



CENTRUM FÜR ASIEN-  
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TRANSKULTURELLE STUDIEN

SÜDASIEN-INSTITUT



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# The Power of Writing: Script and Identity Politics in Contemporary South Asia

**Jun.-Prof. Dr. Carmen Brandt**

**Universität Bonn**

Besides its linguistic diversity, South Asia also hosts a large number of scripts. While the emergence of ethnic groups based on linguistic factors is well studied, research on the influence of scripts on identity formation among ethnolinguistic and religious communities is still at the beginning. This presentation will give a preliminary systematic overview on the importance of writing systems in contemporary South Asia. By presenting some significant examples, it will make apparent that the growing importance of script is connected to the formation and spread of religions, the emergence of ethnic consciousness and nationalism as well as to the evolution of media technologies, for instance to the introduction of the printing press and computer technology. First conclusions in this presentation draw on a comparative study based, among others, on long-term field studies in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

*Carmen Brandt has been junior professor at the Department for South Asian Studies of the Institute for Oriental and Asian Studies at the University of Bonn, Germany, since January 2017. She obtained a Magister degree in Languages and Cultures of Modern South Asia, Indology, and Communication and Media Studies from the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany, where she also received her doctorate in 2015.*

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