

Article

Die deutsche Südasienforschung im Wandel der Zeit

Carmen Brandt und Kirsten Hackenbroch

Summary

In 2006 the German Association for Asian Studies became host to the ongoing working group “Modern South Asia” (Arbeitskreis “Neuzeitliches Südasiens”). This was the first such platform for scholars in Germany working on Modern South Asia that strived to link them beyond disciplinary boundaries. The reasons for this relatively late endeavor of interdisciplinary networking are manifold, and are discussed in depth in the article. Among other reasons, explanations are to be found in the particular history of institutionalized research on South Asia in Germany — meaning Indology. This discipline has been dominated by a focus on Old Indian languages, literatures, philosophies, and religions since its establishment at the beginning of the 19th century. Despite German scholars from other disciplines — mainly History and the Social Sciences — developing selective research projects related to modern South Asia from the mid-20th century onward, these new academic interests would barely lead to an institutionalization of Modern South Asian Studies. Only from the 1990s onward did this gradually change, with the economic liberalization of India, emerging trade relations between Germany and that country, the new geopolitical relevance of the region post-9/11, and overall increased media attention being given to the region in Germany. Accompanying these developments, a growing number of research groups in a variety of disciplines emerged to conduct research on a diverse range of current social, political, economic, or environmental phenomena in South Asia — developments manifested also by an enlarged number of South Asia-oriented funding initiatives. The transformation of research related to South Asia in recent years has thus brought out a new mode of interdisciplinary knowledge production, one driven particularly by young scholars.

Keywords: South Asia, Modern South Asian Studies, Indology, history of science, transformation of area studies, transforming research landscapes, German South Asian Studies

Carmen Brandt ist Juniorprofessorin für Gegenwartsbezogene Südasienwissenschaft an der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn. Für ihre Dissertation untersuchte sie die Darstellung nicht-sesshafter Gruppen in Bengalen, während sie in ihrem aktuellen Forschungsprojekt vergleichend die soziokulturellen und -politischen Dimensionen von Schrift im modernen Südasien untersucht.

Kirsten Hackenbroch ist Vertretungsprofessorin für Humangeographie und Mensch-Umwelt-Beziehungen an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. In ihrer Dissertation untersuchte sie Aushandlungsprozesse des Zugangs zu öffentlichen Räumen für ärmere Bevölkerungsgruppen in Dhaka. Derzeit befasst sie sich mit Akteuren und Diskursen der nachhaltigen Stadtentwicklung in Bangladesch und Südasien.