



## Newsletter of the European Association of South Asian Studies, Winter 2008-09

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### 1. University of Bonn to host ECMSAS 2010

EASAS is very pleased to be able to announce the site for the next European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies: the University of Bonn (pictured above and below). The projected dates are 26-29 July 2010.

Detailed planning is still taking place, however, and these dates should not yet be regarded as final. Our colleagues in Bonn are in the process of forming a steering committee, and for the moment Dr Heinz Werner Wessler ([hwessler@uni-bonn.de](mailto:hwessler@uni-bonn.de)) and Anuradha Bhalla will be the main points of contact. They are planning to



contact some selected foundations and the German Society of Research to gather together funds to help with organising the conference. More details of the conference will appear on the EASAS web-page as soon as they become available.

### 2. Proposed new Constitutional Arrangements

Currently, as those with long memories will recall, the constitution of EASAS is a very simple document. Nonetheless, it has given us some problems. One is that EASAS has no legal status, and therefore is not eligible for grants, nor to open a bank account in its own name. So far we have managed through the goodwill of the original office-bearers, especially Professor Dietmar Rothermund and Professor Dirk Kolff. Indeed, the EASAS funds are held in a bank account under Professor Kolff's name. This is clearly not a long-term solution, and it has been proposed that EASAS should now adopt a constitution that will be recognised as acceptable in at least one European country, without requiring large sums to be paid to register the Association or to audit its annual accounts. We are therefore suggesting the adoption of a new Constitution (which is being sent out as an attachment to this message). The proposed country of registration is Germany; we have modelled the EASAS Constitution on that of the European Association of



Japanese Studies, and have prepared an English-language as well as a German-language version. The draft EASAS Constitution provides for (but does not require) a variety of activities in support of our aims, making possible the broad range of activities we might undertake as long as they contribute to “the cultivation and promotion of scholarship and research in the field of South Asian Studies in all countries of geographic Europe”. Such aims do not prevent members from other parts of the world – indeed, such scholars remain very welcome, as before. Nor do the aims restrict our activities to ‘Modern’ South Asian Studies, and we hope to work more closely in future with some of the other Associations (such as that of South Asian Archaeologists).

Members will no doubt have other queries they wish to raise, and the interim committee proposes a 3-month period (ending on 31 March 2009) for comments and proposed amendments, which should be sent to the Interim Chair, Roger Jeffery ([r.jeffery@ed.ac.uk](mailto:r.jeffery@ed.ac.uk)), who will circulate the Constitution again with the next Newsletter, with comments and proposed amendments, and ask people to confirm their willingness that the Constitution be adopted. I think it will then be possible to register the Association, and to transfer its funds into a new Bank account in good time for ECMSAS 2010.

### **3. Junior Scholars Fest**

EASAS is requesting bids for proposals to hold a small event in the summer of 2009 for MA and PhD students and for postdocs in their early stages across Europe to meet and discuss their work. The proposed forum could be to learn about each other's work, what motivates it and where people see the future of South Asian studies going, through their own work. The event could be more like a festival than a conference or a workshop. In the UK, an endeavour to bring together younger scholars working on South Asia under the auspices of the British Academy worked quite well, but could be improved on. At this stage we suggest that proposals (one-page only) should be submitted to Roger Jeffery ([r.jeffery@ed.ac.uk](mailto:r.jeffery@ed.ac.uk)) with an outline budget (a maximum of 1000 euros would be allocated from EASAS funds). Depending on the number of proposals, a small group from the interim committee would be asked to select one or two proposals that seem worthy of funding. Our (limited) financial contribution might help support attempts to gather funds from other sources. Closing date: 31 March 2009.

### **4. Report on ECMSAS 2008, Manchester**



An exceptionally successful ECMSAS was held in Manchester in July 2008, despite the typical Manchester weather! A vote of thanks was passed enthusiastically at the end of the workshop, reflecting the gratitude of all participants for the hard work done by the Manchester team.

**Some reflections from the organisers –**



## John Zavos and Nile Green

The Manchester conference – held in the second week of July – had just over 350 participants, about average for the ECMSAS conference. The conference lasted for four days, split into two 3.5 hour sessions (9 – 12.30, 2 – 5.30) each day. This seemed to work quite well for panel sessions, allowing for up to 6 papers fairly comfortably, plus a coffee/tea break of up to 30 minutes. Manchester planned for 40 panels, accepted 41 (two did not run as they became unviable at a late stage). Some panels accommodated 15 papers, some as few as two. Everything was under one roof, so participants could commute between panels during sessions.

As in previous ECMSAS, credit is due to panel conveners for constructing viable panels, ensuring the presentation of quality papers, and for taking groups of papers forward to publication in the aftermath of the conference. The responsibility of the Conference organisers was to provide an adequate infrastructure for the successful organisation and running of these panels. Selecting the panels was a major task, as the Manchester team had 143 panel suggestions but only 40 slots to fill. The Academic Committee selected the proposals they thought were the strongest, most distinctive and most likely to attract participants. We aimed to strike a balance between panels offering new topics and those that have become well established through successive ECMSAS conferences. We also aimed to present a good spread of panels by discipline, theme, and coverage of all of South Asia.



As well as the academic focus, ECMSAS arranged a variety of related cultural events. We were pleased to be able to hold a reception at Manchester's historic town hall, addressed by the Mayor of Manchester. We were also delighted to hold an event at the Whitworth Gallery. This focused on their South Asian textiles collection. We were also pleased that the conference coincided with a major exhibition of South Asian books and manuscripts at the John Rylands Deansgate Research Library. Our one regret was that our planned Asian Sounds club night did not take place. We apologise again to all participants who braved the torrential rain to attend; it was, we can confirm, an early victim of the credit crunch. Many thanks are due to our colleague Marta Bolognani, who in the face of this adversity organized an impromptu dance night at a nearby bar on the following evening, after the conference dinner. Many participants did, then, get the opportunity to show us their best Bollywood moves, and – needless to say – the conference was a richer experience for this.

We hope that these comments will be of use to future organizers of ECMSAS: for more details contact either [John.Zavos@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:John.Zavos@manchester.ac.uk) or Roger Jeffery ([r.jeffery@ed.ac.uk](mailto:r.jeffery@ed.ac.uk)).



## **5. Plans for ECMSAS 2012**

Several Universities have offered to consider hosting ECMSAS 2012, and the interim committee feels that it is important that we should take the decision on where the Conference will be held well before ECMSAS 2010. Therefore, we will be asking the potential hosts to confirm their willingness by the end of March 2009. At that point, the options will be circulated to the membership to allow a vote to take place (if more than one University is still offering by that time). We hope then to move to confirm the 2014 venue at the 2010 conference, and plan four years ahead if possible from now on, reflecting the time it takes to gather resources, book accommodation etc. If any group at a European University would like to be considered for hosting either the 2012 or the 2014 conferences, they should contact Roger Jeffery ([r.jeffery@ed.ac.uk](mailto:r.jeffery@ed.ac.uk)) as soon as possible. Universities that have already registered a willingness to consider hosting 2012 will be contacted directly.

## **6. EU meeting in February**

The India-EU Study Centres Programme has been set up in 2008 as an integral part of the India-EU Joint Action Plan adopted in 2005. It aims to promote a better understanding of the EU in India and vice versa through academic and other forms of collaboration. Its chief objective is to strengthen existing study centres on the EU in India and vice versa and to create new study centres on the EU in India and vice versa. Such an agenda requires a close look at the situation prevailing in different States of India and countries of Europe.

There will be a one-day meeting of reflection on the situation of the Indian studies in Europe. Ulrich Podewils – who would come from New Delhi for the occasion – and the members of the consortium supporting the programme will appreciate suggestions for further developing centres of Indian studies in the EU and for identifying places where a special effort needs to be made and the nature of the strategy to be followed. If you have any suggestions in this respect, please send them to Roger Jeffery ([r.jeffery@ed.ac.uk](mailto:r.jeffery@ed.ac.uk)).

## **7. Membership Renewal**

Please renew your membership of EASAS, or consider joining. Most members pay a two-year membership, and if you joined during 2008 you will not need to pay again until January 2010. But for everyone else, if you want to gain the benefits of membership – inclusion in the decision-making over the constitution, reduced rates for the 2010 Conference, and a say in the other activities being planned – please join (or renew) now.

Membership costs 25 Euros per year, and we recommend a 2-year membership. Please send your payment to ABNAMRO-Bank in Leiden. The account number is 608185035, in the name of D.H.A. Kolff, Zoeterwoude, The Netherlands, "inzake EASAS". The IBAN code for transfers from outside the Netherlands is NL86ABNA0608185035; the BIC (i.e. SWIFT) address is ABNANL2A.