

Transcultural Entanglements and Global Perspectives in the Pre-Modern World

First Annual Conference of the Collaborative Research
Center 980 'Episteme in Motion. Transfer of Knowledge
from the Ancient World to the Early Modern Period'

in cooperation with
Haus der Kulturen der Welt

12–13 July 2013

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

The interconnected world that we face today is not a novel phenomenon—it looks back on a long history of exchanges and interactions. The conference will discuss a range of approaches to this history. First we ask how far in the past the notion of cultural entanglements can be projected. Can we sensibly speak of a global Middle Ages, or of globalization in Antiquity? Which types of processes are salient from such a perspective, and which phenomena might these theoretical tools obscure? Contributions will investigate to what extent different cultures and regions influenced one another as well as the ways in which their awareness and conception of those influences diverged. Were processes of border-crossing interaction and exchange in the pre-modern world accompanied by forms of global consciousness? How did transfers and forms of mobility impact on the ways in which people viewed themselves and their communities within their own cultural worlds? And how did these self-images evolve over time? The conference will explore how current theories of trans-cultural entanglements—such as global history and globalization, cultural mobility, transfer and world literature(s)—can be fruitfully applied to the world before 1800. // Die „vernetzte“ Welt ist kein neues Phänomen, sondern beruht auf einer langen Geschichte des Austauschs und der gegenseitigen Beeinflussung. Die Jahrestagung stellt Wege vor, diese Verflechtungs-Geschichte zu untersuchen. Zunächst ist zu fragen, wie weit sich eine Perspektive der Verflechtung überhaupt zurückverfolgen lässt. Können wir sinnvoll von einem globalen Mittelalter sprechen, oder von Globalisierung in der Antike? Welche Prozesse kommen dadurch zum Vorschein, und welche geraten möglicherweise aus dem Blick? In den Beiträgen wird es darum gehen, in welchem Maße unterschiedliche Kulturen und Regionen sich gegenseitig beeinflusst haben – aber auch um die Frage, inwiefern der Blick auf solche Zusammenhänge, und auf die Welt, sich jeweils unterschied. Waren grenzüberschreitende Interaktionen und Austauschprozesse in der Vormoderne bereits begleitet von so etwas wie einem globalen Bewusstsein? Wie wirkten sich Transfers und Formen der Mobilität darauf aus, wie Menschen sich und ihre Gemeinschaften in ihrer Welt wahrnahmen? Und wie hat sich diese Selbstwahrnehmung über die Zeit verändert? In der Auseinandersetzung mit diesen Fragen erkundet die Jahrestagung Möglichkeiten, gegenwärtige Ansätze der Theoriebildung zu kulturellen Verflechtungen – wie Globalgeschichte und Globalisierung, kulturelle Mobilität, Transfer und Weltliteratur(en) – gewinnbringend auf die Welt vor 1800 anzuwenden.

FRIDAY, JULY 12

09.30 **Opening reception desk**
Foyer

10.00–13.00 **GLOBAL TRAJECTORIES**
Lecture and theater hall

MICHAEL BORGOLTE
(Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
“The global Middle Ages? Answers for a new historiography”

ALMUT HÖFERT
(Universität Zürich)
“Royalty and kingship as global concepts in Medieval Arab and Latin world orders”

CHRISTOPH K. NEUMANN
(Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)
“Liminality or 'global' consciousness: İbrāhīm Mütefferikā as author”

13.00–14.30 **Lunch**
Restaurant “Auster” (gallery)

14.30–17.30 **TRANSREGIONAL ENTANGLEMENTS**
Lecture and theater hall

BEATRICE GRÜNDLER
(Yale University)
“Wisdom from India in pieces”

JERRY BROTTON
(Queen Mary, University of London)
“Shakespeare and Islam: An unholy alliance?”

JEROLD FRAKES
(State University of New York, Buffalo)
“Marvels of the East and the paradisaical otherworld in the Nordic West: The Vinland Sagas”

17.30–18.00 **Coffee break**

18.00–19.30 **KEYNOTE**
Auditorium

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK
(Columbia University, New York)
“Afloat in the global”
mit Simultanübersetzung

19.30 **Dinner**
Restaurant “Auster”

SATURDAY, JULY 13

09.00 **Opening reception desk**
Foyer

09.30–14.00 **CHALLENGING CHRONOLOGY**
Lecture and theater hall

EMILY APTER
(New York University)
“Eurochronology and the politics of periodization”

AAMIR MUFTI
(University of California, Los Angeles)
“The ghazal among the nations”

11.30–12.00 **Coffee break**

ANDREW JAMES JOHNSTON
(Freie Universität Berlin)
“Beowulf as world literature”

ANGELIKA NEUWIRTH
(Freie Universität Berlin)
“Locating the Qur'an in the epistemic space of Late Antiquity”

14.00–15.30 **Lunch**
Restaurant “Auster” (gallery)

15.30–17.30 **CIRCULATION OF KNOWLEDGE**
Lecture and theater hall

RICHARD R. K. SORABJI
(Wolfson College, University of Oxford)
“Philosophy from 6th century Alexandria via Greek, Persian and Syriac to Islam”

JÜRGEN RENN
(Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin)
“The globalization of knowledge in history”

17.30–18.00 **Coffee break**

18.00–19.30 **KEYNOTE**
Lecture and theater hall

WANG HUI
(Tsinghua University, Beijing)
“Three sets of 'antithetical' concepts in narratives of Chinese history: Empire and nation-state, fengjian and junxian, rites/music and institutions”
mit Simultanübersetzung

19.30 **Dinner**
Restaurant “Auster” (Spree terrace)

The conference is conceptualized by the research group “**Transfer and Transculturality**” which is headed by Professor Sebastian Conrad and Professor Miltiadis Pechlivanos. // Die Tagung wurde konzipiert von den Leitern der Konzeptgruppe I “**Transfer und Transkulturalität**”, Professor Sebastian Conrad und Professor Miltiadis Pechlivanos.

Venue // Veranstaltungsort
Haus der Kulturen der Welt
John-Foster-Dulles-Allee 10
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Public transport // Öffentliche Verkehrsbindung
Main Station // S-Bahn Hauptbahnhof
(S3, S5, S7, S9, S75)
U-Bahn Bundestag (U 55)
Bus 100 and Bus M 85

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Freie Universität Berlin



SPEAKERS

MICHAEL BORGOLTE (*Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*)

“The global Middle Ages? Answers for a new historiography”

Michael Borgolte is Professor for the History of the Middle Ages and President of the Department of Comparative European History at Humboldt University Berlin. He is a member of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. His research focuses on comparative social, constitutional and church history of the European Middle Ages. Among his numerous publications are *Die mittelalterliche Kirche* [The church in the Middle Ages] and *Europa entdeckt seine Vielfalt 1050–1250* [Europe discovers its diversity].

Abstract Medieval globalism—spanning Asia, Europe and Africa—was dominated by the Muslim community of faith. Europe, i.e. the region of Western Christendom, was a peripheral culture. The expansion of the West started first in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Although the Western-Christian world was linked with the other two continents before 1350, its Early and High Medieval period also belonged to global history. It has proven worthwhile in global historical studies on the Middle Ages to examine empire formation, migration and long-distance trade as the ferments of global connection and cross-cultural interaction.

ALMUT HÖFERT

(*Universität Zürich*)

“Royalty and kingship as global concepts in Medieval Arab and Latin world orders”

Almut Höfert is Professor for Trans-Cultural History of the Arabic and Latin Middle Ages at the University of Zürich. Previously, she held fellowships at the American University in Cairo and at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. Her research interests lie in the history of knowledge and methodological approaches to trans-cultural history. Publications include the edited volume *Between Europe and Islam. Shaping Modernity in a Transcultural Space* (with Armando Salvatore) and a book on gender history in a global perspective.

Abstract ‘Kingship’ is a complex term both in historical sources and in research. It is, therefore, suitable for exploring modern historiographical borders between ‘civilizations’ and historical concepts of a world order that transgresses borders of time, space and religion. This paper will analyze the Arab concept of *mulk* (‘kingship’) as a trans-religious category and facet of the Islamic caliphate and compare it to other concepts of royalty in Europe and the Middle East in the discourses and practices of monarchy.

CHRISTOPH K. NEUMANN

(*Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München*)

“Liminality or ‘global’ consciousness: İbrâhîm Müteferrika as author”

Christoph K. Neumann holds the Chair of Turkish Studies at the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Studies at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. Before coming to Munich, he taught at several universities in Istanbul and Prague. He published widely on Ottoman history, among others *Kleine Geschichte der*

Türkei [A short history of Turkey] and is currently preparing a *Catalogue of the Ottoman manuscripts in the National Library, Prague*. He is active as a journalist and literary translator.

Abstract İbrâhîm Müteferrika is best known for the establishment of the first Turkish printing press in 1727. Born as a Unitarian Christian in Transylvania, he had turned Muslim as a young man and served the Ottoman state in a number of capacities, often relating to tasks that had some connection to foreign relations. This presentation scrutinizes his writings, aiming at establishing whether he developed a worldview transcending the dichotomy between the Muslim and the (Latin) Christian world that was so deeply inscribed in the two cultural and literary environments he belonged to.

BEATRICE GRÜNDLER

(*Yale University*)

“Wisdom from India in pieces”

Beatrice Gruendler is Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Yale University. She has published on the development of the Arabic script, classical Arabic poetry and its social context, the integration of modern literary theory into the study of Near Eastern literatures, and a media-historical approach to early Islamic book culture. As a Fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin during the academic year 2010/11, she began her current book project titled *The Islamic Age of Communication*.

Abstract The classic of Arabic-Islamic statecraft Kalîla wa-Dimna, translated and expanded by Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (executed 756 CE), famously takes material from two Sanskrit works. Despite its later popularity, the work’s early textual history remains obscure, but an indirect transmission of one chapter survives in a treatise on wisdom sayings by Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030 CE). I will compare his version with the later manuscripts to investigate their divergencies and observe how the Arabic reception re-engineered the Indian material to fit within the Arabic corpus of practical knowledge (*adab*).

JERRY BROTTON

(*Queen Mary, University of London*)

“Shakespeare and Islam: An unholy alliance?”

Jerry Brotton is Professor of Renaissance Studies at Queen Mary, University of London and an expert in the history of cartography and East-West cultural exchange in the Early Modern period. He held positions at Leeds and Royal Holloway before returning to the English Department of the University of London as a Lecturer in 2003. Brotton is a regular broadcaster, critic and feature writer, presenting BBC 4’s three-part TV series, *Maps: Power, Plunder and Possession* in 2010. In 2012, he published the book *A History of the World in Twelve Maps* and is currently writing a book on Shakespeare and Islam.

Abstract This paper will draw on recent historical work into Islamic relations with England and the wider European world in the sixteenth century to understand

how the concept of ‚Islam‘ was dramatized on the Shakespearean stage. It will address Shakespeare’s dramatization of ‘Turk’ and ‘Moor’ in a range of plays, including Titus Andronicus, Merchant of Venice, and Henry V, culminating in a reading of Othello.

JEROLD FRAKES

(*State University of New York, Buffalo*)

“Marvels of the East and the paradisaical otherworld in the Nordic West: The Vinland Sagas”

Jerold Frakes is Professor of English at the University at Buffalo. Previously he held positions at the University of Southern California and guest visiting appointments at Columbia University and Freie Universität Berlin. Among his publications on Medieval Latin, German, Norse, and Yiddish literature are *Brides and Doom: Gender, Property, and Power in Medieval German Women’s Epic* and *The Cultural Study of Yiddish in Early Modern Europe*. He is currently writing a book on epistemology and adultery in the medieval European Tristan traditions.

Abstract By the Middle Ages in Western Europe, the discourse tradition of the cultural Other that had originated in the ancient Greek genre of the ‘Marvels of the East’ came to shape descriptions of cultural outsiders (especially Muslims). In the 13th century Norse Vinland Sagas, that discourse was adopted by an Icelandic literary tradition that was at that time incorporating the learned Latin tradition into its native ideologies and ‘applied’ to Norse encounters with a mythologized West, viewed through the double lens of both the paradisaical West and the Marvelous East.

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK

(*Columbia University, New York*)

“Afloat in the global”

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is founding member and President of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University in New York. Her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* is considered a founding text of postcolonialism. Spivak is best known for her contemporary cultural and critical theories that challenge the legacy of colonialism and the way readers engage with literature and culture. She often focuses on the cultural texts of those who are marginalized by dominant Western culture: the new immigrant, the working class, women, and other positions of the subaltern.

Abstract Globality affects our way of thinking time as sequence. In that understanding, I will speak of the ‘simultaneity’ in heteronormativity by touching on Oedipus, Sykes-Picot, and the so-called ‘pre-modern’ in the modern. In other words, I will ask you to think of ‘global culture synchronies’—which would affect the epistemological presuppositions of ‘world literature’ and ‘global history’.

EMILY APTER (*New York University*)

“Eurochronology and the politics of periodization”

Emily Apter is Professor of French and Comparative Literature at New York University. She has engaged critically with debates concerning the politics of translation, most notably in her books *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (2013) and *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (2006). Together with Jacques Lezra and Michael Wood, Apter is currently preparing an English edition of the Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: *Dictionnaire des intraduisibles* [Dictionary of untranslatables: A philosophical lexicon].

Abstract Literary history has been beset by the ‘Eurochronology problem’: in-built typologies adduced from Western literary examples. It is impossible, for instance, to disengage the genre of epic from Homer’s The Odyssey, and from the idea of ancient Greece as the foundation of Western civilization. More recently the politics of periodization has emerged as an important problem in literary theory and literary history. This paper will focus on culturally discrepant timelines (defined by what might be called periodicity untranslatables) and on the impact of time studies on periodizing frames with special reference to comparative ‘contemporaneity’.

AAMIR MUFTI

(*University of California, Los Angeles*)

Aamir Mufti is Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Los Angeles. He pursued his doctoral studies in literature at Columbia University under the supervision of Edward Said. His work reconsiders the secularization thesis in a comparative perspective, with a special interest in Islam and modernity in India and the cultural politics of Jewish identity in Western Europe. His most recent contribution to the study of secularism is the book *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*.

Abstract ‘Lyric’ sensibility emerges in Europe at the threshold of modernity in the encounter with premodern ‘Oriental’ verse, especially the Persianate ghazal form, and having taken over the universe of poetic expression in the West, becomes a benchmark and a test for ‘Oriental’ writing traditions themselves. These transactions must be part of any genealogy of the lyric, that is, any critical-historical account of how ‘lyric’ has come to be conceived of as such in modern literature.

ANDREW JAMES JOHNSTON

(*Freie Universität Berlin*)

Andrew James Johnston is Chair of Medieval and Early Modern English Literature at Freie Universität Berlin. He studied there and at Yale University and received his PhD from the Freie Universität in 1998. He has published several monographs, among them *Performing the Middle Ages from Beowulf to Othello* (2008). He re-

cently co-edited a special issue of the European Journal of English Studies devoted to the topic of medievalism. Though his research focuses mainly on medieval and Renaissance literature, he has also written essays on Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Bertolt Brecht, J.R.R. Tolkien, and film-maker David Fincher.

Abstract During the last two decades, scholars have become increasingly aware of the manifold ways in which Anglo-Saxon writers participated in a project of locating their culture in global contexts while simultaneously forging a specifically Germanic identity. The epic poem Beowulf, this paper argues, constitutes a self-conscious critique of this process, an early attempt both to historicize the notion of the global itself and the specific role that a concept of the ‘Germanic’ might play within that notion.

ANGELIKA NEUWIRTH

(*Freie Universität Berlin*)

“Locating the Qur’an in the epistemic space of Late Antiquity”

Angelika Neuwirth is Senior Professor at the Department of Arabic Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. Neuwirth, who founded the Research project “Corpus Coranicum” at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities recently published her book *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike* [The Qur’an as a text of Late Antiquity], followed by a historical-literary critical commentary to the entire Qur’an. The main aim of her research is to locate the Qur’an in the historical time of Late Antiquity as a contribution to inter-religious dialogue and theology.

Abstract Current delimitations of Late Antiquity tend to exclude Islam. Christian cultural phenomena, though conceded to have endured into early Islam, are not perceived as engaging in a conversation with Islam. Why not replace the epoch Late Antiquity with the concept of an epistemic space? If we focus on the reception of Antiquity, we will re-encounter most characteristic phenomena of Christian Late Antiquity as present in early Islam—an outcome of a lively exchange in methods and modes of interpretation of the inherited texts.

RICHARD R. K. SORABJI

(*Wolfson College, University of Oxford*)

“Philosophy from 6th century Alexandria via Greek, Persian and Syriac to Islam”

Richard Rustom Kharsedji Sorabji is historian of ancient Western philosophy and Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at King’s College London, where he founded the King’s College Centre for Philosophical Studies. He was Director of the Institute of Classical Studies and British Academy Research Professor at Oxford. The Gifford Lectures he gave in 1996 and 1997 were later published as *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*. He is currently working on a publication on the Stoics and Gandhi.

Abstract Greek and Islamic philosophers often offered new ideas as part of a tradition by presenting them within commentary on acknowledged masters, above all on Aristotle. The recently excavated school of Ammonius in Alexandria reveals something of its teaching methods. It brought two innovations into Arabic: a new

introduction, which included definitions of philosophy; and the rebellion of Ammonius’ pupil Philoponus against belief in the eternity of the world, in favor of the Christian belief in its creation in time. The first inspired, the second split the Arabic tradition.

JÜRGEN RENN

(*Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin*)

“The globalization of knowledge in history”

Jürgen Renn is Director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin and Honorary Professor at Humboldt University Berlin as well as Honorary Professor for Physics at Freie Universität Berlin and Adjunct Professor for Philosophy and Physics at the Boston University. He contributed several publications on the development of Einstein’s theory of relativity and has recently edited a volume on *The Globalization of Knowledge in History*.

Abstract Long-distance and intercontinental connections with an attendant spread of knowledge are as old as *homo sapiens*. Since its inception, the globalization of knowledge has been a process with its own dynamics, interfering significantly with other processes of intercultural transmission. The paper addresses central concepts that inform a global history of knowledge and historical phases in which production, transmission and transformation of knowledge were crucial for advancing this process.

WANG HUI

(*Tsinghua University, Beijing*)

“Three sets of ‘antithetical’ concepts in narratives of Chinese history: Empire and nation-state, *fengjian* and *junxian*, rites/music and institutions”

Wang Hui is Professor in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at Tsinghua University in Beijing and one of China’s leading public intellectuals. His research focuses on contemporary Chinese literature and intellectual history. Wang was executive editor of the literary magazine *Dushu* from 1996 to 2007. He held visiting professorships at Harvard, Edinburgh, Bologna, Stanford, UCLA, Berkeley, and the University of Washington. In 2004, he published the influential four-volume treatise *Xiandai Zhongguo Sixiang de Xingqi* [The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought]. A number of his essays have been translated into English and appeared as *The End of the Revolution: China and Its Limits of Modernity* (2009) and *The Politics of Imagining Asia* (2011).

Building on many of the themes of these works, Wang’s lecture will address the possibilities of rethinking modernity through conceptual lenses found in Chinese history and challenge us to re-examine our theories of China and world history as a whole.