



Newsletter of the European Association for South Asian Studies Summer 2010

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1. Bonn Conference

This year's conference took place in Bonn from 26 July to 29 July 2010. It was a great success, with 42 panels and about 350 participants. All the participants I talked to felt that it went exceptionally well, despite the untypical Bonn weather of occasional showers! The logo (a blue elephant baptized "Bonnessh Baba") turned out to be a major attraction. There was also a short report in the major Bonn newspaper and several other media reports – hopefully this attention boost for South Asian studies will pay out at some point of time in the academic struggle for resources at our university. A vote of thanks was passed enthusiastically at the end of the workshop, reflecting our gratitude for the hard work done by the Bonn team.



Bonn conference logo

The conference lasted for four days, split into two 3.5 hour sessions (9 – 12.30, 2 – 5.30) each day. Some panels accommodated as many as 15 papers, some as few as two. Everything was under one roof, so the participants could easily commute between panels during sessions. As in previous ECMSAS, panel conveners were responsible for constructing viable panels, ensuring the presentation of quality papers, and for taking groups of papers forward to publication in the aftermath of the conference. The Bonn organisers provided an excellent infrastructure for these panels, which had been selected as the strongest, most distinctive and most likely to attract participants, offering new topics as well as those that have become well established through successive ECMSAS conferences. There was also a spread of panels in terms of discipline, theme, and coverage of the whole region of South Asia.

As well as the academic focus, the 21st ECMSAS presented a range of related cultural events. A reception hosted by the Mayor of Bonn took place on the first evening, and a 'Bonn beats Bollywood' dance was held at a local night-club, with the assistance of local young people of South Asian origin. Many thanks are due to those who suggested a boat trip on the Rhine – the opportunity to eat, drink, enjoy the views as well as mingle with other participants was enthusiastically taken up.



Overall, the 21st European Conference went smoothly and according to plan – despite the conference organising team learning on the job. The team was energetic and motivated, with good backing from the university, the steering committee and experienced conference organisers from EASAS. The participants’ feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The main cause for frustration arose from changes to the sequence of presentations in some panels, in an attempt by panel conveners to deal with the gaps caused by paper-givers who did not turn up. In the European conferences, the panel organisation is the responsibility of the conveners, but it would be better if some mechanism could be found to avoid frustration for panel-hoppers who come too late to hear the paper they are especially interested in.

One irritation was that some participants represented themselves as EASAS members, although they had not paid their membership fee for a long time. This problem will probably be solved from the next ECMSAS onwards, since the EASAS general meeting decided to link EASAS membership with the conference fee: this will also strengthen the EASAS identity of the conference.



One of the lessons learned is that links with the general public required more concern and professional advertisement than was possible, and as a result the daily forums on literature, economics, media and identity politics were visited mainly by conference participants and not by the outside public. Another is that when the vast majority of participants pay their fees on arrival – not in advance – financial predictions are unreliable, limiting the kinds of activities (such as meals) that can be provided for the participants.

Puppet show in Hindi

2. General Meeting 2010

The General Meeting of EASAS took place on 27 July 2010 at the University of Bonn, during the conference. With respect to membership, the meeting decided to move to a model in which membership in EASAS is a prerequisite to be able to attend the conference, which from now on will be named European Conferences on South Asian Studies (as decided in Manchester in 2008).

Moreover, the membership elected the new council: Professor Roger Jeffery was elected President, Dr Margret Frenz was elected Vice-President, and Professor Ulrike Müller-Böker was elected Treasurer. The extended Council was elected for the first time since the re-organisation of EASAS in 2009. It consists of Dr Nicolas Jaoul (Paris), Dr Anna Lindberg (Lund), Professor Rosa Maria Perez (Lisbon), Dr Danuta Stasik (Warsaw), Dr Heinz-Werner Wessler (now Uppsala), Dr John Zavos (Manchester).

All members of EASAS should have received the detailed minutes of the meeting by email.

3. Venue of 2012 Conference

The venue of the 2012 conference has been confirmed by the organising committee: It will be held at the University Institute of Lisbon (also known as ISCTE-IUL). The organising team will be headed by Dr Rosa Maria Perez.

The call for panels is expected to go out around December 2010 to January 2011, with the deadline in April / May 2011.





4. Doctoral Workshop Heidelberg

The fourth European doctoral workshop took place in Heidelberg from 27 to 28 August 2010. Four members of staff and twelve doctoral students from universities in France, Germany and the UK took part in the workshop. Here are excerpts from Ines Županov's report:

“The organization had been carried out by Professor Subrata K. Mitra and his graduate students, in particular Markus Pauli. The two days of intense meeting, presenting papers and discussions went extremely well. In all, it was a stimulating experience for both students and staff members. The format of the workshop was first applied at the 2009 Edinburgh meeting. It seems well suited for the purpose, which is to provide the students with maximum quality feedback on their PhD work in progress. Papers (no longer than 5000 words) are pre-circulated at least one week before the workshop. Each doctoral student presents another student's paper (10 min). Then one of the staff members provides critical remarks/comments on the paper (10 min) before the student has the opportunity to respond (5 min). The general discussion then carries on for about 15 minutes. Staff members do not comment on their own students' papers before the general discussion.



For the Heidelberg workshop, all the papers arrived on time. The fact that the paper was presented by another student was salutary. The points summarized by somebody else seemed to have given the students a new sense of their own topic direction. The staff critiques were always frank, but fair and were geared to encourage further student research. The fact that the students presented papers written from another discipline and with topics that sometimes were far from their own academic interest, was not a problem at all. On the contrary, the students were able to see more clearly the inconsistencies in the

argument and pinpoint analytical unevenness. The result of such a deep engagement with the student writing (by another student and a staff member) was a very high quality of critique and ensuing discussion. It was also stimulating to hear students find affinities with other students' topics and methodology. After the sessions, the discussions went on and certain key topics cropped up again and again.

In this workshop, we all participated in designing the “future” of social sciences in/on South Asia by reflecting on the appropriate topics to study and on the shortcomings or advantages of certain analytical and methodological tools. In other words, we were thinking about what should be done, rather than what is done currently in our fields. It is this prospective (rather than retrospective) feature, an “added value” as Professor Mitra argued, that gave our workshop its most important quality. There is a close connection between how students construct their own intellectual careers and the general advancement of research on South Asia (or any other field).



As a sign of this, during the workshop the Heidelberg students announced that they had established an informal network of graduate students in Germany working on South Asian topics.

CESA in Paris offered to be the next venue for the 5th European South Asia PhD Workshop in late August or early September 2011. The European Association for South Asian Study provided a grant of 500 € towards the accommodation of the graduate students. The accommodation of the staff members and the meals of the participants are to be provided by the CESA. The travel expenses are not included and are paid by the participants themselves.”



5. Collaboration with SAMAJ

We are pleased to announce that EASAS has reached an agreement with the Board of the online journal SAMAJ which will link EASAS to SAMAJ. More detail on SAMAJ can be found at: <http://samaj.revues.org/index.html>

So far they have had three annual issues:

- 1 | 2007: Migration and Constructions of the Other
- 2 | 2008: 'Outraged Communities'
- 3 | 2009: Contests in Context: Indian Elections 2009

We have reached the following agreement with the SAMAJ Editorial Board:

- 1) From 2011 onwards, there will be one additional issue of Samaj each year for which EASAS will take responsibility
 - (i) for facilitating the proposal, and
 - (ii) for the copy editing work (amounting to about one month full time for 6 papers). This issue can be thematic, or it can be a kind of "best of" of the latest EASAS conference"; but the Samaj board will be free to decide (as for all special issues) if the quality of papers is acceptable. In addition, SAMAJ welcomes the submission of individual papers presented at the EASAS conference for publication as 'varia'(here the refereeing process will follow its normal course).
- 2) EASAS will give publicity to SAMAJ in their newsletter;
- 3) SAMAJ will give publicity to EASAS and its activities when the 'EASAS special issue' is released;
- 4) There will be a trial period of 4 years for this association between EASAS and SAMAJ, after which it can be modified if necessary.



6. Professor Dietmar Rothermund's Lecture at the final session of the 21st European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, Bonn, 26-29 July 2010.

“My lecture includes two different topics. I shall begin by paying a tribute to the three Schlegel brothers who were connected with the German interest in India. I shall then turn to the European Conferences on Modern South Asian Studies and analyse their interdisciplinary development and their spread across Europe.

A Tribute to the Schlegel Brothers

There were several Schlegel brothers but only three of them were intimately connected with India. Carl August (1761-1789) joined the army of the King of Hannover as a young ensign. In 1782 this king (also King George III of England) supplied two of his regiments to the East India Company which was then fighting Tipu Sultan of Mysore. The contract stipulated that they would serve seven years in India. Carl August was soon promoted to the rank of lieutenant and mostly served as an officer on special duty, touring Southern India with an English general in order to find out how the troops of the East India Company could defend themselves against Tipu Sultan. As a result of these travels Carl August produced a military geography of Southern India which was never published. His father later on deposited the German manuscript in the library of the University of Göttingen where it is still preserved. From the text it appears that Carl August carried a small library of contemporary works on military strategy with him to India, among them Friedrich of Prussia's account of his battles. Carl August was an expert on fortifications and studied the forts of Southern India in detail. He recommended that most of them should be razed to the ground as they would only serve the enemy, but he suggested that the fort at Jinji, 160 km to the West of Chennai should be preserved and strengthened so as to serve as a British bastion against Tipu Sultan. This fort is perched on three high granite hills encircled by thick walls. It had served many dynasties over several centuries and had finally become a stronghold of the Marathas. Carl August described the fort minutely and indicated where its defences could be improved. His knowledge was obviously a great asset to the British. He died in 1789 at the age of 28 years just before his regiment was due to be repatriated. His brother August Wilhelm wrote a moving poem about his death in distant India.

Whereas Carl August had lived in India his two famous brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich could only dream of India and celebrate it in their works. Friedrich (1772-1829) was a leading light of German Romanticism. He had studied Sanskrit in Paris and had published his famous book *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (On the language and wisdom of the Indians) in 1808. This was the manifesto of German Indology. Friedrich believed that God has first spoken to man in Sanskrit, a language which the thought to be much older than Hebrew. He admired the highly developed structure of Sanskrit and felt that the subsequent history of mankind was one of decline rather than of progress. Therefore he clashed with the philosopher Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) who believed in a continuous progress of mankind as a manifestation of the divine Spirit. Hegel often referred to Schlegel without mentioning him by name. One of their disputes was about the role of language and of the state as major productions of man. Schlegel highlighted the importance of fully developed languages and Hegel insisted that the state was by far the more important product of man and denigrated India which may have been ahead in the evolution of language but seemed to have produced no state.

Friedrich Schlegel was a gypsy scholar who never held a professorial chair but delivered remarkable lectures on world literature in many cities. At the end of his life he held a high position as a diplomat in the service of Austria. He was an influential literary critic. Marcel Reich-Ranicki, the current nestor of German literary criticism, has acknowledged the debt he owes to Friedrich Schlegel.



Whereas Friedrich Schlegel wrote the manifesto of German Indology, his brother August Wilhelm (1767-1845) actually established Indology as an academic discipline. He had taught literature at various German universities and had made a mark as a translator of Shakespeare's major works into German. Due to his elegant translation, Shakespeare's plays have been more often performed on the German stage than in Great Britain. He also translated the *Bhagavadgita* from Sanskrit into Latin. Hegel wrote a good review of this translation. Later August Wilhelm also translated the *Ramayana*. In 1818 he was called to a chair of literature at Bonn University. This was not a chair of Indology, but since August Wilhelm also taught Sanskrit, his appointment has often been deemed to be the introduction of this subject as an academic discipline. His lectures on Sanskrit were accompanied by an impressive ritual which the German poet Heinrich Heine has described after attending such a lecture. A servant would enter the lecture hall with a chandelier stacked with brightly burning candles and then Professor Schegel would appear and speak to an enraptured audience. The Schlegel brothers were known as protagonists of German Romanticism and this ritual presentation of Sanskrit fitted in very well with their romantic ideas. Later on Indology became the leading discipline of historical comparative linguistics. It gained academic respectability and lost much of its romantic veneer. But the service which the Schlegel brothers had rendered to this discipline will always be remembered.

The European Conferences on Modern South Asian Studies

Let me now turn to my analysis of the interdisciplinary development and the European spread of our conference. It all started with a conference No.0 which I convened in 1966 in Bad Herrenalb in the Black Forest. In addition to German colleagues I had invited Indian and British historians and a few social scientists and geographers. Among the prominent participants were Ashin Das Gupta and Benoy Chaudhuri from Kolkata and Eric Stokes and Ben Farmer from Cambridge. At the end of our proceedings Ben Farmer invited us all to Cambridge in 1968 and this turned out to be the first official European Conference. Ben Farmer was President of St. John's College, Cambridge, at that time and could thus provide hospitality for us in this splendid college. There were about 80 participants, some economists had joined us and they extended the disciplinary spectrum of the conference. We next met near Copenhagen in 1970 and then at Heidelberg in 1972. In the meantime we had wooed the representatives of Modern South Asian Languages and Literatures. They joined us at Heidelberg and they have remained with us ever since. The Bonn conference had three literary panels which is convincing evidence for the strength of this discipline in our midst. Subsequent conferences were held at the University of Sussex, in Paris and Amsterdam and in 1983 at a small town in Sweden near the home of our colleague Karl Reinhold Haellquist. In 1986 we returned to Heidelberg when the University of Heidelberg celebrated its sixth centenary. So far our conferences had been held only in Northern Europe. In 1988, due to the initiative of Mariola Offredi who taught Hindi at the University of Venice, we dared to cross the Alps. The Venice conference was a great experience, but we could register only about 90 participants, because travel expenditure discouraged many of our Northern colleagues and the number of South European scholars in our field was still very limited. In 1990 we returned to London, a safe place as far as plentiful attendance was concerned. A bold new venture was undertaken in 1992 thanks to Joachim Oesterheld who taught South Asian History at Humboldt University, East Berlin. Germany had been reunited, but the colleagues in Eastern Germany had had hardly any contacts with their European colleagues as long as the Berlin Wall lasted. Joachim Oesterheld located a large party school in East Berlin which was now vacant and he hosted the conference there. His colleagues at Humboldt University thought he was mad to do this as there was no previous experience of hosting such conference in East Berlin. But his courage prevailed and we had a wonderful conference. At the end of this conference Marine Carrin of Toulouse University volunteered to host the next conference. She is a cultural



anthropologist and could welcome many colleagues of her discipline at Toulouse, some Sanskrit scholars also joined us. This trend of providing a meeting place for more and more disciplines prevailed at the University of Copenhagen where we met in 1996.

So far the conferences had continued in an informal way. There was no permanent organisation looking after them. This was changed in 1997 with the establishment of the European Association for South Asian Studies (EASAS). However, EASAS does not serve as host of the conferences nor does it wish to interfere in the work of the respective steering committee of the university hosting the conference. It merely acts as a clearing house for information and helps with the search for hosts. In 1998 Jaroslav Vacek, Vice President of EASAS, a Sanskritist teaching at Charles University, Prague, took the initiative to invite the conference which then coincided with the celebration of the 650th anniversary of his university. Prague proved to be an attractive venue for East European scholars whereas many British colleagues dropped out because of the travel expenditure. Nevertheless, the experience of the Prague conference showed us that shifting venues to different parts of Europe helps us to reach colleagues who have not been able to attend earlier conferences.

In 2000 we once more visited the British Isles and had a splendid conference at Edinburgh hosted by Roger Jeffery and his team. In 2002 Heidelberg served for the third time as venue of the conference. Tilman Frasch and his team proved to be good organisers. Now it was high time to think of the Scandinavian countries once more and the University of Lund proved to be an excellent place for the conference in 2004. The next conference was held at Leiden University where Dirk Kolff was the chief host, and in 2008 we met in Manchester where the conference was organised by John Zavos of Manchester University. Tilman Frasch who had in the meantime joined the staff of Manchester Metropolitan University could lend a helping hand. Unfortunately no firm invitation for the next conference was forthcoming at the end of the Manchester conference. EASAS had to step in as a “headhunter” and Hans-Werner Wessler, an Indologist at Bonn University, was found. He proved to be an excellent host of our present conference.

The 44 panels of this conference are a testimony to the interdisciplinary spread of our conferences. I noticed with surprise that we had 7 panels dealing with religion this time. This indicates that the conference reacts to current trends in South Asian research. I was also impressed by the large number of young scholars reporting on their recent field work in South Asia. About 350 scholars have participated in our conference this time, among them several scholars from South Asia. In our earlier conferences we had to restrict them to scholars resident in Europe, including South Asians teaching at European universities. In recent times the organisers of our conferences have been able to get financial support from their respective national research organisations for the invitation of South Asian colleagues and we hope that this will continue.

Finally I should like to comment on the name of our conferences which we intend to change by dropping the “Modern” and referring simply to South Asian Studies. When we started the conferences “classical” studies used to prevail everywhere and they were well represented at Oriental congresses. The few scholars specialising in modern history, political science etc. were rather isolated and hardly attracted any attention. In European studies nobody would turn to the scholars of ancient languages asking them to interpret current affairs. But as far as India was concerned, the Indologists were supposed to provide all the information. A Latinist would not be expected to comment on current Italian politics, but for South Asia no such distinctions were observed. Under such circumstances, Modern South Asian Studies needed a European forum which would help to rally the forces of scholars who were then a small minority. Now we live in different times and do not need to stress the importance of modern studies any longer. Thus we can safely change our name and adopt the new acronym ECSAS under which we shall meet from now on.”