

Fall 2011 Brown Bag South Asia Seminar series

Interdisciplinary South Asia Seminars with Lund University researchers

Thursday 15 September 2011, 12.00–13.00

Malin Gregersen, Department of History:

Fostering Obligations: Swedish Medical Missionary Narratives from South India

ABSTRACT:

Even though Sweden was not participating in the run for colonies during the era of the new imperialism in late 19th and early 20th century, Swedes often took a close interest in African and Asian countries through the work of Christian missionaries. Thus, Christian missionaries played an important role in forming early 20th century Swedish world views. But their depictions of everyday life in foreign countries were formulated on the basis of an aspiration not only to convert people to Christianity, but also to educate, shape and change people according to Swedish and Christian ideals. Such missionary narratives, originating from a South Indian hospital, will be the focus of my talk.

In 1909, a Swedish mission hospital was founded in the small southern Indian town of Tirupattur. It is this hospital as well as the narratives originating there that stand in focus. The Swedes working at the Tirupattur hospital were constantly writing home about their life and work, and in these narratives, they construct an image of their work and of their purpose in India. Letters, articles and books provided stories of progress and setbacks, experiences and encounters, as part of a legitimising account of a missionary assignment in which the Swedish presence in India was presented as both necessary and meaningful.

The aim of my recent thesis has been to investigate such legitimising accounts of Swedish missions in India. In my talk I will present and discuss some of the project's main issues and outcomes, focusing on and problematising the construction of boundaries between ideals and counter ideals as well as between the image of Self and Other.

Venue: Murbeckssalen, Gula Villan (inside Botanical Gardens), Lund

All are welcome!

More information: <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/brownbag2011.html>