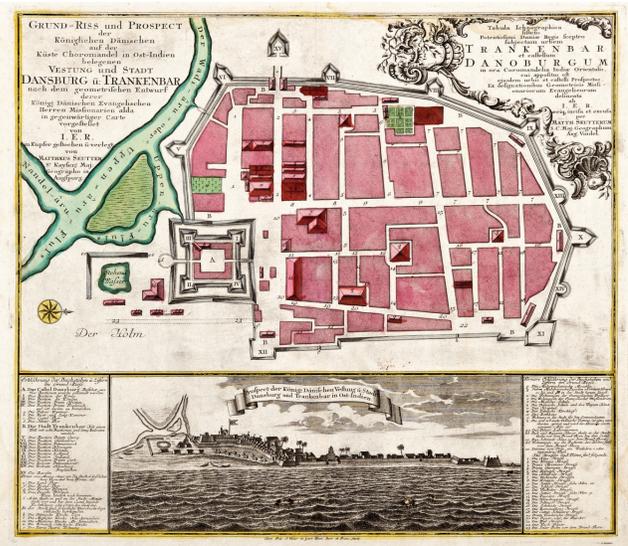




Modern India in German Archives, 1706-1989



Coloured copperplate print by Matthäus Seutter based on a plan by a missionary, showing the Danish fortress in Tranquebar. Source: Augsburg, 1745, 51x58 cm, Halle, Francke Foundations: BFSt: Kt 258

The richness and the potential of the holdings of German archives on modern Indian history has been insufficiently appreciated so far. To the international community of historians of India, these resources can open up new research perspectives that have remained obstructed by an excessive fixation on British colonial archives.

The project has the following key objectives:

- To systematically record the German archival resources on the history of modern India and the history of Indo-German interconnections in a database (1706-1989), to make this database available for international researchers as an open resource and to gradually create a digital archive guide
- To demonstrate the potential of German archival resources through a tandem structure of pilot research projects and a resultant publication series in order to a) promote intensive research especially by German and Indian historians as well as b) create the necessary multilingual and interregional qualification profiles;
- To intensify Indo-German research relationships in the humanities as formulated during the bilateral symposium of the DFG and the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) held in November 2012.



Sources from the library section of the Academy of Sciences of the GDR, inherited by the ZMO library

Materialising Visibility, Preparing Recognition: The 'cultural' politics of GDR-India relations, 1952-1972

Dr Anandita Bajpai

The German Democratic Republic was officially recognized by the Indian government in 1972. However, the trade representations established in 1956 became the 'official mouthpiece' of the GDR in India. Contacts between actors from both the sides can thus be traced much before official recognition was materialised. This project will present a social history of the variegated encounters, entanglements and exchanges, that existed among actors from both India and the GDR and are categorised under the larger umbrella theme of 'cultural relations' in state narratives.

From the perspective of the GDR state officials, cultural contacts with India were state-initiated and clearly 'political' in their objectives. They were seen as a means, a soft tool to stage and realise the political ambitions of official recognition.

The main question posed by the project is:

How were these relations between varied actors from India and the GDR effected by the fact that the GDR was formally not recognised as a sovereign state by the government of India until 1972, and how did they in turn impact the question of recognition?

A first working hypothesis is that an immediate concern was the question of visibility- How to make the GDR known to the people of India, so that they could push for it to be recognised officially? Prominent examples of the same are how Bertolt Brecht was popularised in India as the 'face of the GDR' and how the Indo-GDR Friendship societies toiled to render the GDR visible for Indians.

Instead of looking at India as the space where Inter-German Cold War politics was staged, this project will test a second working hypothesis: How did individual Indian actors in the field of socio-cultural encounters capitalize on the situation beyond the sphere of formalized politics?