11.12.2012 R316, SAI Heidelberg 18:15 Uhr - Prof. Dr. Ines Županov -
*Catholic Orientalism in India: Missionary Philology between Translation and Conversion (16th-18th c.)*.

In my presentation I will be looking into linguistic and philological practices that Portuguese officials and Catholic missionaries developed in the early modern period in India. The encounter between Portuguese language and Indian vernaculars has been both a traumatic and creative moment of cultural encounter. It is also one of the most understudied topics, which has only recently attracted attention by both linguists and historians. One of the reasons for this neglect can be traced back to the Enlightenment and British imperial strategies of demeaning and dismissing Catholic and Jesuit knowledge. Even the very recent Anglophone historiography has been oblivious of these early philological and linguistic production, so that Bernard Cohn, whose article «The Command of Language, the Language of Command» was a source of inspiration to most us in the late 1980s, stated impudently and imprudently that "the British appear to have been ignorant of Portuguese, German, Danish and Dutch grammars and dictionaries when they embarked on their own properly speaking Orientalist campaign". I have three goals in my presentation: 1) to chronicle the way in which Portuguese, the language of the empire, engaged with Indian vernacular languages, just as English did more than two centuries later; 2) to bring into play Catholic missionaries who were the first and the most important actors in the story of linguistic encounter. Importantly, they discovered that translating Christianity into “pagan” tongues was far from an easy task linguistically, epistemologically, theologically and politically; 3) and, in the conclusion I propose to answer the question why this knowledge was devalued in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries. And I will argue that, besides the fact that it was not shored up by sufficient financial grants and the printing press, its “Catholic” quality and purpose played an important role since the labor of Enlightenment and Enlightenment empires systematically excised whatever smacked of Popish religion.

20.11.2012 Z10, SAI Heidelberg 18:15 Uhr - Dr. Yaaminey Mubayi -
*ECOLOGY, RELIGION AND CULTURE IN SYNERGETIC INTERACTION: A CASE-STUDY OF THE ELLORA REGION.*

08.11.2012 Z10, SAI Heidelberg 18:15 Uhr - Instituts-Kolloquium: Dr. Yaaminey Mubayi -

The region of Ellora-Khuldabad-Daulatabad is one of great historical significance in the Indian sub-continent. It was a zone where four major religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam, converged and co-existed; it lay on major trade and pilgrimage routes and was an important political centre of medieval India. This multi-dimensional historic background is represented in the architecture and building typologies, water management technologies (which may have travelled with the Sufis who migrated here from Central and West Asia in the 13th-14th centuries), local myths and rituals, and above all, an ethos of co-existence and sharing of resources amongst diverse communities, still existent today. In particular, community based practices of water management have ensured the survival and development of this political and religious centre for two millennia.
The paper will explore ways in which historical processes of state formation, evolution of pilgrimage centres, relationships between urban settlements and the rural hinterland are underpinned by an understanding of the region’s ecology, particularly the rock-type (Deccan Basalt) and its manifestations, on the part of local communities.


The Left has traditionally been written about in two dominant ways. One is through a nationalist lens which considers Leftist politics in the period leading up to decolonization and beyond as misguided at best and traitorous at worst. The other is through a hagiographical gaze which glorifies the Left’s contribution in the freedom struggle against the British Raj. In short, both narratives view the Left through the prism of the Nation. In line with recent writing on the subject, this paper will attempt to situate the Left in a space which lies beyond the narrow confines of nationalist rejection or appropriation. It will seek to analyze the international, national and, very often, the regional and local considerations that shaped Leftist politics during this period. This analysis will not only highlight the need for studying the Left on its own terms but it will also examine its politics as a symptom of the wider trends in South Asian politics during this period; which included some of the more obvious continuities between the colonial and post-colonial states.

10.07.2012 Raum 316, SAI Heidelberg 18:00 Uhr - Frau Manju Ludwig M.A.: Murder in the Andamans - A Colonial Narrative of Sodomites, Jealousy and Violence

The penal settlement of the Andamans, which was established in 1858 to accommodate the "worst" criminal convicts as well as political prisoners of the British Raj, was until its disbandment in 1945 the object of much debate among colonial officers intent on devising a satisfactory penal regime for British India. The penal colony in the Indian Ocean had been excoriated for its many defects (high mortality rates, inefficient labour system, lack of discipline among convicts) and various recommendations for reform had been voiced over the years both from within the colonial regime as well as by outsiders. One of the frequent criticisms concerned the exceptionally high number of alleged cases of "unnatural vice" among the largely male convict population for which the Andamans had become infamous. These narratives of sodomy in the penal settlement posed a problem for the British regime since they contradicted and undermined the colonial claim to moral reform in the penal settlement. My talk will focus on one specific type of historical source from the colonial archive in which the topoi of sodomy, jealousy and violence figure prominently: the judicial files concerned with acts of murder (by convicts against fellow convicts) in the penal settlement of the Andamans. The narrative in these files elucidates the incoherent ways in which colonial officials of different ranks tried to rationalise the phenomenon of same-sex behaviour by employing pseudo-scientific theories of criminality and race. Even though this documentary corpus predominately represents an official colonial perspective, it, nonetheless, allows us to recover fragments of subaltern native voices which may also shed light on indigenous notions of same-sex
The 'India Growth Story' has been for over a decade the toast of the West, particularly in that, unlike China, India is an electoral democracy. The 'India Shining' story has had a far more nuanced reception at home. Today, even for the elite it carved out and entrenched, it is a story in some danger. But what was it like for the hundreds of millions of Indians for whom nine per cent growth did not translate into higher living standards? How did the liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation that India embraced from 1991 onwards impact India's poor? What was the impact of the Growth Story on hunger, deprivation, livelihoods? Why has the country seen a quarter of a million farm suicides between 1995 and 2010? Twenty years after the great leap forward of July 1991 is a good time to look at those questions. Palagummi Sainath is an Indian development journalist - a term he himself avoids, instead preferring to call himself a 'rural reporter', or simply a 'reporter', focusing on social problems, rural affairs, poverty and the aftermaths of globalization in India. He spends much of the year in the rural interior. He is the Rural Affairs Editor for The Hindu, and contributes his columns to India Together. His work has won praise from the likes of Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen who referred him as "one of the world's great experts on famine and hunger". In 2007 he was the winner of the Ramon Prize.


Europe in the interwar period, in particular political, economic and social developments in Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany in the 1930s constituted a focal point of Indian public opinion and did influence Indian nationalism. Indian nationalists, living outside the subcontinent, linked
with the fascist regimes or antifascist movements, reported constantly and comprehensively about the phenomenon "fascism" in newspapers and journals published in South Asia. These reports, along with personal contacts entertained with their fellow countrymen, contributed to the perception and responses of Fascism and National Socialism in India. In my paper, I propose to examine the engagement of the Bengali nationalist Taraknath Das with Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany. Das, who lived for several years in both these countries, actively promoted German and Italian cultural and educational exchange relations with his homeland. He also published widely about his experiences on the spot. Hence, the questions my paper addresses are how did Taraknath Das perceive and discuss Fascism and National Socialism? Which of their policies were in his opinion worth emulating in the Indian context and why? And finally which continuities and ruptures can be detected in his engagement with both the phenomena?

29.05.2012 Raum 316, SAI Heidelberg 18:00 Uhr - Frau Eleonor Marcussen: "RECONCILIATION AND RECONSTRUCTION: SERVICE CIVIL INTERNATIONAL IN BIHAR, 1934 - 1937"

This presentation examines Service Civil International’s (SCI) work and ideas as the organisation moved beyond the borders of Europe and began reconstruction work after an earthquake in Bihar in 1934. Previous scholarly accounts have discussed ideologies underpinning the work and policies of the British colonial state, 'western' philanthropists, and 'indigenous' associations in relief work in the colonial era, while forms and aims of emerging international relief collaborations in the last centuries before independence have been mostly ignored. The case of SCI sheds light on continuities and breaks in as far as previous networks of Christian missionaries and local relief workers provided a network of cooperation partners, while at the same time, contemporary ideological affinities and colonial considerations proved crucial in transforming the reconstruction work into a political project.

SCI, a relief organisation inspired by European post-World War I pacifist ideologies and Christian ethics, was founded on the idea that relief work in international teams could promote peace and reconciliation. In Europe such work had been organised in order to facilitate national reconciliation; in Bihar the reconciliation aimed at the colonial state and Indian nationalists, and was thus positioned between 'the West and the East'. The presentation first seeks to understand the organisation's motives and ideas behind initiating the project in India; and secondly, it analyses the SCI's role in cooperation with other local relief organisations as well as the government.

15.05.2012 Raum 316, SAI Heidelberg 18:00 Uhr - Frau Divya Narayanan: Historicising Indo-Persian Cookbooks: Analytical Perspectives in the Explo-ration of Culinary and Cultural Pasts

As textual repositories of a historical culinary universe, Indo-Persian cookbooks provide a window to understanding the material culture and socio-cultural environment within which they were
composed and circulated. In this talk, I will discuss what Indo-Persian culinary manuals produced between the sixteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries can tell us about dietary milieus, culinary cultures, and perceptions of taste, as well as about the nature of connoisseurship and the role of food as a socio-political symbol in Mughal and post-Mughal India. I will also examine methodologies of analysis well as problems encountered in interpreting these texts. I shall begin with the sixteenth century text Nimat Nama, discussing its implicit construction of the connoisseur-patron/consumer through an analysis both of its text and miniature illustrations. I will then go on to discuss a broad array of texts right up to the mid-nineteenth century, including short, roughly scribbled cookbooks and Persian medical manuscripts that occasionally verge on being culinary manuals. My analysis of the textuality of these cookbooks or recipe manuals will be accompanied by an examination of various methodological issues concerning the dating of manuscripts and of interrogating their provenance, audience, and authorship. Finally, I will conclude by looking at what cookbooks mean as a historical source within the pre-modern Indian context, as well as situating their locus within a broad corpus of sources available for the study of food cultures.

30.04.2012 Raum Z10 18:00 Uhr - Prof. Dr. Sucheta Mahajan:
Beyond the Archive: Doing Oral History in Contemporary India

In discussing the recent trend of oral history which has energized Indian historiography, this presentation highlights the movement of historical study and research beyond the confines of written archives and official records to the village chaupals and rural fields, to the offices of trade unions, to factory canteens, to simple homes where people gather, meet and live their lives. I shall take a close look at two oral history initiatives to explore issues of methodology and ethics, as well as the transformative aspects of the exercise. The first is the project (of which I was a member) sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research on the history of the freedom movement, conducted by professors and researchers at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU); and the second, testimonies of the survivors/victims of the Partition recorded by researchers.

23.04.2012 Peterskirche, Heidelberg 12:30 Uhr - Prof. Dharampal-Frick:
Was ist Südasien - historisch gesehen?


30.04.2012 Raum Z10 18:00 Uhr - Prof. Dr. Sucheta Mahajan: Beyond the Archive: Doing Oral History in Contemporary India

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written archives and official records to the village chaupals and rural fields, to the offices of trade unions, to factory canteens, to simple homes where people gather, meet and live their lives. I shall take a close look at two oral history initiatives to explore issues of methodology and ethics, as well as the transformative aspects of the exercise. The first is the project (of which I was a member) sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research on the history of the freedom movement, conducted by professors and researchers at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU); and the second, testimonies of the survivors/ victims of the Partition recorded by researchers.

15.12.2011 Raum 317 11:15 Uhr - Prof. Dr. Sanyukta Das Gupta: British 19th century colonial reports on the tribal areas of Jharkhand

European travel literature of the nineteenth century provides a crucial window for analysing the nature of the European encounter with non-European cultures. This paper looks at a particular form of encounter in colonial India - that of British civil and military officers in course of their official tours and military adventures in Chotanagpur and the Santhal Parganas in eastern-central India, then a part of the Bengal Presidency and now located mainly in the Indian state of Jharkhand. Utilising the diaries, memoirs and reminiscences and also the local histories authored by them, this paper explores how such a class of British officialdom responded to an unfamiliar landscape, perceived the colonised populations and reacted to racial and cultural differences. The purpose behind the publication of such private reminiscences was to inform and instruct not only general readers, but also the decision-makers, the bureaucrats and the politicians; hence, these reports were intended to be 'useful' to the government in various ways. At once insiders and outsiders, their recollections and memoirs therefore provide us with an intimate picture of the inner world of the 'little kingdoms' of the district officers and their tribal subjects.

06.12.2011 Raum 316 18:00 Uhr - Milinda Banerjee: God, King, and Country: Colonial and Nationalist Discourses on Human and Divine "Monarchy" in India

In standard generalized accounts, monarchy is often visualized as a primordial institution that has been present in diverse societies across the world, but which is bound to vanish with the progress of modernity. Using a transcultural methodology, Milinda Banerjee offers an alternate view which argues that "monarchy", far from being displaced as an ideological concept and empirical phenomenon, has often been actually strengthened by "modern" ideas about unitary sovereignty, political identity, and administrative efficiency. While mono-centric visions of divine and human rulership were sometimes present in earlier societies as well, mechanisms for making monarchy unquestionably effective could perhaps only emerge with the growth of the apparatus of the sovereign state. Using India (with a primary focus on Bengal) as a case study, Banerjee demonstrates how British colonial intervention thus constructed monarchy as a mode of legitimating governance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and introduced new structures of kingship and dynasty into South Asia. Indian nationalists adapted the British perspective of monarchy, albeit to legitimate the production of a national state. In the process, British officials and Western-educated Indians anachronistically read back "monarchy" into India’s precolonial past. Indian liberals, however, differed from British administrators in emphasizing a
constitutionalist vision of precolonial monarchy, which they sometimes saw as a specifically Indian feature, and sometimes as an ancient Indo-European legacy. British colonialism also introduced or accentuated concepts of (exclusionary) monotheism and divine monarchy in political discourses about empire and nation in South Asia.

Needless to say, these conversations on human and divine "monarchy" were complicated and contested by alternative ideas which had roots in precolonial Indian practices and discourses. Particularly significant were South Asian concepts of multi-centred, collective-communitybased, and ascetic-avatar idioms of human and divine rulership. While "ascetic" and "saviourbased" ideas of leadership have transcultural genealogies, they assumed unique contours in South Asian history as they operated in conjunction with ideas of decentralized (rather than organized church-based) sacral authority and collective-popular (rather than exclusively individual/"king"-centric) notions of rulership. In the colonial period, these perspectives became important in the organization of anti-colonial peasant and "tribal" movements. They sometimes influenced middle-class nationalist visions, as well as provided bases for the reception and growth of democratic-socialist ideas of European provenance. Given that these popular visions offered resistance to colonial politics, they simultaneously contributed towards expanding the domain of institutional power in twentieth century India. Colonial Indian discourses and contestations of monarchy, therefore, offer rich sources for exploring fundamental conundrums about authority and political ethics in mediating questions of sovereignty, identity, and administrative goals in transcultural contexts. Monarchy provides a point of departure for a broader theoretical interrogation of the nature of power, and specifically of the contestations and dialogues between unifocal and pluralistic models of political power, in negotiating self-other relations within a transcultural landscape.

01.12.2011 Raum Z10 18:15 Uhr - Prof. Subrata K. Mitra: Sub-national Movements, the State and the Malleability of Political Space: The "Rational" Politics of Cultural Nationalism Hypothesis Revisited

Sub-national movements belong to the generic category of collective efforts to assert cultural nationalism in a territorial space that corresponds to an imaginary homeland. Typically, they question the fixed character of nations and central states as they strike out for their own living space. They draw their support from the affinity that their supporters feel with a particular language, religion, ethnicity, region or some deeply felt sense of collective grievance. Rising typically from a conflation of identity and material interests such movements gather force when the leading initiators succeed in attracting sympathisers from the imagined community corresponding to the cultural catchment. Central states contest the claims to legitimacy of such movements in the name of what sub-nationalists see as an outmoded nationalism, and resist their growth but eventually, when they cannot subdue them they start negotiation with the leadership of the sub-nationalist movement. Once sub-nationalists succeed in gaining power (through democratic elections or a negotiated transfer of power), a phase of banalisation of the original idea that had generated the movement in the first place sets in. In India, this phase has usually taken the form of the creation of new federal States where the leaders of the movement become office-holders of the new territorial unit.
This "rational politics of cultural nationalism" hypothesis is partially challenged in contemporary Indian politics by the emergence of some new movements from within old sub-nationalist movements that have gone through a full life cycle from initiation to banalisation. The movement for a separate Telengana State which its proponents wish to be carved out of Andhra Pradesh, one of the first sub-national movements of India, is the focus of this article. Based on this empirical exemplar, the article aims at a reappraisal of conventional models of sub-national movements in the light of counterfactuals such as the reappearance of a movement where conventional theory did not predict it, and to look for a new explanation which adds re-use of collective memory, the non-linearity of time, the dynamism of imagined communities, and cultural and conceptual "flow" to the conventional arguments of politics driven by power and interests. Instead of predicting a "once-for-all" state-formation, based on what the article calls the "illusion of permanence", the revised model presented here is more circumspect about the future, which it conceptualises in terms of probabilities, contingent on a larger cluster of factors, compared to the conventional model of the rational politics of cultural nationalism.

22.11.2011 Raum 316 18:00 Uhr - Amelia Bonea - Telegraphic Communication and Contending Visions of Journalism in Nineteenth-Century India

During the nineteenth century, the emergence of new technologies of transport and communication changed the ways in which information travelled between Britain and India. The telegraph, sometimes referred to as the internet of the nineteenth century, was conspicuous among these technologies in that it facilitated rapid communication between colony and metropolis: for the first time in human history, messages became detached from material carriers such as runners, trains or steamers and travelled solely through the invisible agency of electricity. To date, scholarly accounts of telegraphy in South Asia have focused predominantly on the military and commercial applications of this technology, overlooking the fact that the newspaper press in the subcontinent was among the earliest and most enthusiastic users of this new mode of communication. In fact, there is indication that some editors based in the northern part of India were even willing to make financial contributions towards the construction of telegraphic lines. What motivated their eagerness towards the new technology? How was the telegraph incorporated into the news reporting practices of colonial newspapers in the subcontinent? How was the use of telegraphy by the newspaper press regulated by the colonial government? What kind of visions of journalism did the new technology promote? Using a combination of colonial records, memoirs and newspapers, this paper ponders the seemingly neutral character of technology as a tool or means to an end and underscores the complex nature of news in a colonial environment, as a contested field in which power relations were constantly played out.

08.11.2011 Raum 316 18:00 Uhr - Dr. Jana Tschurenev - "Returning the Gaze? The American Women's Christian Temperance Union in Indian Perspectives"

In 1873, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was formed as part of the 'women's crusade' against saloons and liquor shops. Under the leadership of Frances Willard (1839-1898), it's 'do-everything' policy included, most prominently, campaigning for (Anglo-Saxon) women's right
to vote. Guided by a belief in American women's providential mission to care for their 'enslaved sisters', moreover, the 'World's WCTU' started to work internationally for temperance and social reform. The presentation contrasts the WCTU's 'feminist imperialism' with sources written by Indian commentators, such as Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922), thus trying to put Western internationalism and its limitations in another perspective.

25.10.2011 Raum 316 - Mr. Irfanullah Farooqi (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) :
"From Islam to Muslims: An Inquiry into the Evolution of Iqbal’s Thought"

Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) is one of the most prominent figures of 20th century colonial India. With reference to Indian Muslims’ response to modernity, he is placed next to Sayyid Ahmad Khan. However, unlike Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Iqbal’s relationship with Islam is considered to be of a purer kind. His poetry too is revered for its typically Islamic character. The lecture will revisit the whole idea of Iqbal being “Poet of Islam”, a title being conferred upon him almost unanimously. Specifically paying attention to the post-Europe phase of his life, the arguments will be around Iqbal’s Islam and the way it evolved vis-à-vis his lived conditions. Given the importance of it, the famous 1930 Presidential Address will be analysed, however, through a fresh vantage point. With the help of his letters and a book titled Stray Reflections, the idea is to bring back Iqbal into the realm of the ordinary, thereby paving up ways for a more informed understanding of the person.

22.7.2011 - Prof. Dr. Shubhada Joshi,: "Ayurveda and Yoga"

The ancient tradition of Ayurveda literally meaning ‘knowledge about human life’ is based on the philosophy of Samkhya, one of the oldest schools of Indian philosophy. - Yoga is also a philosophical school which is inseparably associated with Samkhya philosophy. It is Samkhya epistemology and metaphysics, which is acceptable to both Ayurveda as well as Yoga. - According to Samkhya, human person is a product of ‘pure consciousness’ (Purusa) and pure matter (Prakriti). The sense organs, which also include mind, the sense objects, the five subtle and gross elements (Panchamahabhutas) etc. are all products of pure matter. When consciousness and pure matter come together, a human person, as well as the whole animate and inanimate world, comes into existence. The matter consists of three qualities sattva, rajas and tamas. Sattva is luminous, bright, pure, virtue, etc. Rajas is the moving or stimulating principle because of which either sattva or tamas change homogenously or heterogeneously. Tamas is dark, sloth, inertia, non-virtue/vice, etc. - The concept of health is important for both Yoga as well as Ayurveda. For Ayurveda, healthy life is of two types viz. sukham ayuh (happy life) and hitam ayuh (healthy and useful life). A person leading sukham ayuh or quality life is having good health, both physical and mental and also achieves goals. The unhealthy life is asukham ayuh. A person leading hitam ayuh has qualities such as concern for all beings, does not aspire for other’s wealth, is truthful, peace-loving, vigilant, has control over raga-dvesha, respects superiors, is knowledgeable, gives for charity, etc. Such a person is a useful member of society, practising virtue and leading a quality life. - Yoga also speaks of healthy life. For Yoga, healthy life is the basic precondition to practice the eightfold path of Yoga. It does not
give importance to sukham ayuh, for life where there is absence of diseases, is a happy life. According to Yoga, overcoming diseases is important as a beginning for hitam ayuh, i.e. life for the fulfillment of a higher goal like the realization of the real nature of a human person. - Ayurveda and Yoga believe in the phenomenon of disturbance of balance between the three qualities (gunas) or three types – vata, kapha, pitta. To set right the harmony by overcoming the distributed balance, both systems use certain cleansing methods known as shuddhi kriyas. The purpose of these cleansing techniques is to purify the body as well as the mind. That is why Yoga’s eightfold path begins with Yama and Niyamas, the aspects giving guidance for practice of virtue and good moral conduct. - It believes that it is the healthy, virtuous mind that will keep the body healthy. Ayurveda also emphasizes appropriate diet, right type of thinking and right type of exercise (yukta ahara, vichara and vihara). - The approach of both Ayurveda and Yoga is holistic. It considers ‘body-mind and self’ as human person. Hence, disease is dealt with from an holistic perspective. Ayurveda prescribes not only the treatment for physical body but also for the mind. For both Ayurveda and Yoga, each individual is unique. Hence the health or ill-health of each individual is evaluated and treated in the unique way. The medicine prescribed for the cure is a personalized one. Likewise, in the case of Yoga, the practice of the eightfold path is advised to each individual according to his or her capacity, attitudes, aptitudes, likes, dislikes, etc. There are many similarities between the two as both are aiming at quality life of individuals. Hence, a synergy between the two may be of a help to attain better health for a human person.

21.7.2011 - Prof. Dr. Shubhada Joshi,: "Multiculturalism and India: Its philosophy and society"

The word ‘multiculturalism’ implies acceptance of plurality of cultures, variety of religions, as well as various multiplural philosophies. It also indicates the cordial and harmonious relations between various cultures which are made up of different religions, philosophies, languages, customs and traditions. - The need to develop an approach of respect towards a variety of cultures has become the urgent need of our society, as harmony and peace of the world are in danger. - The plurality of cultures, which includes a variety of religions, philosophies, languages as well as other aspects of culture, has existed in India since ancient times. India has always been culturally diverse and yet has been united, and within the multiplicity of cultures, there remained certain undercurrents binding the people together. - Before presenting the Indian saga of multiculturalism, it is necessary to understand the significance of ‘culture’. The progress of science and technology is the outer aspect of any society, whereas culture, i.e. religion, philosophy, language, literature etc., constitutes the inner aspect of social life. It shapes the values, the ‘formation’ contrasted with ‘information’. It makes a human being a human person. The legacy of wisdom is a gift of culture to human society. The variety of the ‘inner’ is an important aspect of the unique individuality of members of a society. Harmony between the variety of cultural heritages has always enriched the life quality of the people as well as of society. - In India, plurality, diversity and variety have always been respected, as testified by its history of ruptures and assimilations. The first major rupture was more philosophical and religious rather than political. The rise of the Sramana tradition, i.e. the philosophy of the Buddha and the Jainas was a vital blow to Vedic philosophy. Yet it did not create unrest or violence,
mainly because of the non-exclusivist, tolerant philosophies of both the Vedics and the Sramanas. The epistemological and philosophical framework of the Vedanta, Buddhists and Jainas provided room for variety, multiplicity, plurality along with respect and love. - The ‘indescribable’ (anirvacaniya) of Vedanta, the ‘beyond categories’ of the Bauddhas and the ‘syadvada’ of the Jainas constitute the fundamental philosophical positions, along with the ethics of respect and love for all human beings and nature, which laid the foundation of multiculturalism. - The second rupture was rather painful; it came in the form of Islamic invasions. This constituted both a political encounter as well as a cultural one. Understanding how with the help of ‘bhakti’ or ‘movement of devotion’, Indian society could come to terms with Islamic influence and reconstruct a new form of plurality, constitutes an interesting field of study. Despite the encounter with an ‘exclusivist’ religio-cultural framework, including the trauma of religious conversions, nonetheless, Indian society could maintain its faith in multiculturalism. - The third blow was through the ‘British Raj’. This was mainly political, though religio-cultural as well because Christianity and modernity accompanied British rule. This represented another encounter with an exclusivist religion, namely Christianity, along with ‘modernization’ which was ‘empirical’, ‘rational’, ‘individualist’ and ‘right-centric’. This was in contrast to the Indian world view which was ‘spiritual’, ‘wisdom-oriented’, ‘holistic’ and ‘duty-centric’. It is also very enlightening to study how this encounter was responded to by Indian thinkers in the 19th and 20th century, with the aim of preserving their faith in ‘unity in diversity’ and maintaining the tradition of ‘multiculturalism’. - The contemporary neglect of the ‘outer’ aspect of religion is not a matter of concern. What is more serious is the neglect of the ‘inner’ value base, which makes man rise higher in the realm of ethics, aesthetics and spirituality. This represents the content of the ‘quality of life’, which cannot be reduced to outer, technological progress. - It is maintained that the question of ‘life-quality’ may be meaningfully raised only after the attainment of luxury and affluence, i.e. ‘food first and then ethics’. But the curious fact about human beings and modern societies is that, despite material benefits, human beings fail to experience contentment and happiness and find new miseries for themselves, new neuroses and pathologies and even a new science to deal with these problems. When this state of discontent prevails, a certain degree of awakening regarding the hollowness of technological comfort takes place and the search for the ‘inner’ begins to be taken seriously. - The writings of post-modern thinkers reveal the violence, concealment and degeneration involved in technological change and progress. What would be helpful towards reconstructing the well-being of society and human persons would be to apply ‘wisdom’ and a critique of such wisdom inherited through cultural and religio-ethical traditions. Such reconstruction will be the mark of a living society, progressing in the direction of peace and well-being not only of one nation but of the entire globe.

12.7.2011 - Frau Eleonor Marcussen M.A.: Natural disasters and development: outcomes of reconstruction work and visions of a ‘new’ India in 1930s Bihar

In the 1930s, India experienced major challenges and changes in terms of economic and social development. In this chapter I discuss the development discourses that underpinned reconstruction work of towns and infrastructure in the aftermath of the earthquake in Bihar in 1934. As recent research has already argued, the principal disagreements on development centred on diverging
perceptions regarding the ‘progress’ implicit in development and, secondly, on identifying the legitimate agents to implement development in India during this time. On the basis of archival sources, such as town development plans and correspondences between committees, I argue that the reconstruction and planning of infrastructure reflect political discourses on ‘development’ contained in local, national as well as international aspirations and aims. The chapter has two interconnected goals. First, in order to contextualise the course reconstruction work took in Bihar I aim to place it within a larger framework of discourses on ‘development’, both social and economic, in India in the 1930s. The second goal is to study and analyse the landscape of Bihar as a special case for reconstruction after disasters given that the region’s recurrent experiences with both floods and droughts had set the agenda for official and non-official approaches in coming to terms with disasters. However, as argued in the last part, the reconstruction work undertaken in Bihar in the 1930s served mainly to reap political and economical dividends for sections of both the nationalist movement as well as the colonial government.

Prof. Dr. Indivar Kamtekar: “Looking beyond flags: The 1940s in India”

The standard interpretation of the 1940s in India focuses on the contest between the forces of imperialism and nationalism, leading to Indian independence in August 1947, when the British flag was lowered, and India’s tricolour was unfurled. By looking in detail at the workings of the state, it is however possible to sketch a picture which the standard interpretation has overshadowed so far. A new interpretation emerges, which enables us to understand some crucial aspects of Indian history in the forty years after independence.


Prof. Dr. Lynn Zastoupil: Provincializing England: Rammohun Roy and the Globalization of Anti-Trinitarian Satire

This presentation explores the transnational circulation of anti-Trinitarian satire from Britain to Bengal and back in the early nineteenth century, as well as the political uses to which this satire was put. Attention is given to Dialogue between a Trinitarian Missionary and Three Chinese Converts, originally published in London in 1818 and republished in Kolkata in 1823. Long, but mistakenly, attributed to the pen of Rammohun Roy, this anti-Trinitarian satire inspired Rammohun to employ similar means against the missionaries and colonial authorities in Bengal. When the Dialogue appeared in Kolkata, Rammohun, writing under the pseudonym of Ram Doss, used its central rhetorical strategy—taking Trinitarian ideas at their face value—to mock Christianity as a form of polytheism akin to Hinduism. In a controversy over the obituary he wrote for the first bishop of Calcutta, Rammohun employed this same strategy to place the highest colonial official in India on a level with the lowest of his Hindu subjects. Placed alongside Rammohun’s critical writings on the English political and religious establishment, these satirical works reveal a concerted effort to provincialize England (but not Scotland) as a laggard nation in the progress towards rational religion and political liberty.

Prof. Ronald Inden (Chicago): Popular Patriotism in Indian Film

Am 10.05.2011 findet um 18 Uhr in Raum Z10 des SAI Heidelberg eine gemeinsame Lektüre mit anschließender Diskussion zum Thema 'Popular Patriotism in Indian Film' unter der Leitung unseres Gastes Prof. Ronald Inden statt. Die Abteilung lädt alle Interessierten herzlich ein und würde sich über eine rege Beteiligung freuen.

Prof. Dr. Pius Malekandathil: From Crusade to Collaboration: Changing Meanings of the Portuguese Relations with the Indian Ocean Muslims, 1500-1650

This talk looks into the meanings of nuanced relationship that the Portuguese maintained with different categories of Indian Ocean Muslims at different time points. The spirit of crusade, associated by many with the initial phase of geographical discoveries of the Portuguese, eventually gave way to pragmatic approaches, whereby economically and politically useful Muslim segments were identified and increasingly accommodated as collaborators by the Portuguese in their attempt to expand their political and commercial horizons. With the major strands of Indian Ocean trade being dominated by the Muslim merchants and a great bulk of South Asia being ruled by Muslim rulers, the Portuguese realized that a crusade would not be possible in Asian waters and hence they were compelled to re-define their attitude towards Muslims and enter into different degrees of relationship with them on the basis of their commercial and political utility. They relatively
maintained a good rapport with such larger political players as the Mughals, the Safavids and the Omanis, obviously to keep the greatest threat of the times, the Ottomans, out of the maritime space of Indian Ocean. The smaller players like the king of Cannanore and the sultan of Aceh were already absorbed as collaborators supplying cargo, while the Deccani sultanates of Golconda and Bijapur were networked through Portuguese renegades and adventurers. When the Estado da India moved towards carving out more and more collaborators and supportive bases out of Muslim political houses, the private Portuguese casado traders expanded their commercial ties with the various segments of Muslim merchants of coastal western India. The Portuguese private traders, initially marrying Muslim ladies and expanding commercial networks with the Muslim relatives, played vital role not only in diluting the crusading spirit, but also in developing different layers of networks with Muslim societies of the Indian Ocean.

Interview mit Professor Ranajit Guha

Professor Ranajit Guha ist Gründer der Subaltern Studies Group einer höchst einflussreichen historischen Schule. Als prominenter indischer Historiker hat Professor Guha mehrere Bücher über Geschichte, Geschichtsschreibung und Politik Südasiens geschrieben. Sein Buch Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India wird allgemein als Standardwerk angesehen.

04. bis 05. Februar 2011:

Interdisziplinärer Doktoranden-Workshop zum Thema "Hierarchie und Emanzipation"
organisiert von Prof. Dr. Gita Dharampal-Frick, Rafael Klöber M.A., Manju Ludwig M.A., Jonathan Reinhard.

Der Workshop richtet sich an Promovierende der Geschichts-, Sozial-, Literatur-, Regional- und Kulturwissenschaften sowie verwandter humanwissenschaftlicher Fächer. Das Thema "Hierarchie und Emanzipation" soll aus unterschiedlichen Forschungsperspektiven und Blickwinkeln beleuchtet und konzeptionell hinterfragt werden. Gerade die postkolonialen und postmodernen Theoriedebatten haben Fragen darüber aufgeworfen, wie mit solchen normativen und epistemischen Kategorien umgegangen werden kann. Daher gilt es die Nützlichkeit solcher Begriffe für die wissenschaftliche Arbeit zu überprüfen, ohne dabei den Blick für die empirische Forschung zu verlieren. Der Workshop will promovierenden Nachwuchswissenschaftlern/innen die Möglichkeit geben, ihre jeweiligen Dissertationsprojekte einem breiten interdisziplinären Publikum zu präsentieren und soll dem fruchtbaren akademischen Austausch dienen.

Dienstag, 18. Januar 18:00 Uhr c.t., RAUM 316: Vortrag:

When a river shifts its course: Gangetic diaras and the colonial state, 1760s-1890s von Dr. Nitin Sinha (ZMO, Berlin)
By looking at the interplay of law and revenue in understanding the colonial practices and policies towards diaras, the paper addresses a fairly neglected field of agrarian-ecological history of South Asia. The constant formation and disappearance of lands raised several issues of which the permanent and stable revenue extraction and the fixation of proprietorial rights were the most important from the viewpoint of the colonial state. While using a number of case-studies, the paper argues that although maximisation of revenue did not necessarily mean the dilution of the idea of perpetual settlement, throughout the nineteenth century the state nonetheless failed to arrive at a standardised set of practice because of its own structural (bureaucratic) incoherency and its ideological underpinnings.

Freitag, 14. Januar 10:00 Uhr c.t., KJC, Voßstr. 2, R.212: Vortrag gefördert vom Exzellenzcluster "Asia and Europe"

"Between Empire and Nation: Internationalism in Interwar India and Britain" von Prof. Dr. Manu Goswami (Department of History, New York University)

Internationalism is commonly heralded as a central political force of the twentieth century. Yet in contrast to the vast scholarship on a comparable phenomenon such as nationalism, that on internationalism is conspicuously meagre. There is little consensus about its intellectual foundations, the sources of its global resonance, and its political trajectory. My project, which examines a cohort of Indian and British intellectuals and activists in the decades between the first and second world wars, suggests that internationalism is part of the global history of political modernism, that its ideological origins are distinct from its competitors such as nationalism and imperialism, and that its global appeal during the 1920s and 1930s prompts a rethink of the interwar era as a world-wide historical conjuncture. My proposed book brings together a group of intellectuals, organizations, insurgencies, and legal trials in colonial India and Britain that have been regarded as discrete, rooted in incommensurate intellectual and political constellations, or whose significance has been overlooked. Precisely because internationalism was a trans-regional phenomenon, I adopt a comparative framework attuned to the unities among its diverse regional expressions.

Montag, 13. Dezember 11:00 Uhr s.t., Raum Z10: Vortrag gefördert vom Exzellenzcluster "Asia and Europe"

"Caste and History in a Transcultural Arena: Publicity, Polemics, and the Politics of Identity" von Prof. Dr. Anupama Rao (Columbia University, New York)

Anti-caste radicalism in the Marathi-speaking region of western India was predicated on rewriting the history and identity of the dispossessed and downtrodden castes. The writings of Jotirao Phule, and later, of B. R. Ambedkar, challenged cultural nationalists' focus on resuscitating the glories of Vedic India, and instead imagined the caste subaltern as a victim of the enduring contradiction between Buddhism and Brahmanism. Indeed by the inter-war period, Buddhism would become central not only to refashioning Dalit and low-caste identity, but also to the development of what I call "vernacular Marxism", influenced by European debates and characterized by the publication of philosophical and historical texts, which challenged universalist narratives of "transition" by instead
underscoring the specific trajectories of slavery and caste labor in India, from ancient to modern times. My paper explores the unexpected resonances and divergent interpretations of the interface between Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Marxism as it came to be articulated by anti-caste radicals, on the one hand, and by Marxist intellectuals (especially D. D. Kosambi), influenced by European discourses, on the other. Central to my concerns are the development of practices of publicity and polemics through which challenges to the Hindu historical were mobilized, including an exploration of the distinctive literary infrastructure (and the novel reading and writing cultures) through which alternative conceptions of history, political emancipation, and ethical redemption were imagined.

Dienstag, 23. November 18:00 Uhr c.t., Raum 316: Abteilungskolloquium der Geschichte Südasiens
"Lakshmi's Other: Brahmanical Construction of a Negative Goddess" von Prof. Dr. Kunal Chakravarti (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

In this lecture the process of the making of a goddess (Alakshmi) will be traced - a goddess who serves no useful purpose and yet occupies a fairly visible though negative position in the Vaishnava pantheon. This is an attempt at making sense of this basically discarded divinity in terms of the Brahmanical conception of a universe that encompasses the totality of empirical experience, a conception in which good and evil, and the various shades between them, meaningfully coexist.

Dienstag 02.11.10 17:00 Raum 316 Abteilungskolloquium der Geschichte Südasiens
"Winston Churchill and the Great Bengal Famine" von Frau Dr. Madhushree Mukerjee

The Bengal famine of 1943 has generally been regarded as an unfortunate outcome of local factors, such as a corrupt and inefficient provincial government. It was also, however, a wartime famine, and setting it in the context of World War II reveals the pressures exerted upon Indian grain markets by the British War Cabinet. Key factors driving the famine were inflationary financing of the war effort and the acquisition and export of Indian goods, including rice and wheat, also for the war effort. A series of War Cabinet decisions in 1943 regarding the allocation of shipping to India precipitated and exacerbated the famine. In sum, the absolute control exerted by the War Cabinet over India's exports and imports combined with the active hostility of Churchill toward Indians to cause the famine deaths of 3 million people.