Nordic South Asia Network

Nordic Newsletter 9 - 14 July 2017

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NORDIC SOUTH ASIA NETWORK

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Limited contents due to the editor's vacations:

- Research Community News
- Conferences and workshops outside Scandinavia

Research Community News

• Ashok Swain first UNESCO Chair Professor at Uppsala University



Professor Ashok Swain at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University has been appointed a UNESCO Chair on International Water Cooperation. The university has signed an agreement with UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) about establishing a chair at Uppsala University focused on research about international water issues – the UNESCO Chair on International Water Cooperation. The task of the chair holder is to promote research and teaching on international water management and water governance issues and to facilitate collaboration within and outside Uppsala University. Prof. Swain's work will be carried out within the framework of the Research School on International Cooperation which was established in 2014 in collaboration with Sweden's first UNESCO centre, the International Water Cooperation at Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI). Read more.

• Copenhagen meeting to form a South Asia across the Nordic Region collective



On Tursday 27 June 2017, The Centre of Global South Asian Studies and the Asian Dynamics Initiative (ADI) at University of Copenhagen had invited scholars and practitioners across the Nordic region for what is supposed to become the First Annual Meeting of an initiative entitled *"South Asia across the Nordic Region (SANR)"*.

The new collective will offer a platform to present ongoing research, and generate fresh ideas and information that will enhance our knowledge of the South Asian region. This interaction is expected to increase scholarly collaboration across the region in fruitful ways. Peter B. Andersen, University of Copenhagen and Kenneth Bo Nielsen, University of Oslo, chaired the business meeting.

The entire Copenhagen meeting was convened by Dr. Ravinder Kaur, and included presentations by a number of leading Nordic South Asian studies scholars, and a session with PhD candidates. In a panel on "*Infrastructures: Policy, Actors, Development*", chaired by Patrik Oskarsson from Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Mikael Aktor from University of Southern Denmark spole about *"Religion and Water Politics: Religious-Economic Consequences of the Narmada Valley Development Project in the Omkareshwar Area"*; Mikkel Fugl Eskjær from Aalborg University, Campus Copenhagen, spoke about *"Bangladesh and the Lab Metaphor: The Changing Views of Bangladesh as Laboratory for Development and Climate Change"*; Siddharth Sareen from University of Bergen, spoke about *"Mobilising Nordic collaboration on solution-oriented energy sector transformations in and beyond South Asia"*, and Patrik Oskarsson himself spoke about *"Policy circulation in a multipolar world: Global best practices and the governance of Indian mining in Mozambique"*. The panel also included a presentation by Lisa Björkman, Department of Urban and Public Affairs, University of Louisville, USA, who spoke about *"Pipe Politics, Contested Waters: Embedded*

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Infrastructures of Millennial Mumbai".
A Keynote lecture was given by Professor Sumathi Ramaswamy from Duke University, USA, on *"A Mahatma on the March: Towards an Aesthetics of the Ambulatory"*
The PhD session was chaired by Dan V. Hirslund, University of Copenhagen, with Stine Simonsen Puri, University of Copenhagen and Kenneth Bo Nielsen being discussants. Among the PhD candidates were Martin Lundqvist from the School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, who writes about *"Challenges to 'the local turn' in peacebuilding: tentative findings from Nepal and Cambodia"*. Full information about the Copenhagen meeting.

• Catalogue of entire SYDASIEN magazine content from 1977 + pdf-files now being published

Sydasien Is your field of interest within South Asia? The online journal Sydasien.se is the only swedish journal featuring South Asia related articles focusing on cultural issues and political debates. You will also find various articles on recent news and events, in-depth research accounts, stories from NGO-organizations work in the region, Human Rights issues, Womens & Childrens Rights issues, Enviromental issues and Poverty issues.
For 34 years the Swedish-language print magazine SYDASIEN played an important role to disseminate news and information on South Asia. With popularly written articles on politics, history, literature and culture in the eight countries that consist South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) SYDASIEN was a unique feature in Scandinavia till the magazine closed down in late 2010.



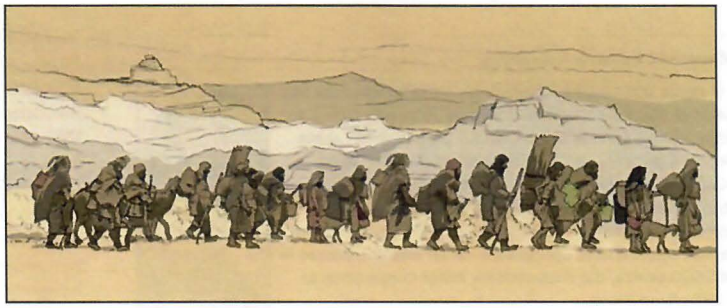




SYDASIEN editors Lars Eklund (1982–2007), John Senewiratne (2008–2010) and Johanna Sommansson (2011-now).

The magazine was launched in 1977 by a group of journalists, researchers and development assistance employees, among many others were Staffan Lindberg in Lund, Thomas Bibin in Gothenburg and Kalle Kjellman in Stockholm.
Lars Eklund, now working with the Nordic South Asia Network (NSAN), was the editor in chief for 25 years, during the period 1982–2007.
From 2008 till the closure in 2010, the magazine was then edited by John Senewiratne in Norrköping.
However, in 2011 SYDASIEN resurfaced in a brand new shape, as a high-quality Internet based web magazine. It was launched by the current editor of the magazine, Johanna Sommansson, holding an MA in Social Anthropology and a BA in Indology from Stockholm University. Go for the Sydasien.se.
You may also join Sydasien.se via Facebook: www.facebook.com/sydasien
It is also a pleasure to announce that a searchable catalogue with links to full-text scanned magazines from the entire SYDASIEN production from 1977 till today is now being published by Lars Eklund. Right now the full content of the first 22 years, 1977-1998 is available as pdf-files. The index also includes the content up till 2007. Go for the index.

• Genetic research proves the theory of Aryan migration to India being true



New DNA evidence is solving the most fought-over question in Indian history. Did Indo-European language speakers, who called themselves Aryans, stream into India sometime around 2,000 BC – 1,500 BC when the Indus Valley civilisation came to an end, bringing with them Sanskrit and a distinctive set of cultural practices? Genetic research based on an avalanche of new DNA evidence is making scientists around the world converge on an unambiguous answer: yes, they did. Tony Joseph writes in The Hindu, 16 June 2017 an article entitled *"How Genetics is Settling the Aryan Migration Debate"*. Read the article.

• New Himalayan research project led by Joyanto Routh



In January 2017, Dr. Joyanto Routh from Department of Thematic Studies - Environmental Change at Linköping University was granted a 2016 Swedish Research Council project grant (Development research) for a Nepal related project entitled *"Carbon Circulation in Small Streams in the Himalayas: Impact on Soil Erosion and Climate Change"*. The project deals with certain natural processes and land-use practices accelerating the disturbance of soil organic carbon (OC). This is a large problem in mountainous terrains, where small mountain rivers (SMR) erode and transport OC-rich top soil. A large amount of this OC pool in SMRs represents highly aged C, which when oxidized can be an additional hidden source of greenhouse-gas emission. OC release and oxidation via this aquatic conduit poses a livelihood challenge because loss of soil-OC diminishes its quality for agriculture, and degradation of OC could affect the climate.
Nepal is affected by these changes both on short and long-term scales. Hence, the overarching aims of this study are to 1) develop and implement novel approaches to quantify the spatial and temporal variability of OC flux, and its fate in SMRs, and 2) initiate awareness and specific outreach activities for sustainable development practices. Dr. Routh and his research associates will implement these goals by studying the variation of well-established multi-proxy physical and geochemical parameters in two SMRs located in western Nepal. The project will support proactive research initiatives and communication, and two-way knowledge exchange. These efforts will contribute towards better synergy, filling in knowledge gaps, and provide data for launching better soil conservation efforts and land-use practices. Moreover, it will empower the local community in making suitable and judicious decisions for sustainable development practices and reduce poverty.
Previously, Dr. Routh has worked with several other South Asia related projects, for example on Arsenic in the Bengal

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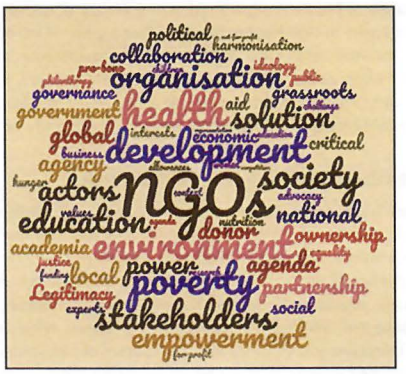
Delta Plain Groundwaters in Bangladesh and Indian state of West Bengal; on Environmental and long-term pitfalls of human induced changes in lake ecosystems: A case study of the Kumaun Lakes in Northeast India; on Biogeochemical signatures and high-resolution paleoclimatic records in spelotherms from caves in Meghalaya (India); and High-resolution Holocene paleoclimate records in glacial lakes from the northeastern Himalayas in Bhutan. More information

• More information about South Asia related research at Swedish and Nordic universities

See our page, http://nordicsouthasianet.eu/research-community-news

Seminars and Conferences in Scandinavia

• Oslo Research School on Critical Perspectives on NGOs in Development



Oslo Academy of Global Governance, and SUM Research School at the Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo, calls for applications to a Ph.D. course entitled 'Critical perspectives on NGOs in development', to be held 16 – 18 August 2017. The objective of this interdisciplinary course is to critically analyse the changing role of NGOs in development, focusing especially on health and environment.

- What roles do NGO-actors play: for example in communicating local realities to those in power, in representing civil society, or as sub-contractors to donors?
- What are their resources, and sources of power; and how is this power exercised?
- What are the wider implications of the increased influence, proliferation-, and professionalization of NGOs?

The lecturers include Prof. David Lewis from London School of Economics and Political Science; and Associate Professor Ann Swidler, Professor, University of California, Berkeley.

The interdisciplinary nature of the course will be most suitable for doctoral students engaging with different disciplines within the social sciences – anthropology, sociology, political science, geography, and development studies. Doctoral students will be prioritised, although other applicants may be considered only if space permits. Full information.

• Information about South Asia related lectures and seminars

See SASNET's page, http://nordicsouthasianet.eu/lectures-in-scandinavia

Conferences and workshops outside Scandinavia

• SOAS workshop on Labour Market Intermediaries in Contemporary India

An academic one-day workshop entitled *"Worker-Contractors: Refiguring Low-level Labour Market Intermediaries in Contemporary India"* was held at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, on 7th of July 2017. It was supported by the European Association for South Asian Studies (EASAS). The workshop was organised by Geert De Neve (University of Sussex); Richard Axelby (SOAS); and Brendan Donegan (London School of Economics, LSE).

The Indian contractor's role may end with the delivery of labourers to an employer or they may take on a supervisory role while working alongside the workers they recruit. This diversity of activities is reflected in the range of names by which they are known in India: third-party recruitment agent, labour intermediary, gang-leader, jobber, mukkadam, kangani, sardar, arkati, maistri. Despite a growing recognition of the significance of labour contractors in India and beyond, there remains a paucity of studies revealing the social identities and personal trajectories of these kinds of contractors and the intimate processes of exploitation to which they contribute.

This one-day symposium responded to this gap in the literature by bringing together scholars using ethnographic methods to examine the role of low-level labour contractors in contemporary India. Full information including list of papers selected for presentation.

• Interesting panels at ICAS 10 to be held in Chiang Mai

The International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) - the largest international gathering in the field of Asian Studies, holds its 10th summit on 20-23 July 2017 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. ICAS attracts participants from over 60 countries to engage in global dialogues on Asia that transcend boundaries between academic disciplines and geographic areas. Since 1997, ICAS has brought more than 20,000 academics together at nine conventions. ICAS 10 is organized by the Regional Center for Social Change and Development (RSCD), with support from the Faculty of Social Sciences of Chiang Mai University (CMU), one of the best universities in Southeast Asia. Nearly 2 000 Asia specialists and representatives of civil society are expected to attend.

The extensive programme includes panels on *"Exhibiting Indian Archives: Putting Heritage Back in Place"*; *"Democracy, Decentralization and Local Politics in South Asia"*; *"India's Foreign Policy 2014-2017: Reflections and Perspectives"*; *"Postcolonial Displacements: Migration, Narratives and Place-Making in South Asia"*; and *"Trajectory of Muslim Women in South Asia: A Development Discourse"*. Full information.

• Middle Bengali Retreat cum Workshop in Transylvania in August

For the second time, a Middle Bengali Retreat and Workshop will be held in Miercurea Ciuc/Csíkszereda, Romania, 3-13 August 2017. It is organised by the Faculty of Economics, Socio-Human Sciences and Engineering, Department of Human Sciences at Sapientia - Hungarian University of



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Transylvania, in collaboration with AIBS (American Institute of Bangladesh Studies) and the University of Chicago, USA. Deadline for applications is 2 May 2017. (*Photo from the 2016 retreat*)

The aim of the retreat is to bring together scholars and advanced students of Middle Bengali in a relatively informal way, to discuss or simply to enjoy reading together texts on which a specialist is working. In this way, not only the audience would benefit from the leaders' expertise but important feedback will also be provided for panel leaders from a qualified audience. Participants are normally academics and graduate students; however, undergraduates with a firm commitment are also encouraged to attend.

The format will be similar to the other Intensive Retreats (for Sanskrit see e.g. http://www.efeo.fr/siissr/index.htm) including outings and reading texts outdoors within beautiful scenery. Each day, three ninety-minute reading sessions will be conducted by outstanding specialists. One text will be read through several sessions.

This year, the readings will cover a wide range of Middle Bengali texts and a variety of genres (narrative, lyric, didactic) and periods (from the Bengali Sultanate to late Mughal times). After a general introduction on Middle Bengali grammar, prosody and literary genres, we will read texts such as Rūprām's Dharmamaṅgal, narratives on the lives of Sufi saints, Brajabuli lyrics by Vidyapati and other poets, Vaiṣṇava hagiographies and plays, etc... Session leaders who confirmed their participation are Tony Stewart (Vanderbilt University), Rebecca Manring (University of Indiana, Bloomington), Thibaut d'Hubert (University of Chicago), and Ishan Chakrabarti (University of Chicago). Full information.

- **18th South Asian Literary Association Conference to be held in New York**

The 18th Annual South Asian Literary Association (SALA) Conference will be held in New York City, US, On 8-9 January 2018. A Call for papers has now been announced. The theme for the conferece will be *"Precarity, Resistance, and Care Communities in South Asia"*. The conference is co-chaired by Dr. Sukanya Gupta and Dr. Afrin Zeenat.

The organisers are interested in insecurities and care communities that may exist within states and within bodies. Papers could answer the following questions, among others: What forms do these insecurities and care communities take in literature and culture? How do authors depict states of insecurity or care communities? What literary devices do they use? How do bodies and states clash? What insecurities do diasporas pose to the host nation-state? What precarities do foreign nationals face in South Asia?

Deadline for submitting abstracts is 15 August 2017. Please note that those who submit abstracts for consideration to the SALA conference must become members at the time of submission. Full information about the conference.

- **Other conferences connected to South Asian studies all over the World**

See SASNET's page, http://nordicsouthasianet.eu/conferences/conferences

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regards

Lars Eklund

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Nordic South Asia Network (NSAN)
Address: 23 A, Sardar Sankar Road,
Kolkata - 700 029, India
Phone: +91 90 51173899
Webmaster: Lars Eklund

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