



European Association for South Asian Studies

www.easas.eu

EASAS Newsletter Winter 2019

1. New Membership Administration

Since July 2019 Christoph Blumert has been joined by Ramtin Azimi (Cologne) for handling membership related issues.

Our team has completely renewed the EASAS IT system to make it fully functional and self-sufficient. The new system enables new members to register through an online registration form. It also allows members to pay their membership fee through PayPal, Credit Card or SEPA.

A dashboard for every member has been created. This allows members to sign in, see their account information, have an overview of their paid membership fees, pay outstanding fees and cancel their membership right in the dashboard. We plan to add more features to the dashboard in the future.

2. Council Meeting

A meeting of the Council of EASAS was held in Warsaw on 2 April 2019.

3. Next European Conference on South Asian Studies (ECSAS) in Vienna: 29 July–1 August 2020

The organisation of the 26th European Conference on South Asian Studies in Vienna is well on track (see the website: <https://ecsas2020.univie.ac.at/>). The conference will take place at the Uni Campus „Altes Allgemeines Krankenhaus“, University of Vienna, from **29 July to 1 August, 2020**. Altogether 53 panels were accepted which cover a wide range of disciplines, in line with the motto of the conference „Reflecting on Disciplinary Boundaries“. The Call for Papers closed on 24 November 2019, and the selection of papers is currently in process.

We are happy to inform you that two keynote speakers have accepted our invitation: Shail Mayaram (Professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi) and Monica Juneja (Professor at the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies).

Early bird registration for the conference will start in February and will be open until 30 April 2020. After this date standard registration will be open until 7 July 2020, followed by late registration.

We look forward to meeting you in Vienna in summer 2020! For more information check the website (see above). If you have any queries contact ecsas2020@univie.ac.at.

4. Academic Workshop “Conversion” Religions and Multi-Religious Entanglements in South Asia’ supported by EASAS

EASAS partly supported a workshop organized by Prof. Dr. Ines G. Županov and held at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, on 25 April 2019, titled “Conversion” Religions and Multi-Religious Entanglements in South Asia (8th to 19th c.): Contexts and Perspectives’ by a post-ECSAS grant.

Report

This international conference showcased a new research project and a new research team working on Abrahamic religious networks in South India and Indian Ocean in the pre-modern period. Our research question was: How to study and understand a millennium of religious encounters in the region that we can define as simultaneously land-bound and sea-born? All presentations were focused on mapping Abrahamic religious networks – Judaic, Islamic and Christian – that had a tendency, not equally pronounced in all periods, to proselytize or at least to erect boundaries towards ‘others’. These actors were approached both in their movement, mobility and in the process of sedentarisation.

Together with these imported ‘conversion’ religions, all presentations referred to the extraordinary diversity in the religious landscape in South India and the adjacent coastal regions. At the heart of the discussions was the question of how the coexistence of South Indian religious traditions (Jain, Hindu, Buddhist) with Abrahamic religions developed historically in relation to political, economic and cultural dynamics in southern India – filled in motion by agrarian expansion, migration of warrior lineages from the north and increase in country and long-distance trade coupled with monetization – in the course of a millennium before the advent of high colonialism. Of course, a *longue durée* historical glance – a millennium – is necessarily strewn with linguistic difficulties and epistemological traps. This is why the speakers mastered between them, most of the relevant research languages – Malayalam, Garshuni Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada, Syriac, Portuguese, Italian, Latin, etc.

The presentations were all critical of an image of this region and its millennium as some kind of utopian and idyllic space of coexistence of diverse religious communities that has been projected by some scholarship. We agreed that religion and violence are closely connected and in one way or another participate in any religious expansion and that ‘conversion’ religions

in particular depend on management of violence and the building and maintenance of boundaries. Most of the papers were interested in 'micro-historical' perspectives and we all agreed that the success of any religious movement in India had to do a lot with 'caste' since religious mobility was never, or rarely, an individual enterprise but was inscribed in durable local social relations and structures. Mahmood Kuria's paper on matrilineal kinship and its effect on dissemination of Abrahamic religions and Ophira Gamliel's presentation of documents relating to Jewish communities (in particular poetry inscribed on the tombs) highlighted this local situatedness of the communities under study. Quite a few presentations were about 'literary' or para-literary texts such as *Keralolpati*, taken up by Manu Devadevan and *Tembavani* by Margherita Trento, and in general the question of translation and conversion was a major discussion topic during the conference. Papers by Radu Mustata, Torsten Tschacher and Deepra Dandekar were also part of the 'translation' and transcreation discussion. Historiography and transmission of historical knowledge was in particular addressed by Istvan Perczel and Carsten Wilke.

The gender/nation parity of participants was fully respected. We had two German scholars, three Indian, one Hungarian, one Italian, one Dutch/Israeli, one Rumanian and one French/Croatian. We had senior and junior scholars and two PhD students. There were four women and six men.

5. 12th EASAS PhD Workshop in South Asian Studies, University of Stuttgart, 19-21 September 2019

The workshop was convened by Dr. Margret Frenz, FRHistS, FHEA, University of Stuttgart, and Dr. Georg Berkemer, Humboldt University Berlin

Report

The 12th EASAS PhD Workshop took place at the University of Stuttgart from 19 to 21 September 2019. Participants hailed from ten countries, in alphabetical order, from Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Twelve students' chapters were presented by one of the fellow students and commented upon by a senior member of staff.

The format of presenting and discussing chapters followed the usual pattern employed at EASAS doctoral workshops: the papers, no longer than 5000 words, were circulated in time before the workshop. Each PhD student presented another student's paper for about 10 minutes. Then one of the staff members provided constructive feedback in the form of comments on the paper for another 10 minutes. After this, the doctoral student who wrote the paper had the opportunity to respond to his/her presenter and commentator for 5 minutes. Subsequently, a general discussion on the paper was initiated.



Photos © Margret Frenz

At the Stuttgart workshop, participants had lively and intense discussions on all presented topics, which ranged from historical to anthropological, and linguistic to performative subject areas. The in-depth discussions offered students with maximum quality feedback on their work in progress. At Stuttgart, the student participants particularly enjoyed the diverse set of papers, all relating to South Asian Studies, but embedded in a variety of disciplines; the opportunity to engage with other PhD students who experience similar challenges when researching and writing their theses; the constructive feedback by all participants and the specific format of presenting another fellow student's paper and receiving comments by a senior scholar; and the ample time to discuss papers and comments. Regretfully, all eligible papers were on India, so that the workshop did not include PhD topics on other South Asian countries. For future workshops, it would be excellent if students working on those would come forward with applications.

6. SAMAJ-EASAS special issues 2019 and 2020 and invitation to join the SAMAJ-EASAS editorial team

SAMAJ and the European Association for South Asian Studies (EASAS) jointly edit, once a year, a special issue with some of the best papers presented in the European Conference for South Asian Studies that is organized by EASAS every two years.

SAMAJ-EASAS Thematic Issue Series 21, 2019, is online: 'Representations of the "Rural" in India from the Colonial to the Post-Colonial' edited by Joël Cabalion and Delphine Thivet: <https://journals.openedition.org/samaj/>

The idea of the village has been central throughout Indian history. Since colonial times, Indian villages have been pictured as 'small republics' and as a relevant microcosm for understanding Indian society at large. Combining the issue of representation with that of rurality, this special issue investigates the actors, be they external or internal to rural society, who claim to represent the 'village,' and how its internal social differentiation is being addressed: who does speak for/about/of/against/with the village? The different aspects of the representations and practices of the 'rural' and its social components, contributing to the social production of rural space, are herein studied from a range of different disciplinary perspectives, such as history, political science, sociology, anthropology, and literary studies/theory. At last, the purpose of this issue is to reassert village and rural studies as a legitimate and crucial area of research through which to understand the important social, economic, political and cultural dynamics and tensions which mark the trajectory of Indian society over time.

The next issue will be 'Coded Citizenship. Biometrics, Identity and De-socializing Technologies in South Asia', edited by Silvia Masiero and S. Shakthi. It will be published before the next ECSAS 2020 in Vienna.

The SAMAJ-EASAS series editors are at present Alessandra Consolaro and Sanjukta Das Gupta. Unfortunately, José Mapril had to opt out because of academic commitments. We are looking for one or two persons who are willing to enter the SAMAJ-EASAS team and share this challenging and exciting experience.

All EASAS members can apply, and young scholars are mostly welcome. Please send your application to office@easas.eu. Decisions will be taken by the EASAS Council.

7. Call for proposals for EASAS PhD Workshop 2020

The Call to Universities and Institutions of Higher Education to host the 2020 EASAS Doctoral Workshop is now open and will be circulated among the members.

The workshop will give PhD students an opportunity to receive feedback on their theses from senior scholars and fellow PhD candidates who are also working on South Asian topics. In addition, it will create networks between young students of South Asia and help them develop contacts with others. The doctoral workshop is envisaged as a two-day event for a maximum of 16 PhD candidates and 6 faculty members from European universities, to be held at a host European university.

The host university will organize the workshop and arrange board and lodging for students as well as the invited faculty members. The selection of the host university will be made by the EASAS board. The EASAS board will assist with accommodation and board for students and staff at the workshop with a sum up to € 2500. Participants will have to make their own travel arrangements. Please note that the EASAS membership is mandatory for all participants.

Proposals must include:

- Willingness to hold the workshop in 2020, specifying the period (but not conflicting with the dates of the Vienna ECSAS).
- Brief description of the institution.
- Brief description of the local steering committee for the doctoral workshop, whose members must be specialists in South Asia and members of EASAS. The workshop steering committee will plan and manage the workshop, select the student participants and the invited faculty members.
- Brief budget, listing costs for venue, accommodation, and board of participants.

Please send your proposals to office@easas.eu by 15 February 2020.

Last, but not least, the EASAS Board and Council wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

On behalf of the Council,
Danuta Stasik, President
Martin Fuchs, Vice-President
Peter B. Andersen, Treasurer