

Bulletin

B A S A S
BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR
SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

Volume 7 No.1 ISSN 1461-8907 Autumn 2004

www.basas.ac.uk

Contents

Association News:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1: The Society for South Asian Studies, the British Academy and BASIS | 2 |
| 2: The BASAS Research Register and ESIND | 3 |
| 3: The Leeds Conference 2005 | 4 |
| 4: Postgraduate Prize 2005 | 5 |
| 5: One day workshop in Bristol | 6 |

Other News

- | | |
|--|----|
| The Future of Area Studies | 6 |
| Conference: Disciplinary Identity of Area Studies | 8 |
| Two new appointments at SOAS | 9 |
| Obituary: Colin Simmons | 9 |
| The Pakistan Studies Group | 10 |
| New Research unit on Strategic Stability at Bradford | 11 |
| Conference on 'The New Security Agenda in South Asia' Report | 11 |
| Members' News: | 12 |
| New publication | 12 |
| The South Asian Specialist Group of the Political Studies Association | 12 |

Association News

1 The Society for South Asian Studies, The British Academy and BASIS

Many members do not know much about the Society for South Asian Studies (SSAS). The society began life in the 1970s as the Society for Afghan Studies, and was oriented towards archaeology. Since then it has grown and changed, to be concerned with the whole of South Asia, although much of its work and its membership still reflects a leaning towards archaeology and indology. In recent years, the society has opened up to scholars in the social sciences and humanities.

The society is a registered charitable company – which means it is vetted in ways which BASAS is not (although BASAS submits annual accounts to its membership.) It is one of the group known as BASIS, which stands for British Academy Sponsored Institutes and Societies. All of the BASIS members have received until recently a block grant from the British Academy. The overwhelming bulk of the money has gone to high-cost institutes like the British School at Rome and the British School at Athens (see <http://www.britac.ac.uk/institutes/index.html>).

The society for South Asian studies has received over the last few years a block grant of about £70,000. This money has been spent on small research grants, small travel grants, language scholarships, conference support, and the support of its own journal *South Asian Studies* and of other monographs.

As a result of major overhauls, in the future the British Academy will only give money to societies for core activities and outreach. Competition for research funds will in future be centralised. This means that money which was previously ring-fenced for South Asian Research and which was efficiently and effectively targeted, will no longer be available on the same basis.

The chairman of SSAS, Michael Willis (British Museum), and members of the council of the Society have been working hard to come up with a new strategic plan, so that as much money as possible can come to the society for core activities and outreach support. Some of this core money is envisaged for research groups of an ‘distinctive innovative’ kind – though in truth we do not know quite how they are going to be so distinctive and innovative as yet – which is why, below, we seek your help.

Your executive committee and SSAS have agreed that it is in our strategic interests to try and work more closely together. It is proposed that a common membership application form be produced, on which existing and new members can indicate their preference for membership of either or both societies. This will be centrally administered by the secretary of SSAS. The same form will be used for members to indicate which publications they would like to receive.

In the draft corporate plan of SSAS provision is made for an annual subvention to the BASAS conference (outreach). It is also the intention that the BASAS conference be used as the vehicle for SSAS members to present their work. We have not yet worked out whether this means a dedicated panel or not.

It is quite clear that now is the time for us to consider whether we can outline a strategy for South Asian research in the UK. To this end, at the end of our next conference in Leeds (March 30th to April 5), there will be plenary sessions, and discussion sessions, to debate such a strategy. Speaking personally, I am suspicious of strategies, because they can inhibit new initiatives, as well as stimulate them. However, in recent reviews of research applications within South Asian

studies, it is clear that certain issues do keep repeating themselves. As one small example, recent applications for a variety of purposes have all had at their heart the digitisation of documents or maps in order that rare material can be made accessible to all potential users.

SSAS members are being invited to attend the BASAS conference.

Your committee will welcome all inputs and a lively debate in Leeds.

2 The BASAS Research Register and ESIND

Last summer BASAS constructed a data-base of members' interests. It seems to have been useful.

We would like to improve its usefulness.

1.) If you wish an entry to be added, or to revise your existing entry, please e-mail g.chapman@lancaster.ac.uk

2) We would like to include up to 5 publications for members – again these will be indexed according to subject matter.

PLEASE SUBMIT THE CITATIONS FOR UP TO 5 PUBLICATIONS, MAKING SURE YOU ALSO SUBMIT YOUR NAME AND CURRENT E-MAIL ADDRESS. PLEASE DO THIS ONLY BE E-MAIL TO g.chapman@lancaster.ac.uk

Next, we have received the message below from Raf Gelders in Belgium. This is a worthy initiative to construct a data-base for Europe.

Your executive committee is minded to send a copy of our data-base to Belgium. If any member individually objects to being included (you are identified by name and e-mail only), please let your secretary, Katharine Adeney (k.adeney@sheffield.ac.uk), know, ASAP.

At the Research Centre Vergelijkende Cultuurwetenschap, Ghent University, Belgium, we are building a database on the European Studies on India in the humanities and the social sciences (European Studies on India Database: ESIND). The aim is to include the data of all scholars who are doing research on India and who are either citizens of – or working in – one of the 25 European Union Member States. The database intends to be as comprehensive as possible in terms of the research scholars included. It will be freely accessible to all on the Research Centre's website, which is currently being set up. The main purpose of the database is to facilitate the collaboration and the creation of networks among European scholars of India. Another purpose is to obtain a general image of the kind of research that is being done. In the first stage, we have gathered the data of as many scholars as possible through the internet – at the websites of universities and other institutions. Obviously, this will not be exhaustive. Is it possible for me to have exceptional access to the BASAS directory list. I would be very obliged if I would be able to expand upon the database which the BASAS already has. Yours Sincerely, Raf Gelders

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Raf Gelders

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3 The BASAS Conference 2005

is being organised at the University of Leeds, c/o Department of Religious Studies, by Dr Emma Tomalin and William Gould March 30th - April 1st. The panels so far include:

Nepali Identity in the Diaspora. Chairs: Vibha Arora at vibha.arora@linacre.oxford.ac.uk and Professor David Seddon J.D. Seddon@uea.ac.uk

Researching and writing another economics: the South Asian economy from the bottom up

Chair: Professor Barbara Harriss-White at barbara.harriss@qeh.ox.ac.uk

Identities in Sri Lanka: Tamil and Sinhala Ethnicity Chair: Dr Alan Bullion at

Alan.Bullion@informa.com

It's shining for some: an exploration of India's post-liberalisation middle classes Chair: Dr

Emma Mawdsley at e.mawdsley@bbk.ac.uk

Perspectives of Religion, Society and State in India Chairs: Dr Jo Sharma and Dr William

Gould at w.r.gould@leeds.ac.uk

Religion and Politics in Contemporary Pakistan Chair: Dr Magnus Marsden at

mmm22@cam.ac.uk

Religion in the South Asian Diaspora Chair: Dr Sean McLoughlin at s.mcloughlin@leeds.ac.uk

Men, the Body and Religion in South Asia Chair: Dr Louise Child at bobchild@ic24.net

Roles and Relationships for women in South Asia Chair: Dr Emma Tomalin at

e.tomalin@leeds.ac.uk

Echo-histories and Family Histories Chair: Professor Sudha Rai at sudharai@rediffmail.com

Processes of Marginalisation and State Responses Chairs: Sony Pellissery at

sony.pellissery@st-cross.oxford.ac.uk and Nageela Yusuf at

nageela_yusuf@hotmail.com

Maritime archaeology and ethnographic approaches in India Chair: Dr Lucy Blue at

L.Blue@soton.ac.uk

Street/Culture Chair: Francesca Orsini at fo201@cam.ac.uk

Ethnic Conflict and Terrorism in South Asia Chair: Dr Rajat Ganguly at r.ganguly@uea.ac.uk

For more information see: <http://www.basas.ac.uk>

4 Postgraduate Prize 2005

Since 2000, the British Association of South Asian Studies (BASAS) has awarded a prize for the **most outstanding paper** given by a **student** at its **annual conference**. The paper may be on any subject relevant to the conference.

The BASAS Prize consists of a monetary award of £100.00

Prize winning papers will be considered for publication in the annual BASAS issue of [*Contemporary South Asia*](#).

ELIGIBILITY:

The student:

- Must be studying for a degree in an institution of higher learning at the time of the BASAS Annual Conference.
- Need not be a member of BASAS.

The Paper:

- Must have been accepted in advance by a panel convenor.
- Must be presented in person by the student at the BASAS annual conference.
- Must not have been presented elsewhere or published previously.

JUDGING:

- The judging panel will consist of the Executive Committee members of BASAS.
- The judging panel reserves the right not to present the award and will not enter into correspondence concerning its final judgment.

Further information can be found at <http://www.basas.ac.uk/prize.html>

5 First of the BASAS Workshops

News of this comes late if you have not already heard by e-mail – but in conjunction with the Politics of South Asia Specialist Group of the Political Studies Association the BASAS Annual Workshop 2004 '**Chauvinism in South Asia**' is being held 13 November 2004 at Governance Research Centre, University of Bristol.

PROGRAMME

Neil DeVotta (Hartwick College) Chauvinism and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka
Prasun Sonwalker (University of the West of England) Assamese Chauvinism and the Political Dynamics of North East India
Emma Mawdsley (Birkbeck College) The Abuse of Religion and Ecology: The Vishva Hindu Parishad and the Tehri Dam
Dibyesh Anand (University of Bath) Imagining Muslims: Hindutva's politics of representation

REGISTRATION

The workshop is free of charge to members of BASAS and the Political Studies Association subgroup. However, the room has a limited capacity so participants will need to register their attendance with Ben Kisby at Ben.Kisby@bristol.ac.uk

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, please contact workshop organiser Dr Andrew Wyatt via telephone +44 (0)117 928 8477 or email at a.k.j.wyatt@bristol.ac.uk

Address: Governance Research Centre, Department of Politics, University of Bristol, 10 Priory Road, Bristol, BS8 1TU, UK.

See also <http://www.basas.ac.uk/basasw04.html>

The Future of Area Studies

The future of the area studies in the UK is a matter of great concern. There is now a subject centre for languages linguistics and area studies, who provide interesting material at their web site. There has recently been an initiative to restart coordination between area studies associations in the United Kingdom. Hence the now defunct Cocasa (Coordinating Council of Area Studies Associations) has been replaced by UKASA. If any BASAS member wishes to receive e-mail from UKASA, please let John Canning [J.Canning@SOTON.AC.UK] know.

The disciplinary structure of the RAE obstructs area studies, and may well contribute to their demise, unless we fight hard for their worth. In the 2008 RAE Area Studies in general seem to be an odd left-over category - for example

Panel L American Studies and Anglophone Area Studies, Middle Eastern and African Studies, Asian Studies, European Studies

while

Panel N Classics, Ancient History, Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Philosophy, Theology, Divinity and Religious Studies, History

could accommodate any number of South Asianists. And so it goes on for scholars contributing in the fine arts, law, and many other disciplines.

A South Asian geographer, B.H.Farmer (1973) discussed similar issues at some length in a paper entitled "Geography, Area Studies and the study of area. In a second paper (1983) entitled "British Geographers Overseas, 1933-1983" the demise of overseas involvement was clearly matched with the decline of empire. In the USA the absence of global regional expertise also became apparent in the Second World War, and the Governments of both countries took active steps to promote it.

In the UK. "The [Hayter] committee was concerned with a somewhat quaint assemblage of regional studies: with, in fact, Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African studies (for the best of British reasons, that an earlier Committee had surveyed the same scene). The Hayter committee concluded, very broadly, that while enough was being done in terms of studies of language, classical literature and so on ("orientalism" in [Farmer's] part of the world) ...nothing like enough was being done in terms of "modern studies", amongst which they included geography." (Farmer, 1983:76). The implementation of the Hayter report allocated Area Centres to specific universities; China to Leeds, Japan to Sheffield, Southeast Asia to Hull, South Asia to Cambridge, the Middle East to Durham, and so on. In London at SOAS three new social science departments were founded: Economic and Political Studies, Sociology, and Geography. The last has now been transferred to King's, and the area expertise will melt away.

The debate is also continuing in the USA where David Ludden (2000), a South Asia historian, has recently written:

"In the US, area studies came into being to serve national interests that became more global after 1945. In the 1950s, federal programs and private foundations provided funds to increase American knowledge of world areas to inform the global conduct of US foreign policy, but national interests also included businesses, foundations, and universities that all sought to globalise their role in America's world.... Specifically American national interests propelled an American style of area studies and American globalisation at the same time."

Something called a Title VI program in the Department of Education, together with Fulbright programs, the Social Science Research Council's area studies programs, university programs to teach languages and area-specific courses, funded new Centres, and were an influence on UK educational policy. But since the end of the Cold War, put at 1989, Area Studies have had to fight increasingly hard for their existence. :

"A big shift in the nation-state system would necessarily destabilize area studies, so closely had the two been linked; and after 1989, such a destabilization did occur. However, this shift continued a process of globalisation that actually began long before and whose pace has actually been faster at various times in the past than it is today What is new today is not the fact of globalisation, but rather its recognition as a central historical process and utilization as a theoretical basis for efforts to reorganize knowledge and power in the world."

He also believes that:

“There is no theory of area studies or of area-specific knowledge; there is only a set of institutional, personal, and fragmented disciplinary, market, and professional interests that converge primarily on funding. The organizations that should have taken the lead in forming a broad theoretical basis for area studies are the area studies associations -- the African Studies Association, Association of Asian Studies, Latin American Studies Association, and Middle East Studies Association -- which have done little except tout the importance of their own world area “

What does Disciplinary Academia do with Area Studies? The failure of the Area Studies Associations in the USA to defend themselves collectively means that the disciplinary model of social science again dominates:

“The new post-1989 critique of area studies initially came from the SSRC president, David Featherman, in the form of disciplinary objections to area studies in general. He argued that disciplinary social sciences were more universally applicable, globally useful, and more worthy of support than area studies. His argument against area studies favored "hard" social sciences like economics, political science, and sociology, which use statistical data, formal models (often mathematical), and positivist, explanatory theory.”

Just as Huntington(1997) observed that Westernisation is not synonymous with modernization, and that Westernisation is neither universal nor universalising, so western social science is not universal. Yet, as Milton Singer said: “Social scientists in particular cultivated an Olympian complacency about the universality of their disciplines, and... did not feel the need to go beyond the familiar experience of Europe and United States for illustration and proof of their universal principles" (M. Singer, 1964, in Farmer, 1973:3)

So what are we doing about it?

Contributed by Graham Chapman

References

- Farmer B H 1973 Geography Area Studies and the study of area *Transactions Institute of British Geographers* 1-15
Farmer B H 1983 British Geographers overseas 1933- 1983 *Transactions Institute of British Geographers* NS 8 70-79
Huntington S P 1997 *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* Simon and Schuster New York
Ludden D 2000 Area Studies in the Age of Globalization *Frontiers* 1-22

There will be a one-day conference in London organised by John Canning (Southampton) and the Subject Centre for LLAS

**Disciplinary Identity of Area Studies
29 November 2004**

<http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/llaseventitem.aspx?resourceid=2166>

New Appointments at SOAS

We welcome two new appointments this year in The Department of the Languages and Culture of South Asia, SOAS:

Dr Jeevan Deol, Lecturer in Urdu and South Asian Studies (jd38@soas.ac.uk)
Mr Krishna Pradhan, Lector in Nepali (kp15@soas.ac.uk)

(We hope they become BASAS members forthwith)

Obituary

COLIN SIMMONS

Colin Simmons, professor of international economics at the University of Salford, died on 30 May, aged 56, after a long and courageous struggle against cancer. He will be remembered by historians and economists all over the world for his pioneer research in fields as diverse as coal mines in India and handicrafts in Greece; and he will be remembered, also, by his many pupils, his close-knit family and his lifelong friends.

He went to Hull to read economics, which had a major economic history component. Always sensitive to intellectual excitement, Colin soaked up the Marxist spirit of the place. When it came to choosing a topic for his MA at the School of Oriental and Asian Studies and his D.Phil at Oxford (1970-73), he chose the history of the mining industry in India, with special reference to the miners.

No one, in the entire academic world, knew anything about the history of the Indian coal industry. That he found the sources he needed - often the records of obscure mining companies in filthy godowns - and persuaded their owners to give him access to them, despite all the problems of climate and sickness and suspicion, is a tribute both to his indomitable persistence and his skill at man management.

The outcome was a series of papers of staggering originality – on the primary sources he found, on the recruitment of the miners, on working conditions in the mines, on living conditions in the company towns, on the sources of capital for the coal industry, on the Indian entrepreneurs who supplanted the western colliery-owners - which would have done his career more good if several of them had not been published in Bengal Past and Present. It must have been a difficult choice between publishing in Indian journals, which Indians could read, and publishing in western journals which were so expensive that only a handful of elite institutions could afford them.

After first the University of Sierra Leone and then Khartoum – he must have been one of the last British expatriates to teach at the University of the Sudan - he came home. He spent the rest of his working life, twenty-eight years, at Salford

He published influential papers on industrialisation in India and co-edited three books - two on economic development, the third on India's political economy. But his most remarkable achievement was his hundred-page tour de force on the relationship between economic development and economic history. It remains, almost twenty years on, the best thing on the subject ever written.

The great turning-point in Colin's publications came in 1992, with his shift from economic history to international economics. Over the next twelve years he worked on an astonishing range of projects: peasant households in China, off-farm activities in the Punjab, drought relief in Botswana, handicrafts in Greece, economic liberalisation in Bulgaria, even Manchester airport: more than thirty articles in refereed journals. If ever anyone was cut down in their prime, it was Colin.

As his pupils and his daughters show, England is still capable of producing the same combination of high academic attainment and caring profession; of infinite intellectual curiosity and profound humanity. Colin succeeded in transmitting something of his values to a new generation; he lives on in them. The ultimate lesson of his life, therefore, is one of hope.

Abridged from a longer tribute by Clive Dewey

The Pakistan Studies Group

This group organised by Pnina Werbner [P.Werbner@keele.ac.uk] and Stephen Lyon [S.M.Lyon@durham.ac.uk] meets in the early summer at a small Quaker Retreat in the Lake District. The meeting is informal and low-cost – but the surroundings are idyllic.

This year the group met from Friday May 7th to Sunday May 9th. The programme (<http://psg.anthropology.ac.uk/Workshop2004/programme.html>) included the following:

Cultural symbols and systems - Chair- Iain Edgar

Waqas Butt, University of Keele: Turbans

Steve Lyon, University of Durham: Culture as Information Systems: The Epidemiology of Cultural Change Across Generations

Pakistani Diaspora (I) - Chair - Inger-Lise Lien

Ulla Vuorela, University of Tampere, Finland: Arranged marriages - a 'fortress happiness' or risky business?

Marta Bolagnani, University of Bradford: The Myth of Return: Dismissal, Survival or Revival?

Health Issues - Chair - Kaveri Harriss

Elizabeth Croot, Institute of General Practice and Primary Care, Sheffield. : 'God's Repaying Me Now with A Vengeance': Beliefs about childhood disability amongst Pakistani families in Sheffield

Alison Shaw, Brunel University: TBA

Politics and Culture - Chair - Michael Fischer

Iain Edgar, University of Durham: An Analysis of the 'true dream' in contemporary Islamic belief and Islamic Jihadist dreamwork

Mariam Abou-Zahab, IEP/CERI-INALCO, Paris: From the mosque to the hujra : social change and the MMA vote in the NWFP

Cultural representations - Chair - Ulla Vuorela

MacDonald, Iain Kenneth, University of Toronto: Memories of Tibet: Examining the Cultural

Production of Identity and Place in Baltistan

Hirsiao, Anu. University of Tampere, Finland: "When Preposterous and Obstinate Converse...":

Intergenerational Literary Bonding in Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days* and *Boys Will Be Boys*

Development and Applied Anthropology - Chair -Mariam Abou-Zahab

Bushra Hassan, University of Oxford: Conceptualising Development: A Comparison of Pakistan Official Plans Compared to Perceptions of Pakistani Rural Poor

Kaveri Harriss, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine: Work in progress paper:

Living with long-term illness in Pakistani families in London

If you want to join in next year, contact Pnina or Steve.

New Research Unit at Bradford

The University of Bradford launched its new South Asian Strategic Stability Unit, within the Department of Peace Studies, with a two-day workshop "Towards Strategic Stability in South Asia", on 7th and 8th October, 2004. (<http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/sassu/events/conference.htm>)

The conference was attended by High Commissioners from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, a raft of senior military personnel from the region, experienced diplomats, academics from the UK, S Asia and the USA. It was a resounding 'launch' and we wish the unit, directed by Professor Shaun Gregory, a bright future and of course we hope that it can contribute to the resolution of dangerous tensions on the sub-continent.

The theme of the Bradford meeting was traditional security concerns – the stability of deterrence, for example, now that S Asia has entered the nuclear age.

Wilton Park - at Wiston House

Earlier, in July, there was a conference on The New Security Agenda in South Asia held at Wilton Park (Wiston House, Sussex), country lair of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The themes here were more about migration, water, narcotics and crime etc. This meeting too contained a mixture of practitioners, professional and academics. A summary can be found at : <http://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/web/papers/pdfs/pdfreports/WPS04-10/WPS04-10.pdf>

Member's News

Publication:

A book assessing the first full term of a coalition (and Hindu Nationalist) government in India will be published in 2005.

Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Sáez (eds.) (2005) Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism (Routledge).

Contributors are

Katharine Adeney, James Chiriyankandath, Meghnad Desai, Apurba Kundu, Christophe Jaffrelot, Rob Jenkins, Marie Lall, James Manor, Alistair McMillan, Subrata Mitra, Nitya Rao, Lawrence Sáez, Gurharpal Singh, Andrew Wyatt, and John Zavos.

Congratulations to Vibha Arora

of Linacre College Oxford, who has just successfully defended her PhD Thesis on

"Just a Pile of Stones! The Politicization of Identity, Indigenous Knowledge, and Sacred Landscapes among the Lepcha and Bhutia tribes of Sikkim, India"

The Political Studies Association

The PSA Specialist Group on South Asia has some new web pages at:-

<http://www.psa.ac.uk/saspgrp/sahome.htm>

The Future of the *Bulletin*

Given the amount of material now available on BASAS website and to members through the Directory etc., and given the publication annually of an edition of Contemporary South Asia dedicated to papers from the BASAS conference (both activities made possible thanks to Apurba Kundu by the way), some people have wondered whether we actually still need the Bulletin. My own feeling is that enough miscellaneous material of interest to members accumulates, such that we do need it, and that publication and distribution of the Bulletin is also a happy and encouraging way to maintain some sense of community for South Asian scholars. However, it also seems plain to me given other demands and distractions that one edition per year, probably early autumn, is enough. Any thoughts from members?

Contributions welcome for the next edition of the Bulletin

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