

Studying Documents
in Pre-Modern South Asia and Beyond
Problems and Perspectives

Venue: Akademie der Wissenschaften
Karlstraße 4
69117 Heidelberg

Date: 4–6 October 2015

Beginning: Sunday, 4 October 2015, 18:00

Documents form a unique textual category, which deserves scholarly attention in its form-, content-, and context-related dimensions. Although over the last decades, the “government of paper” (Matthew S. Hull) in colonial and post-colonial bureaucracies has received considerable scholarly attention, the practices of documentation in pre-modern societies in South Asia still largely remain unexplored. The study of such documents is therefore a challenging field. It opens up new perspectives in the study of South Asian religions and societies which until now have only rarely been explored by Indologists and other textual scholars of South Asia.

Usually documents exhibit formal features that are highly specific, depending on their historical and local surroundings. However, to a considerable extent, they follow common principles and standards. Documents in pre-modern South Asia, for instance, are often multilingual and influenced by the different trans-local administrative traditions, Persian or British, of the sub-continent. Regarding their contents, such documents can cover a large range of topics, which could be called in modern Western terms juridicial/legal, administrative or religious without, however, exhibiting neat separations between these fields.

The proposed conference is organized under the auspices of the project “Documents on Religion and Law of Pre-modern Nepal” (www.haw.uni-heidelberg.de/forschung/forschungsstellen/nepal/projekt.en.html) conducted since 2014 by the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. It aims at bringing together experts for the study of documents in pre-modern societies, with a special focus on South Asia, but also including insights gained with material from beyond this regional context.

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Pre-Modern South Asia
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International
Academy Conference
4–6 October 2015
Heidelberg

HEIDELBERGER AKADEMIE
DER WISSENSCHAFTEN

Research Project
Documents on the History of Religion
and Law of pre-modern Nepal

South Asia Institute
Im Neuenheimer Feld 330
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REGISTRATION AND CONTACT

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Cover picture:
Royal document, dated 1846,
with the hand print of King Rajendra Vikram Shah,
National Archives Kathmandu.
(Photo: Manik Bajracharya)

Member of the Union of the German Academies
of Sciences and Humanities



HEIDELBERGER AKADEMIE
DER WISSENSCHAFTEN

Akademie der Wissenschaften
des Landes Baden-Württemberg

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Karlstraße 4, 69117 Heidelberg

PROGRAM



RESPONSE CARD

SUNDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2015

18:30 WELCOME
RECEPTION FOR CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

MONDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2015

9:30 WELCOME ADDRESS
BERND SCHNEIDMÜLLER

Panel I: Chronicles and Records
Chair: Axel Michaels

9:45 YOGESH MISHRA
Waking History Up from the Chronological Nightmares:
A Perspective from the Medieval Newari Historiography
ALEXANDER VON ROSPATT
Recording the Collective Sponsorship of the
Renovations of the Svayambhūcaitya of Kathmandu
in the later Malla Era
DISCUSSION

11:00 COFFEE BREAK

Panel II: Legal Practice 1
Chair: Kerstin von Lingen

11:15 AXEL MICHAELS
Are Hindu Women/Widows Allowed to Establish a Śiva
Temple? A Question Asked in a Letter to Jaṅga Bahādura
Rāṇā Dated 1863 CE
RAJAN KHATIWODA
Documented Evidence on the Implementation
of the (*Mulukī*) *Ain* in mid-19th Century
SIMON CUBELIC
The Legal Status of Gambling in Early 20th Century Nepal:
The Case of the Annapūrṇā Temple in Asan, Kathmandu
DISCUSSION

13:00 LUNCH BREAK

Panel III: Legal Practice 2
Chair: Monika Boehm-Tettelbach

14:00 POLLY O’HANLON
In the Presence of Witnesses: Documents of
Property Right in Early Modern Western India
TIMOTHY LUBIN
Towards a South Asian Diplomatics: Cosmopolitan Norms
and Regional Idioms in the Use of Documents
DIWAKAR ACHARYA
A Debt-clearance Certificate from the 17th century Mithilā
CHARLES RAMBLE
Procedures for Solemnising Tibetan Covenants and Other
Documents in Highland Nepal, 19th–20th Centuries
DISCUSSION

16:15 COFFEE BREAK

Panel IV: Digitizing Documents
Chair: Madeleine Herren-Oesch

16:30 GEORG VOGELER
Digital diplomatics – the Evolution of a European
Tradition or a Generic Concept?
CHRISTIANE SIBILLE
Networking Digital Documents –
a View from “Beyond”
OLIVER HELLWIG, AXEL MICHAELS, CHRISTOF ZOTTER
The Digital Infrastructure of the Project
“Documents on Religion and Law of Pre-modern Nepal”
DISCUSSION
18:15 END OF PANEL IV
19:00 CONFERENCE DINNER

TUESDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2015

Panel V: Administration
Chair: Jörg Gengnagel

9:00 CHRISTOF ZOTTER
Ascetics in Administrative Affairs.
Documents on the *mahantamaṇḍalā*

MONIKA BOEHM-TETTELBACH
Revenue Grants from Rajasthan (17th–19th Century)

GISÈLE KRAUSKOPFF
The Use of Written Archives in the Study of Migratory
Practices of an Ethnic Minority, the Tharu of Nepal ...
Or How Archives Illuminate the Tarai Peasants’ Links
to the Cultivated Land and Their Strategy of Resistance
to State Control.

DISCUSSION

10:45 COFFEE BREAK

Panel VI: Documents and the Palace
Chair: Hans Harder

11:00 MANIK BAJRACHARYA
Newars in the Court of Early Shah and Rana Rulers
RAMESH DHUNGEL
PM Jangabahadur’s Letters to Hodgson
on Progress in Nepal and Assistance to British India

ASTRID ZOTTER
What Can Documents Tell about Rituals?
The Example of Royal Nepalese Durgāpūjā Practices

DISCUSSION

AXEL MICHAELS
Concluding Remarks

13:00 LUNCH BREAK

14:00–16:00 MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMISSION

STUDYING DOCUMENTS IN PRE-MODERN SOUTH ASIA AND BEYOND
PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

International Academy Conference of the research project
Documents on Religion and Law of Pre-modern Nepal

Heidelberg, Sunday 4 – Tuesday 6 October 2015
Beginning: Sunday 4 October 2015, 18:00 Academy,
Karlstraße 4, 69117 Heidelberg.

☐ Participation
☐ No participation

RSVP before 25 September 2015.