaidya scholar physicians and folk medical practitioners of Kerala, India, are continuing their traditions while coexisting with biomedicine. Her wide-reaching research has also examined the impact of botanical/medical knowledge systems of India in the early modern world. She has curated exhibitions at Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University, at the National Center for Biological Sciences in Bangalore and in Leiden, Netherlands and has a permanent installation at the Natural History Museum, India. She is a visiting professor at NCBS/TIFR, Bangalore.

Biomedical researcher Annamma Spudich shares her research into the “Hortus Indicus Malabaricus” (“The Garden of Malabar”), which documents the rich legacy of Indian botanical medical traditions. A collaboration between Indian scholars, artists, and collectors and European translators, engravers, and publishers, the 12-volume treatise, richly illustrated with 794 copper plate engravings, was published in Amsterdam between 1678 and 1693. Although Indian botanists had been highly valued, globally traded commodities since the first millennium, it was only at the end of the 15th century that Europeans entered into direct trade with India. In this presentation, Spudich shows us how the “Hortus” highlights the contributions of Indian scholarship to knowledge creation in the modern sciences and provides a unique view of East-West interactions in the early modern period.

Carcapuli - Garcinia cambogia (indica) (also called KOKUM)
C. Acosta, “Tractado de las Drogas y Medicinas de las Indias Orientalis”, Burgos, Spain, 1578, p.331
Special Collections, Univ. of California, San Francisco.
“The powder of this fruit is very much in use by midwives who give it to women who have just given birth to [help them] expel the placenta and to produce milk, and before labor to ease the process for which they (the peasants) say it has a great effect. [it’s very effective].”
(Excerpt of translation of the text by L. Wright and A. Spudich)