

THE SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE
FIFTY YEARS OF LOOKING AHEAD IN SOUTH ASIA

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The South Asia Institute at Heidelberg University is Europe's leading centre for the Study of South Asia. Since our founding in 1962, we have focused on all of the countries of South Asia: not just India but also Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, along with neighbouring regions like Tibet and Afghanistan that have important historical and cultural links to South Asia. Our cutting-edge research and teaching is sustained by an equally strong focus on traditional subjects like language and history, which we regard as a necessary basis for the study of current issues. Unlike any other institute of its kind in the world, the South Asia Institute maintains branch offices in Delhi, Islamabad, Kathmandu, and Colombo. We conduct teaching and research on all the major communities of South Asia: Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis and Adivasis (tribal peoples), along with South Asia's numerous linguistic communities. In fact, we offer more South Asian languages than any other comparable Institute in Europe. Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Bengali, Tibetan and Sanskrit are offered on a regular basis; other languages like Nepali, Dari, Pashto, Pali and Sinhala are offered from time to time. Our Geography Department with its state-of-the-art equipment makes an important contribution to advanced regional studies that is not available elsewhere, our library of 260,000 volumes is the largest of its kind in Europe, and our Special Collection "South Asia," supported by the German Research Foundation, is unparalleled.

LANGUAGE-BASED STUDY AND FIELDWORK METHODS

We urge all of our students (and require many of them) to attain competence in at least one South Asian language, and unlike similar institutes, we have the expertise to support this. Students in our language departments acquire important skills in textual and cultural analysis. We encourage those in fieldwork-based disciplines to acquire working knowledge of at least one South Asian language, and those conducting text- and archive-based research to supplement this with fieldwork. With nearly fifty years' experience developing academic networks in South Asia, we can arrange a wide variety of internships for our students. We offer regular Summer Schools (spoken Sanskrit has been offered since 2000), language teaching in India (for example, Hindi in Jaipur), and regular excursions (to Kathmandu, Varanasi, Tamil Nadu, Pakistan, the Western Himalayas, etc.)

TEACHING

We offer an interdisciplinary B.A. and an M.A. in South Asian Studies, as well as a unique inter-disciplinary M.A. *Health and Society in South Asia*. In addition, our students pursue degrees in the eleven disciplines represented by the Institute and its departments: Anthropology, Art History, Buddhist Studies, Classical Languages, Economics, Geography, History, Modern Languages, Political Science, Theology, and Transcultural Studies. Our disciplinary breadth was notably expanded after a nationwide competition in which the German Research Foundation elected to support Heidelberg University in establishing the Centre of Excellence *Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows*. Nowhere in Europe is such a wide spectrum of teaching and research on South Asia to be found.

RESEARCH

Our research interests are very broad, and we continually explore new themes, but nevertheless a few areas of emphasis can be identified. These include:

Politics and Economics

The international importance of the South Asian region, especially India, is rapidly growing. Our departments specializing in the Politics and Economics of South Asia are an integral part of the Institute, and help in numerous ways to contribute to policy development and to

the analysis of international commerce between South Asia and Europe. Current research focuses on democracy and development through projects on citizenship, governance, security, and identity.

Visual Studies

Visual Studies combining Media Anthropology and Art History, is a focus of the South Asia Institute and its partners in the Centre of Excellence. We offer numerous opportunities for study and research in this field, which continues to attract a large number of students, and is available only in Heidelberg.

The Himalayas

Four of our Professors are Himalayan specialists, and Himalayan Studies is an important option in our new M.A. degree. Current and planned research in the area focuses on the themes of global warming, development, and the Tibetan-Indian cultural interface.

Ritual

A major, eleven-year Collaborative Research Programme (Sonderforschungsbereich) *Ritual Dynamics*, in which the majority of the departments of the South Asia Institute are involved, has shown that ritual continues to be an important part of private and public life in India, just as it is elsewhere in the world.

Transcultural Studies

Transcultural Studies is a major focus of the South Asia Institute, within the framework of the Centre of Excellence *Asia and Europe in a Global Context*. Here we study the increasing interconnectedness of South Asia in a globalized world, in areas ranging from popular culture to international finance, as well as the strong historical connections between South Asia and other cultural spheres in the past, both within Asia and beyond. Many of us are interested in issues of migration, not only from South Asia to Europe but also within South Asia itself.

Health

Europeans and North Americans make increasing use of South Asian traditional healing systems like Ayurveda; at the same time, India has become a world leader in medical education and in the provision of medical services. We have a number of active research projects in this area, and offer a two-year, research-based M.A. *Health and Society in South Asia*, unique in Europe.

SUBSTANTIVE COOPERATION

We are committed to working partnerships with South Asian colleagues: not just talking about them, but actually implementing them. Many of our students and staff come from the countries of South Asia, and nearly all of our projects are conducted with academic partners from the region. We always have several Visiting Professors from South Asia, sponsored by countries like India and Pakistan, as well as by the Federal German State of Baden-Wuerttemberg. Prominent among these are the *Heinrich Zimmer Chair for Indian Philosophy and Intellectual History*, and the *Allama Iqbal Professorship*, supported by the Governments of India and Pakistan, respectively.

For research and teaching in South Asia, nowhere compares to the South Asian Institute. Whether you are interested in politics, economics, religion, languages, history, health, or geography, it is here that you will find the broadest spectrum of teaching, the most up-to-date research, and the most fruitful partnerships with colleagues, students, and friends in South Asia. To find out more about us, have a look at our website: www.sai.uni-heidelberg.de

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