Activities under the Memorandum of Understanding between the Universities of Delhi and Heidelberg in which the branch office is actively involved. The most important event in this respect was a Workshop initiated by the Department of History of the SAI and Delhi University (DU) that took place on 24-25 February 2003 at DU. Fifteen scholars from DU and ten from the SAI exchanged their research interests in lively discussions, and various common areas of future collaboration were identified. The workshop was concluded with a festive reception organised by the branch office on the lawns of the Max Mueller Bhavan. In addition, the second exchange student with support from Baden-Württemberg was at the moment studying at the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, DU.

Important discussions were also held with the Centre for the Study of Development Societies (CSDS) in respect to the organisation of alternating summer schools in the field of social sciences. The branch office furthermore supported members of three major research projects, namely "Visualized Space: Constructions of Locality and Cartographic Representation in Varanasi", "Umstrittene Zentren: Konstruktion und Wandel sozio-kultureller Identitäten in der indischen Region Orissa", and "Kultur(en) im Widerstreit. Diskursive und Performative Identitäts-Formationen in inter-kulturellen Räumen". It also gave advice to numerous other scholars and students from India and Germany.

The most important high level political events in which the branch office was involved were the launch of the "National Mission for Manuscripts" by the Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee in his residence on 7 February 2003 and a Round Table Discussion with the German President Johannes Rau on 4 March 2003 in the German Embassy.

Branch Offices: New Delhi, Colombo, Kathmandu

The three representatives of the SAI’s branch offices came together for their first meeting from 12-19 November 2002 in Sri Lanka. The chance to exchange their experiences and visions for the future was a great advance for the branch offices.

The concrete result of the workshop was a working paper, spelling out the views of the representatives on how to strengthen the cooperation between the branch offices and how to better integrate them into the activities of the SAI in Heidelberg. In their recommendations the representatives concretised their thoughts that had already been mentioned in the strategy paper of the previous year.

New Delhi Branch

The academic year 2002-2003 has been marked by numerous significant academic as well as representative activities. It started off with support for Indian scholars to attend the 17th ECMSAS in Heidelberg in September 2002. The representative furthermore co-organised a panel there on "Problems of Urbanisation in South Asia", whose proceedings are under preparation for publication. This panel also gave impetus to increased collaboration with the Centre de Science Humaines in Delhi and various Indian scholars to pursue a common research project on "Urban Governance".

Between September 2002 and March 2003 the branch office organised lectures at various localities for seven scholars, namely Prof. William Sax, Prof. Joachim Österheld (ZMO; this was a lecture series of five talks in cooperation with the Max Mueller Bhavan), Alexander Fischer, Dr. Maren Bellwinkel, Dr. Harald Fischer-Tiné (Humboldt University Berlin), PD Dr. Martin Fuchs, and Karin Polit. All lectures were very well attended by academics and the general public, and a new format was initiated to win eminent Indian scholars in the respective fields to chair the sessions.

Especially noteworthy are the increased activities under the Memorandum of Understanding between the Universities of Delhi and Heidelberg in which the branch office is actively involved. The most important event in this respect was a Workshop initiated by the Department of History of the SAI and Delhi University (DU) that took place on 24-25 February 2003 at DU. Fifteen scholars from DU and ten from the SAI exchanged their research interests in lively discussions, and various common areas of future collaboration were identified. The workshop was concluded with a festive reception organised by the branch office on the lawns of the Max Mueller Bhavan. In addition, the second exchange student with support from Baden-Württemberg was at the moment studying at the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, DU.

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Colombo Branch

While topics of historical and archaeological interest, and study of Pali-literature had been prominent in academic interest in Sri Lanka earlier, since the opening of this branch office most of the research topics have centered on issues of development, resource management, and conflict resolution. With the objective to build up expertise in specific development-related, political, and cultural issues of Sri Lanka, the branch office Colombo initiates and facilitates research cooperation between the University of Colombo (and other Sri Lankan academic institutions) and the SAI. In particular, it supports the newly established programme "Improving Capacities for Poverty Research" (IMCAP) at the University of Colombo.

Since the opening of the branch office in 1999, it has served as a pool of information and assistance for an increasing number of researchers from Heidelberg. Also, scholars from other academic institutions repeatedly turn to it for advice and exchange. Local scholars keep in close contact encouraged by the already practised research cooperation. A DAAD exchange programme was set up in 2001 for a period of four years which is particularly designed to support young scholars.
Besides active research, research consultation, research administration, and support of the head office, the activities of the branch office include the organization of lectures, workshops, discussion circles, and publications. As part of the DAAD exchange programme the branch office organized the selection and journey of four scholars from Colombo University for the workshop in Heidelberg on 6 December 2002 on "Sri Lanka: Politics, Violence, and the Role of Youth". On 16-17 December 2002, it organized the workshop on "Reproductive Health and Medical Anthropology" in Colombo with Stefan Ecks and Regina Gorgen from Heidelberg.

The office is embedded in an excellent network of exchange and collaboration with local academic, political, and developmental institutes and agencies. On 10 December 2002, it conducted a seminar on "Local Governance and Conflict Management" presenting the results of the same research project run in cooperation with the Development Studies Institute, University of Colombo, the Sri Lanka Institute of Local Governance, and the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies. On 3 April 2003, Dr. Jürgen Clemens was the first speaker in a new series of lectures organized jointly with the Faculty of Arts at the University of Colombo. He elaborated on "Rural Development and Rural Energy Supplies: Potentials of Small and Micro-Hydrel Projects for Forest Conservation in Mountain Areas of Northern Pakistan". His presentation was very well received and in the discussion numerous parallels to the situation in Sri Lanka were identified.

In cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Foundation for Community Transformation a full day seminar was organized on 24 May 2003. Speakers including Prof. Paul Lim (University of Penang, Malaysia, and EIAS, Brussels) and Prof. J. Uyangoda (University of Colombo) presented papers on general and specific aspects of federalism, a topic of highest political priority in Sri Lanka.

Together with the Jaffna Rehabilitation Project of the German Corporation for International Cooperation (JRP-GTZ) under its team leader Eberhard Halbach, the SAI facilitated monthly meetings of organisers from different organisations and academics for an exchange of information on issues like the political conflict, war trauma, rehabilitation, and poverty.

In order to stimulate further reflection on the peace process among the youth, the SAI in cooperation with the National Science Foundation has advertised a competition for research papers among Sri Lankan undergraduate students. Case studies are invited on the topic "The Role of Religion in the Peace Process". The three best papers will be presented by their authors in a workshop in October 2003. This event will be included in the festivities of the German Embassy for the celebration of 50 years of diplomatic relations between Germany and Sri Lanka.

Kathmandu Branch

The SAI Kathmandu Office is affiliated to Tribhuvan University (T.U.) and is institutionally linked to the Centre for Nepal and Asia Studies (CNAS). Its office has recently been relocated to Patan/Dhobighat, where it occupies a three-room flat, including a small library. As a farewell to the previous (Marianna Kropf) and welcome to the newly appointed representative a reception was organised, bringing together a broad variety of Nepalese and international scholars and other professionals. This reception was also taken as a most suitable opportunity for officially welcoming Prof. Novel K. Rai (CNAS) as the first guest professor to the SAI (see page 10), handing over the tickets, as well as visiting cards for his "new identity".

During the last years lecture series were held on a regular basis, mainly in cooperation with CNAS, Royal Nepal Academy (RNA), or GTZ. Within her three-year appointment Marianna Kropf has organised an impressive number of 30 lectures, covering a broad spectrum of topics by scholars from many renowned universities. These lectures regularly attract a large audience from both within and outside university. An academic "handing over" was organised when on 26 May 2003 Marianna Kropf was giving a lecture on "The Merging of Traditions in the Lay Worship of the Navagraha in the Kathmandu Valley", a crucial aspect of her forthcoming PhD. thesis.

New activities of the recently appointed representative will also include teaching at T.U. Topics for lectures and seminars focus on aspects suitable for interdisciplinary courses, mainly Human Development and Globalisation. A similar course was offered during a guest lecturership funded by the DAAD in autumn 2001 and was well-received among students as well as faculty members. For (geography) students from Heidelberg a field course will be offered in 2003/04, providing them with the opportunity to gain
experience in empirical field work, similar to a course carried out in autumn 1999 (together with Dietrich Schmidt-Vogt, then Dept. of Geography, SAI). For students from Tribhuvan University, the office plans to offer a few (nominal) grants for supporting field work for their M.A. theses, along with organising tuition and seminars for interested students.

New research projects by members of SAI faculty include life-cycle transition rituals, carried out within the broader framework of the DFG-funded “Dynamics of ritual. Socio-cultural Processes in a historical and cultural comparative perspective”, involving Axel Michaels, Niels Gutschow, Alexander von Rospatt, and Nutandhar Sharma (see page 16). A new project was also granted recently by the Volkswagen Foundation, within their framework of documenting rare languages. This project on documenting two Rai languages in eastern Nepal brings together scholars from several universities, such as Martin Gaenszle (Anthropology), and Novel K. Rai (CNAS, Linguistics). Elvira Graner, the current representative, is carrying out a research project on International Labour Migration from Nepal in close collaboration with the Nepal Institute of Development Studies (NIDS; Ganesh Gurung).

Elvira Graner handing over tickets and cards to Prof. Novel K. Rai at a reception in Kathmandu on 22 April 2003 - Photo: Rajeh L Shrestha

In November 2002, students from the SAI formed a new students’ body. Kristina Solbig, Sabine Mietzner, Anja Kluge, Anita Lakhota, Caroline Gevers, Eric Decker and Volker Oberkircher will represent the interests of their fellow students.

The first activity of the students’ body was organizing a christmas party at the SAI. Students and teachers alike enjoyed Indian food, German cookies, drinks and music. Currently, the representatives of the students are co-operating with the Board of Directors in the ongoing budget negotiations with the administration of Heidelberg University. Members of the students’ body also organize introductory weekends and classes for new students. All students of the SAI are welcome to join the meetings of the students’ body. For the upcoming winter semester, regular meetings will be scheduled.

For further information, please send an e-mail to our mailing list (→ 3).

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Staff News

Dr. Tilman FRASCH, Dept. of History, resigned.

Christiane NOE and Hartmut FÜNGFELD took up an appointment as Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiter in the Dept. of Geography.

Isabel WERLE, Dept. of International Economics, resigned.

Karsten FREY took up an appointment as Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter in the Dept. of Political Science.

Mathias METZGER took up an appointment as Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter in the Dept. of Modern Indology.

Peter LEHR, Dept. of Political Science, resigned.

Dr. Stefan KLONNER and Dagmar VÖLKER took up an appointment as Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiter in the Dept. of Economics.

Dr. Elvira GRANER took up an appointment as successor of Marianna KROPF as head of the branch office in Kathmandu.

Dr. Birgit MAYER-KÖNIG took up an appointment as successor of Christine BIGDON as head of the branch office in Colombo.

Alexander FISCHER took up an appointment as Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter in the Dept. of Political Science.

Dr. Ravi AHUJA took up an appointment as Wissenschaftlicher Assistent in the Dept. of History.

Claudia THEIS-PASSARO took up an appointment as secretary in the Dept. of History.

Dr. Michael NIJHAWAN took up an appointment as Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter in the Dept. of Anthropology.

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Elvira Graner