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

by Simon Cubelic

From 4th – 6th October 2015 the Research Unit "Documents on Religion and Law of Pre-modern Nepal" (Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities) organizes an international conference entitled "Studying Documents in Pre-modern South Asia and Beyond: Problems and Perspectives". The event will take place at the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Karlstraße 4, 69117 Heidelberg.

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. Therefore, the study of such documents is a challenging field. It opens up new perspectives on South Asian religions and societies which until now have only rarely been explored by Indologists and other textual scholars of South Asia.

The proposed conference is organized by Axel Michaels under the auspices of the project "Documents on Religion and Law of Pre-modern Nepal" 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.

One of the main objectives of the conference is to contextualize the increasing production of documents in Nepal during the Śāha and Rāñā period within the framework of pre-modern South Asian administrative and legal cultures which are shaped by polyglotism and draw upon several trans-local literary cultures. Furthermore, digital aspects of document and archival research will be discussed and the digital infrastructure of the projects "Dodis" (Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland) and "Documents on Religion and Law of Pre-modern Nepal" will be introduced.

Around twenty presentations, with subjects ranging from indigenous traditions of Nepalese historiography, legal, ritual and religious practices of 19th century Nepal, deeds and diplomatics of different pre-modern South Asian regional cultures to digital methods in European diplomatics and archival research, will shed light on a broad variety of documentary practices in South Asia and beyond. Confirmed speakers include among others Diwakar Acharya (Kyoto), Monika Boehm-Tettelbach (Heidelberg), Polly O'Hanlon (Oxford), Timothy Lubin (Washington), Charles Ramble (Paris) and Alexander von Rospatt (Berkeley).

External guests are welcome. Prior registration is required. Please contact: [simon.cubelic@adw.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:simon.cubelic@adw.uni-heidelberg.de)

For details see: <http://www.haw.uni-heidelberg.de/forschung/forschungstellen/nepal/projekt.en.html>



A pañjāpatra of King Rājendra (1846), National Archives Kathmandu.

Foto: Manik Bajracharya.