

## 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 fields 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 juridical/legal, administrative or religious without, however, exhibiting neat separations between these fields.

The proposed conference is organized under the auspices of the project “Historical Documents from Premodern Nepal” (<http://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 premodern societies, with a special focus on South Asia, but also including insights gained with material from beyond this regional context.

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



International  
Academy Conference  
Heidelberg  
4–6 October 2015

### HEIDELBERGER AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN

University of Heidelberg  
South Asia Institute  
Im Neuenheimer Feld 330  
(rooms 211/212)  
69120 Heidelberg

### ANMELDUNG UND KONTAKT

katharina.graetz@germanistik.uni-freiburg.de  
sebastian.kaufmann@adw.uni-heidelberg.de

### Titelbild: ■■■■

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

Die Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften ist Mitglied  
in der Union der deutschen Akademien der Wissenschaften

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**HEIDELBERGER AKADEMIE  
DER WISSENSCHAFTEN**

Akademie der Wissenschaften  
des Landes Baden-Württemberg

SENDER

SURNAME

NAME

STREET

VENUE

PHONE

FAX

E-MAIL

UNIVERSITY OF HEIDELBERG  
SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE  
SIMON CUBELIC  
IM NEUENHEIMER FELD 330  
(ROOMS 211/212)  
69120 HEIDELBERG



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# PROGRAM

ANTWORTKARTE

## SUNDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2015

18:30 WELCOME  
DINNER FOR CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS  
(on invitation)

## MONDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2015

9:00 WELCOME ADDRESS  
**BERND SCHNEIDMÜLLER**

9:15 **Panel I: Chronicles and Records**  
Chair: Axel Michaels

**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

10:45 COFFEE BREAK

11:00 **Panel II: Legal Practice 1**  
Chair: Kerstin von Lingen

**AXEL MICHAELS**

Are Hindu Women/Widows Allowed to Establish a Śiva  
Temple? A Question Asked in a Letter to Jaṅga Bahādura  
Rāṅṅā dated 1843 CE

**RAJAN KHATIWODA**

Documented Evidence on the Implementation  
of the (*Mulukī*) *Ain* in mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century

**SIMON CUBELIC**

The Legal Status of Gambling in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Nepal:  
The Case of the Annapūrṇā Temple in Asan, Kathmandu

DISCUSSION

12:45 LUNCH BREAK

14:00 **Panel III: Legal Practice 2**  
Chair: Monika Boehm-Tettelbach

**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 17<sup>th</sup> century Mithilā

**CHARLES RAMBLE**

Procedures for Solemnising Tibetan Covenants and Other  
Documents in Highland Nepal, 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

DISCUSSION

16:15 COFFEE BREAK

16:30 **Panel IV: Digitizing Documents**  
Chair: Madeleine Herren-Oesch

**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  
“Historical Documents of Nepal”

DISCUSSION

18:00 **END OF PANEL IV**

19:00 CONFERENCE DINNER

## TUESDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2015

9:00 **Panel V: Administration**  
Chair: Jörg Gengnagel

**CHRISTOF ZOTTER**

Ascetics in Administrative Affairs.  
Documents on the *mahantamaṅḍalāī*

**MONIKA BOEHM-TETTELBACH**

Revenue Grants from Rajasthan (17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> 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

11:00 **Panel VI: Documents and the Palace**  
Chair: Hans Harder

**MANIK BAJRACHARYA**

Newars in the Court of Early Shah and Rana Rulers

**RAMESH DHUNGEL**

PM Jangabhadur'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 BOARD

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

International Academy Conference of the research project  
*Historical Documents from Premodern 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 8 June 2015.