



# Asia & Europe *Bulletin*

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**Essay** Contesting the Commons:  
Travelling Norms of Nature Conservation p. 4

**Interview** Exploring the Notion of  
'Circulating Norms' p. 7

# Contents

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## Essay

Contesting the Commons: Travelling Norms of Nature Conservation p. 4

---

## Interview

Exploring the Notion of 'Circulating Norms' p. 7

---

## Report

In Memory of Helmut Brinker: Ink Painting and Football p. 10

---

Coping with 'Religion' p. 10

---

Lives between Asia and Europe p. 12

---

A Fresh Look at Postmodernity p. 14

---

Invitation to a Stroll p. 15

---

On Uses of the 'Third' in Historical Studies p. 16

---

Fluidity of Statuses p. 16

---

## Doctoral Program

Different Ways of Advancement p. 17

---

News & Events p. 19

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Protesting woman at an anti-nuclear power  
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# Editorial

*Dear Readers,*



The positive response to the first issue of our bulletin as well as the good news that the URPP Asia and Europe has been granted its extension until 2017 brought the work on the second issue in full swing and it is a great pleasure to see it published. The second issue focuses on the topic of the circulation of norms between Asia and Europe: a multifaceted process which shapes political and legal strategies not only of agents at national

and trans-national levels, but also influences the live and the environmental situation of people in even the remotest localities. In her feature article on "Travelling norms of Nature Conservation" Shalini Randeria deals with the impact of current globally designed concepts of nature conservation on communities living in and from the Gir forest (western India). She analyses the different strategies of those advocating the transformation of the Gir forest into a 'nature park' over against grass-root activists fighting for the rights of the forest-dwellers. In so doing, the latter demand that the Indian state replaces legal provisions inherited from British colonial legislation with a more appropriate legal principle enacted in the US. We are thus dealing here with a process of 'Glocalization' in which agents at a local level use globally available norms in order to change state legislation. With this essay Shalini Randeria made another major contribution to the activities of the URPP, which she continuously supported from the very start not only with respect to her research input, but also through her personal engagement and the supervision of several Ph.D. and Post-Doc projects. Last Fall, she became the director of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. We are very pleased that Shalini Randeria will remain a member of the URPP and participate in our future activities.

One of these future events is directly connected to the topics raised in the feature article, as the members of Research Field 3 *Norms and Social Order(s)* have taken on the task of organizing the next annual conference of the URPP on the topic of "Travelling Norms and the Politics of Contention." It will take place from October 25 to October 26, 2013. The conference mirrors the larger research program

on "circulating norms," which is delineated and discussed in an interview with David Chiavacci, Bettina Dennerlein, and Dorothea Lüddeckens.

This issue also includes reports and reflections on the rich spectrum of the research activities that were going on in our three research fields in the past year. You will find reports on the aims and issues of the 2012 annual conference of the URPP "Concepts of Religion between Asia and Europe," and on the topics and discussions of an international workshop organized by Research Field 2 on "Biographies Afield in Asia and Europe." The latter workshop focused on biographies and (auto-) biographical testimonies of individuals whose lives are marked by trans-cultural movements and experiences between Asia and Europe in historical contexts from the early modern period up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sourav Kargupta (Kolkatta), who participated at the post-graduate workshop on "Asian Postmodernities and their Legacies," shares his thoughts on deconstructivist aporias and perspectives on "post-modernity," giving a lively idea of the intense interdisciplinary discussions during the event. Incited by our former Academic Director, Andrea Riemenschneider, professor of Chinese studies, it was also the first workshop exclusively designed for post-graduates and set a successful example to be pursued in the future.

In supporting junior researchers on the doctoral and postdoctoral level for more than six years and in running an interdisciplinary doctoral program since 2009, the URPP Asia and Europe has successfully supported several generations of graduate students in conducting research within an interdisciplinary framework. What ways of advancing are opening up for our students when their scholarships have come to an end? Roman Benz updates us on three alumni and gives us insights into their views on their achievements and future perspectives.

Finally, I like to express our thanks to Jorrit Britschgi, Philipp Hetmancyk, Thomas Hüllelein, Justyna Jaguścik, Sourav Kargupta, Shalini Randeria, Ralph Weber, Sebastian Zylinski, and Roman Benz for their valuable contributions to this volume.

Prof. Dr. Angelika Malinar  
*Academic Director*



# Contesting the Commons: Travelling Norms of Nature Conservation

*International norms of biodiversity conservation consider the establishment of uninhabited 'protected areas' as an effective way to protect nature. This essay examines the ideology and practices of new regimes of environmental governance in Gir forest (western India) by delineating (post)colonial continuities in displacement, dispossession and the curtailment of the rights of forest-dwelling communities.*

Shalini Randeria



This essay explores the paths and patterns of travelling norms of nature conservation from their colonial beginnings to contemporary processes of their transnationalization. The contradictions of

colonial impositions are delineated here along with the impact of the new environmental regime of pristine 'protected areas,' which the Indian state borrowed from another post-colony, the U.S.A. My ethnography also analyzes the struggle around an alternative, cosmopolitan vision of the commons, one held by grass-root activists, who forge strategic trans-local alliances in order to protect the rights of forest-dwelling communities.

Imperialism brought about profound transformations in the conceptualizations of nature and society as well as in the legal and institutional regimes for their control in European metropolitan centers and colonies alike. Pervasive changes in landscapes, ecologies, and ideas about nature – whether as wilderness in need of conservation or as a resource to be exploited for economic gain – are among the most enduring legacies of

British colonial rule all over the world. The current policies and practices of environmental governance in India have inherited these contradictory colonial ideologies of nature.

Ironically, the environmental interventions of the post-colonial state have extended the scope of colonial categories, discourses and mechanisms of surveillance and the control of nature and local populations. In the name of development as well as management of biodiversity, ever more territories and communities have come under the control of the post-colonial state. International organizations like the World Bank and international NGOs like the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) have undergirded this process.

**Grassroots activists insist that environmental protection and natural resource use are not technical but political issues.**

The new globalized forms of ecological governmentality include elements from several Western strands of conservation ideology. Among these is the now hegemonic idea of biodiversity conservation, enshrined in the international Convention for Biological Diversity, which in turn is based

on the U.S. model of National Parks that identifies uninhabited wilderness reserves as 'protected areas.' This term encompasses various levels of protection ranging from highly restrictive national parks to wildlife sanctuaries, where communities inhabiting the area have greater rights.

## A clash of models of conservation

My argument on the effects of (post-) colonial environmental regimes is based on ethnographic material generated in the Gir forest, which was home to a World Bank funded biodiversity conservation program in the western Indian state of Gujarat. Gir is the last intact habitat of an estimated 304 Asiatic lions according to a 1995 census. The Government of Gujarat declared parts of the forest a wildlife sanctuary in 1965. In 1975, a part of the area was turned into a national park. Within the territory classified as 'protected area,' there are 54 traditional livestock-owning pastoral communities (known as *Maldharis*, i.e. owners of cattle). Their population totals 2,540.<sup>1</sup> About 14,200 heads of cattle belonging to them graze in the sanctuary but are not permitted to cross into the area now demarcated as national park.

Pastoralists emphasize their own positive contribution to conservation including their intimate knowledge of and care for their surroundings, as well as the symbiotic relationship between their buffaloes and the lions that prey on the herds of cattle. By contrast, state forest officials, international organizations, and environmentalist NGOs all advocate conservation norms derived from a Euro-American ideology of 'protected areas.' Among its assump-

<sup>1</sup> World Bank (1996), *Staff Appraisal Report: India, Ecodevelopment Project*, report no. 14914-IN, August 3, 1996.



Taking a rest in civilisation: The Asiatic lions living in Gir Forest National Park explore the surroundings of their habitat from time to time. © Dilip Jiruka

tions is an antagonism between the rights of nature and those of local inhabitants. The expansion of protected areas thus leads to the conversion of inhabited forests into uninhabited national parks, which turns forest-dwellers with a variety of usufruct rights to commons into encroachers, illegal residents and law-breakers through a re-drawing of cartographic boundaries.

#### Dilemmas of displacement

Pastoralist families that were forcibly resettled outside the boundaries of the protected area thus lost their livelihood and customary access to the commons. Ironically, not even the lions benefitted from the eviction. For as the pastoralists point out, the Asiatic lions' survival in the Gir forest depends on a delicate ecological balance maintained by the presence of the pastoral communities' buffaloes. With the displacement of the cattle and their owners, the lions were forced to move further out into the sanctuary area and beyond in search of prey. Some lions had to be shot when they began to prey on cattle in the villages around the Gir forest, even turning into man-eaters on occasion.

Community-based NGOs have tried mobilizing public opinion, organizing protests, and filing court cases in order to protect the rights of the pastoralists to live and move freely in the forest, collect forest products, graze cattle, and access fodder and water. In the Gir forest they were pitted against the Indian chapter of World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-International) and the state government of Gujarat, who argued that the traditional grazing practices of the pastoralists endangered both the fragile local ecological system and the lions. Accordingly, in the name of the common good of biodiversity protection, the joint action of these groups restricted the pastoralists' rights.

In terms of the overriding commitments accepted by the Government of India, World Bank policies safeguarding those affected by a project from involuntary displacement prevail over national laws for the limited duration of the project and within the project areas. Unable to protect the rights of local forest-dwelling communities under the national law that requires the relocation of any person living within ar-



reas demarcated as national parks, human rights NGOs together with peoples' organizations, therefore, strategically invoked the World Bank's norms against involuntary displacement. They were thus able to prevent further forcible evictions that would have violated the World Bank's conditionalities for the credit given for the biodiversity project.

#### Competing cosmopolitan visions

The 'parks vs. people' conflict in the Gir forest alerts us to a clash of cosmopolitanisms, reflecting the contrast between two visions of the relationship of local communities to nature. These contending visions entail very different designs of (world) citizenship. I have called the bearers of these visions





A *Maldhari* settlement and buffaloes on the fringes of the Gir forest. © Dilip Jiruka

“footloose experts” and “rooted cosmopolitans.”<sup>2</sup> The one, based on values of biodiversity conservation, is a totalizing and technocratic vision in which the local population is seen as a major threat to nature. Seeing themselves as representatives of global stakeholders in nature, transnationally linked experts working for international organizations and (inter)national NGOs share this vision.

Grassroots activists articulating an alternate vision question this biocentric view of the relationship between society and nature. They insist that environmental protection and natural resource use are not technical but political issues. Arguing against a narrow environmentalist agenda that pits peoples’ rights to access commons against conservationist goals, they seek to protect the claims of local communities to natural resources. They link ecological problems to questions of political economy, social justice, and citizenship rights. Such a cosmopolitan perspective gives primacy to the survival needs and cultural priorities of resource-dependent communities over the rights of nature.

<sup>2</sup> See Shalini Randeria (2007), “Global Designs and Local Life-worlds: Colonial Legacies of Conservation, Disenfranchisement and Environmental Governance in Postcolonial India,” in: *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 9(1), pp. 12–30.

Rooted cosmopolitans contest the definition of common good advanced by (inter)national experts and the state. Bound by neither national loyalties nor a statist vision, these activists may also transcend the nation-state in search of ideas and alliances. They freely borrow and mix norms of heterogeneous origins in order to defend the rights of local populations under threat from the new regime of ecological governmentality. Their advocacy of the traditional rights of local communities is framed in terms of universalist discourses of human rights, the rights of indigenous communities, and the value of localized knowledge of nature for environmental sustainability, all of which constitute a global counter-hegemonic discourse.

#### **Glocalization of law**

With the imposition of English common law throughout the British Empire, the principle of ‘eminent domain’ was exported to the colonies. It refers to the power of the state to appropriate property without the consent of the owner and convert it for public use by virtue of its sovereignty over all lands within its jurisdiction. The post-colonial Indian state has retained this Anglo-Saxon legal principle. This remnant of British law not only contravenes the customary rights of local communities to commons but also is unable to accommodate the survival needs of resource-dependent communities. There-

fore, activists advocate its replacement by the American doctrine of the state as ‘public trustee,’ challenging the absolute nature of the ‘eminent domain’ concept. This principle imposes obligations and constraints on the use and sale of natural resources by the state, since it views the state as trustee rather than as owner of natural resources within its territory.

Instead of drawing on pre-colonial Indian traditions for allegedly authentic alternatives to modern western legal concepts and norms, these activists have chosen to set aside a judicial principle of colonial provenance through advocating its replacement by a more suitable, contemporary American one. The political ideas and practices of these community-based cosmopolitans are forged in a context and articulated in a vocabulary that is inflected with the vernacular but which is not entirely local. Here we have not only an interesting example of a creative process of ‘glocalization’ of legal norms by non-state actors<sup>3</sup>, but also an unusual trajectory of travelling norms resulting in the Americanization of Indian law by grassroots activists aiming to counter the global designs of biodiversity conservation.

<sup>3</sup> See Shalini Randeria (2007), “The State of Globalization: Legal Plurality, Overlapping Sovereignties and Ambiguous Alliances between Civil Society and the Cunning State in India,” in: *Theory, Culture and Society*, 24(1), pp. 1–33.

#### **Shalini Randeria**

Shalini Randeria is a founding member of the URPP Asia and Europe and a former professor of social and cultural anthropology at the University of Zurich. Since September 2012 she chairs the newly formed Anthropology and Sociology Department at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. Fortunately, she continues to be an associated member of the URPP Asia and Europe.

# Exploring the Notion of ‘Circulating Norms’

*Among the three Research Fields at the URPP Asia and Europe, Research Field 3 is focusing on “Norms and Social Order(s).” In the interview, three of its members – professors David Chiavacci (social science of Japan), Bettina Dennerlein (gender and Islamic studies), and Dorothea Lüdeckens (study of religions) – explain their current collaborative research interest in the ‘circulation’ of norms in connection with forms of ‘political protest.’*

Interview: Roman Benz

*Professors Chiavacci, Dennerlein, and Lüdeckens, could you explain the interest of Research Field 3 in ‘circulating norms?’*

**Bettina Dennerlein:** Choosing this subject was a result of ongoing discussions on joint research interests inside the URPP. When Research Field 3 was reorganized in 2009, it took up the ambitious task to explore the broad field of “Norms and Social Order(s).” While working on this subject, we were especially concerned with relations of exchange and entanglements between Asia and Europe – many of us being interested in questions related in one way or another to human rights norms. In order to frame our research in a more systematic manner, we find the notion of ‘circulating norms’ very helpful. Initially we used it to describe the complex and often conflicting processes of globalization and transnationalization of human rights norms. But it became obvious that this notion was useful in other contexts as well.

**Dorothea Lüdeckens:** To clarify our understanding of circulation, we need to emphasize that norms usually undergo more or less distinctive changes if taken over by other societies. A norm developed in Asia may lose all clear signs of its origin in the course of adaptation in Europe. In later times, norms that once travelled to Europe from elsewhere may be adapted in Asia as typical European ones.

*Could you give an example?*

**David Chiavacci:** Let me pick Japanese management practices (quality circles, kaizen, etc.) admired in the West. By taking into account the suggestions of the employees on how to improve workflow and production process, these practices essentially increased the productivity of Japanese companies. But this collecting of labor-saving proposals had been developed in the US some decades earlier in connection with the so-called Taylorism and had been implemented in Japan after World War II. Still, Western observers regarded these practices as originally Japanese and even questioned whether they were compatible with Western culture.

*How do you define ‘circulating norms’ more precisely?*

**Dennerlein:** We decided to use the concept in a rather open, pragmatic way, allowing for theoretization but not following one strict line. For example, during a workshop on “Protests, the Media, and the Circulation of Norms,” we discussed together with Scott Rodgers, one of the paper presenters, the approach to globalization developed by Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, who are trying to apply the idea of ‘circulation’ developed in economics to the field of cultural studies. But as mentioned above, our major interest is not so much in theorizing the idea as much as in exploring its productive qualities in different contexts.

*Besides ‘circulating norms,’ the idea of ‘travelling norms’ is used in Research Field 3 as well. Are these two interchangeable?*

**Chiavacci:** In our view, they are not. We prefer to argue that the notion of ‘travelling norms’ is included in the idea of a ‘circulation’ of norms. If you talk about circulation, you are interested in



Bettina Dennerlein: “It no longer makes sense to consider human rights norms as ‘Western.’”

bi- or multidirectional movements of norms. An in-depth exploration of the underlying relationships will probably result in time-intensive research projects. Therefore, confining oneself to the examination of single trajectories from A to B may sometimes be a more practicable approach. Consider conducting an anthropological field study in B on a micro-level, with a focus on the influence of norms originating from A. Most probably, you would not explore the norms way back to A in the same study. In this case, we prefer to talk of 'travelling norms,' which underlines the concentration on the one-way aspect.

*Why has Research Field 3 recently begun focusing its research activities on political protests, namely in the Arab world and in Japan after the Fukushima nuclear disaster?*

**Dennerlein:** To some extent, it has been a reaction to these events, giving us the opportunity to study the 'circulation of norms' as currently unfolding in practice. Thanks to our previous discussions about the circulation of norms at the time the events took place, we were able to respond quickly by elaborating a specific research agenda. Today's political protests extensively refer to transnationally established ideas and norms, adapting them to the needs of a

particular situation. As far as the Arab world is concerned, we can observe an impressive example of how the language of human rights norms has been taken up in an utterly non-ideological way to express claims to justice, dignity, freedom, and democratization during the so called 'Arab spring.' These claims mobilized the urban masses to an extent that no one thought possible in this region of the world.

**"The fact is that researchers so far have been very much focusing on reasons to explain the decades-long stability of authoritarian-populist and authoritarian-monarchist governments in the Arab world."**

Bettina Dennerlein

**Chiavacci:** Determining political protests as the research topic of Research Field 3 had practical reasons too and helped us to consolidate further our research activities. Before, Research Field 3 comprised a broad range of projects, limiting the exchange of ideas between the doctoral students.

*Returning to the events in the Arab world, could you explain the impor-*

*tance of Western influence as it relates to human rights norms?*

**Dennerlein:** I would say that they have been so important during these events because it no longer makes sense to consider human rights norms as "Western." This has to do with developments in international relations after the end of the Cold War but also with the establishment of a multitude of oppositional human and women's rights groups in the Arab world. The urban masses in the Arab countries do not necessarily regard human rights as norms of Western hegemony, but as appropriate tools to frame their protest – not least for the sake of legitimating the protest on an international scale. Nowadays, human rights norms simply belong to the political culture of many Arab countries.

*But the so-called West seemed very surprised that human rights norms were widespread in this part of the world.*

**Dennerlein:** Neither governments nor political and social scientists dealing with this region were really expecting the kind of uprisings we have seen or the language that would be used by the new political actors. The fact is that researchers so far have been very much focusing on reasons to explain the decades-long stability of authoritarian-populist and authoritarian-monarchist governments in the Arab world. As a consequence, most of the time too little attention had been given to dynamics of socio-cultural change and its possible political consequences. Someone who has been doing research on this topic from very early on is sociologist Asef Bayat. He has become an important figure in explaining the 'Arab spring' by developing a conceptual framework for describing the transformation processes in the Middle East. He has introduced notions like 'post-Islamism' and 'non-movements,' the latter referring to unorganized daily practices that effect not only social, but potentially also political change.



Dorothea Lüddeckens: "Norms usually undergo more or less distinctive changes if taken over by other societies."



**Chiavacci:** As far as revolutionary events are concerned, we will probably never have socio-scientific theories capable of precise predictions. By definition, the concept of 'revolution' includes the idea of sudden unforeseeable changes.

*What is special about political protests in Japan?*

**Chiavacci:** For a long time, Japan as well as other democracies in East Asia were considered 'strong states' where influential bureaucracies tried to manage the overall social development, thereby keeping the civil society – in comparison to the situation in Western industrial countries – in a dependent position and even instrumentalizing it for the implementation of policies.

After the Fukushima nuclear disaster, many Japanese media reported in detail on the nuclear phase-outs decided in Germany and Switzerland. These decisions were attributed to the strong civil society movements in the two countries. As a result, Japanese anti-nuclear activists increased their effort to organize political protest against the use of nuclear power, especially on the national level. As a consequence, a number of new social movements and organizations were established. Among them is e.g. the Japanese green party, which is strongly influenced by the German "Alliance '90/The Greens." We can observe a transnationalization of green politics as German ecologists travel to Japan to support local activities.

*Could you describe the social influence of Japanese anti-nuclear power movements?*

**Chiavacci:** Since the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, the mobilization of citizens critical of nuclear power has reached an impressive degree. Before anti-nuclear movements were limited to regional and local protest, but now the movements have the potential to gain a voice in energy policy on a national level. Of course you have to be cautious in predicting the long-term effects of these protests. The Liberal Democratic Party



David Chiavacci: "The mobilization of citizens critical of nuclear power has reached an impressive degree."

(LDP), which stands for the continuation of nuclear power, won the last elections in December 2012. It must be said, however, that the Japanese electoral system favored the LDP to a certain extent. The party missed the majority of the votes, but acquired more seats in the House of Representatives than the fragmented opposition. Maybe this political situation will strengthen the civil society movements as they become even more important in their struggle for a nuclear phase-out.

*What are the next steps in carrying out the research agenda of Research Field 3?*

**Dennerlein:** This spring semester, there will be two workshops, one about political protests and digital media and one about intersectionality, a concept developed in gender studies to analyze the intersection of different dimensions of inequality like, most notably, race, class and gender.

**Lüddeckens:** Finally, Research Field 3 will organize the annual conference of the URPP Asia and Europe in September of this year, addressing the issue of "Travelling Norms and the Politics of Contention."

**Chiavacci:** With these events, we aim at building up an international network of researchers who are interested in project specific collaborations.

### Research Fields

Besides *Research Field 3*, the URPP Asia and Europe houses two other research fields:

*Research Field 1: Concepts and Taxonomies* reflects on a precise terminology that is vital for conceptualizing and studying phenomena such as identity constructions, exchanges and encounters between various cultural spaces in Europe and in Asia. One of its major goals is to contribute to the understanding of basic concepts, especially their taxonomical status and position, translational equivalents and correlates, as well as their use as heuristic instruments.

*Research Field 2: Entangled Histories* explores how the processes of cultural exchange and the constructions of cultural boundaries between Asia and Europe are shaped by agents and embedded in particular temporal and spatial contexts. The research field highlights the dynamics of exchange and constructions of cultural differences. Entangled histories are studied primarily with regard to historical, institutional, and geographical interactions, as well as media representations (literature, film, and art), and the history of knowledge.

# Ink Painting and Football

**The East Asian art historian Prof. Dr. Helmut Brinker was a member of the URPP Asia and Europe since its beginning in 2006. On 9 July 2012, he died unexpectedly at the age of 72.**

Jorrit Britschgi

Helmut Brinker was born in Lübbecke (Westphalia, Germany) on 17 August 1939. He studied German literature, art history, and archeology at the University of Heidelberg. A lecture on East Asian ink painting by the art historian Dietrich Seckel (1910–1997) incited his sustained interest in the artistic and aesthetic traditions of China and Japan. In 1973, he published his dissertation on Zen-Buddhist portraiture from its beginnings to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A Harkness Fellowship (1966–68) enabled him to enroll at Harvard and Princeton. Brinker's fascination with portrait art – an interest he shared with his supervisor, mentor, and close friend Dietrich Seckel – was in no way his only area of expertise. To the contrary, he covered the full spectrum of the rich field of East Asian art history, offering lectures on Korean literati painting as well as on Buddhist art from China and Japan.

## Lectures “in situ”

Following the completion of his dissertation, Helmut Brinker began working as curator for East Asian art at the Rietberg Museum, Zurich. He designed numerous exhibitions for the museum, such as *Gold in the Art of East Asia*; *Bronzes from China*; *Brush and Ink*; *Art Treasures from China*; *Chinese Cloisonné*; *The Pierre Uldry Collection*; and *Zen: Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings*.

Helmut Brinker was a masterful conveyor of East Asian art history. His remarkable expertise is evident not only in the long and substantial list of his publications and of the exhibitions he realized as a curator, but also in the

range of his teaching at the University of Zurich. Beginning as a lecturer at the Art History Institute, he became a private lecturer in 1975 and, three years later, was appointed as an associate professor. In 1982, he became full professor.

The fortunate proximity to the Rietberg Museum turned out to be extremely productive. Helmut Brinker was convinced that art is studied best in direct experience and the Rietberg Museum had plenty of original artifacts to offer. Therefore, his lectures usually took place in the museum's exhibition rooms and permanent galleries.

## The former sportsman

In 2006, Helmut Brinker retired as an emeritus professor, but he continued to work on numerous hitherto neglected projects. Furthermore, he wrote a concise introduction to Chinese art (C.H. Beck) as well as – surprisingly to many people – a cultural history of football in China. Yet, for all who knew stories from the right time, such as where he played for the Lübbecke football club or won the city of Zurich's tennis championship (single and double) in 1972, this interest in sports was hardly surprising. Additionally, Helmut Brinker found extra time to apply himself to his *moxi* (ink games). He shared his most beautiful works with his wife, the Germanist Claudia Brinker-von der Heyde, and with his friends.

With the death of Helmut Brinker, both the University of Zurich and the discipline of East Asian art history have lost one of their most eminent representatives. In addition to his professional connoisseurship, many of us will remember Helmut Brinker as a very warm-hearted and friendly colleague.

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A longer version of this article including a list of Helmut Brinker's publications and exhibitions is published in *Asiatische Studien*, 4/2012.

# Coping with ‘Religion’

**The Annual Conference of the URPP Asia and Europe on “Concepts of Religion between Asia and Europe” was held November 1–3, 2012 at the Museum Rietberg, Zurich. The topic of the conference addressed current debates on the Western ‘genealogy’ of the concept of religion by tracing Asian counterparts and perspectives.**

Philipp Hetmanczyk

Scholarly discussions on religion over the last two decades are marked by a tendency to move away from attempts to define religion as a concept or a social practice. Instead, the historicity of the term and the implications of its emergence as an abstract category in the period of European Enlightenment are highlighted in recent studies. While the constructed character and thus the usefulness of ‘religion’ as an analytical category has already been pointed out by religious studies scholars such as Jonathan Z. Smith since the 1980s, important postcolonial studies deconstruct ‘religion’ as a European construct embedded in the history and structure of Western imperialism. They stress that the encounters between European colonial powers and non-European civilizations have had a lasting impact on both sides, including their understanding of ‘religion.’ It is argued, by Talal Asad for instance, that the term religion tends to fundamentally distort the social and cultural realities of the cultures to which it is applied.

The postcolonial critique rejects a supposedly universalized concept of religion that neglects its Eurocentric and Orientalist implications. With this critique comes the assumption that most Asian languages, prior to their encounter with western powers, seemingly had no conceptual equivalent for

what in modernity has come to be the distinct sphere of religion and, therefore, the term should be applied only to European texts and contexts.

### 'Religion' in classical sources

This critique can be seen as an important prerequisite not only for studying the entangled histories between Asia and Europe with respect to the field of religion, but also invites us to have a closer look at the semantic orders of teachings, practices, and institutions before the advent of the abstract category 'religion' in non-European societies past and present. Furthermore, the precise nature of the conceptual and historical entanglements and their consequences for religious practices both in Asia and Europe still need to be studied in greater detail, although much research has been already carried out for particular regions and historical periods. One aim of the conference was to refine historical awareness and enhance our understanding of the concept's career and impact in European and Asian social and intellectual history. The conference was structured in four panels addressing the issues from historical as well as systematic perspectives.

The first panel, "Before religion," dealt with taxonomic fields connected with 'religion' in various Asian languages and cultural traditions before their encounter with the modern understanding of 'religion.' Christoph Uehlinger (Zurich) discussed representations of the religion of ancient Western Asia in academic discourse. He argued that 'religion' in this case is more useful for describing a certain milieu of educated specialists rather than as a designation for an overall belief system of societies as a whole. Raji Steineck (Zurich) presented the results of his research on the „Buddha Way“ in the writings of the Japanese Zen Buddhist teacher Dōgen and pointed not only to the differences between that concept and modern notions of religion, but

also to the overlaps of the two. Max Deeg (Cardiff) dealt with the Chinese term *jiao* (teaching) as the closest possible equivalent to the concept of 'religion'. The terminological status of this word can be explained by tracing the semantic shift that occurred when the word was applied to Buddhist teachings. It served to identify these new doctrines when they were disseminated in China by monks and travelers from India. Angelika Malinar (Zurich) dealt with the ambiguous Western perception of India as the 'land of religion,' yet as a culture without a 'precise' concept of religion although it is readily accepted that the Sanskrit tradition offers a remarkable terminology spectrum. She analyzed the delineation of religious 'pathways' in selected Sanskrit texts and pointed to some second-level terms which serve as functional equivalents of religion as general category. In a similar vein, Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz (Bern) argued for a dis-privileging of modern understandings of religion as the dominant framework for establishing historical as well as systematic watersheds. She demonstrated how Tibetan Buddhist concepts of *chos* and *śāsin* were used to circumscribe the religious field in early-modern Central Asian societies independently of any European influence.

### The impact of encounters

The second and the third panels dealt with the modes of encounter and entanglement between Asian and Western concepts and taxonomies relating to religion and focused on processes in which 'religion' was negotiated, defined and delimited. A particular emphasis was given to studying the ways in which Asian social elites adopted and initiated a discourse on religion, often in an attempt to inscribe their own tradition(s) into the new paradigms, such as models of evolution, progress etc., which since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century have been invoked as major factors of modernity. Jason A. Josephson (Wil-

liamstown) analyzed how in Japan the category of 'religion' was negotiated diplomatically between the Japanese and Western governments. In his view, 'religion' in 19<sup>th</sup> century Japan was partly a product of international treaty negotiations. In his talk, Vincent Goossaert (Paris) showed how the figure of the Daoist 'Heavenly Master' became declassified due to a Western concept of 'religion' that became a political standard with the Republican regime in China. He also addressed how the 'Heavenly Master' endeavored to reinvent his role in the new socio-political system. Stefan Reichmuth (Bochum) took up the term *dīn*, which is frequently referred to as the equivalent of religion in the Islamic world, and traced transformations of its meaning during the 18<sup>th</sup> century in a close reading of texts by Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1791). The problems and distortions which occur when religion is used in Western classifications in order to group Islam together with Judaism and Christianity were pointed out by James Frankel (Manoa). He emphasized how such classification conflicts with conceptualizations of *dīn* in Islamic traditions. In India, the rise of the concept of 'religion' resulted – among other things – in the invention of the term 'Hinduism.'

Geoffrey Oddey (Sydney) explored the process in which the term 'Hinduism' was introduced and found acceptance in colonial India. He argued that the term proved useful not only in the hands of missionaries and colonizers, but also as propaganda among Indian elites themselves. Sudipta Kaviraj (Columbia) sent a paper on different constructions of Hinduism as a religion in 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal. After pointing to the major channels through which the Western concept was disseminated (Christian missionaries and Western education), he analyzed how Bengali intellectuals mediated rationalist social philosophies with traditional religious doctrines and practices in creating new formations of Hinduism. This historical



trajectory was pursued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Christian Novetzke (Washington). He explored the 'teleological' and 'eschatological' propositions as well as the religious dimensions implied in the political ideas of two important political and religious leaders of 20<sup>th</sup> century India, Gandhi and Savarkar. Lily Kong (Singapore) drew attention to the ways in which the government of Singapore enacts a 'management' approach to religion in order to turn it into a useful instrument for propagating state values. She analyzed how the state seeks to shape religion through political and legal strategies and interferes in the affairs and practices of religious communities.

### Reclaiming the concept of 'religion'

The last panel "Religion contested and reclaimed" addressed contemporary discourses on religion that are actively engaged in defining 'religion.' Yang Fenggang's (Purdue) paper aimed at producing a social scientific definition of religion for the study of religions in China. Katsuhiro Kohara (Kyoto) analyzed a change in the concept of 'religion' since the 3/11 Tsunami disaster – that is, a naturalization or de-anthropocentrization of the concept. From a sociological perspective, Volkhard Krech (Bochum) exposed a framework in which the constituents and boundaries of a religious field can be identified and systematized. This last paper was followed by general comments by Lucian Hölscher (Bochum) on problems and potentials of conceptual history or *Begriffsgeschichte* as highlighted during the conference.

One of the results of the conference was that historical entanglements that shaped the category of religion still need to be studied in more detail. The same is true of the study of classical and early modern sources and social contexts in which terminologies and taxonomies of the religious were developed, not only in Asia, but also in Europe.

## Lives between Asia and Europe

**Biographical texts are important sources for tracing 'entangled histories' between Asia and Europe. Researchers discussed the various issues involved in analyzing these texts in a URPP workshop.**

Thomas Hüllein

Organized by Sven Trakulhun (URPP Asia and Europe) and Henning Trüper (EHESS Paris), the international workshop "Biography Afield in Asia and Europe" (September 20–21, 2012) enabled nearly a dozen scholars to discuss the often ambiguous concepts of biography and life-writing in cross-cultural contexts.

For some time, biography writing has been the subject of multi-faceted theoretical and methodological debates. Theorists of biography, such as Leon Edel, have sought to establish certain methodological standards for life-writing that amount to an excavation of the private self. The biographer's task is in this view to locate "the figure under the carpet," to infer, often by using Freudian terminology, what is "hidden," the "secret myth" influencing the course or pattern of a person's life. At the same time, there are certain reservations about the limitations of biography writing due to the narrative structures enacted in telling a life as (hi)story. Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu are probably the most frequently quoted theorists who argued that the idea of the autonomous subject is a construct, and therefore envisioned the deconstruction and even the end of authored texts and subjectivity. When these debates are extended to transcultural contexts, the complexity is enhanced even further. Dealing with biographies between Asia and Europe turned out to be particularly challenging.

Henning Trüper and Sven Trakulhun outlined in their introduction

some of the methodological challenges life-writing implies, particularly in transcultural contexts. Biographical materials, they argued, play an important role in the study of transcultural exchanges between Asia and Europe, reflecting perceptions and constructions of a 'self' in different societies and cultures. They emphasized the special importance of biographical and micro-historical approaches for the study of imperial, colonial, and postcolonial history, and encouraged investigation of the various ways in which self-representations have been created by travelers, missionaries, scholars and other inhabitants of "contact zones" (M. L. Pratt). In his talk during the workshop, Henning Trüper explored a variety of patterns of discourse and genres of text concerning the nature and purpose of biography, personhood, and subjectivity in the world of Orientalist learning in the closing decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, he drew on materials emanating from and pertaining to the lives of Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930), and Enno Littmann (1875–1958).

### Difficulties of the biographical approach

All participants of the workshop had to cope with difficulties connected with biographical approaches, including the scarcity of (edited and researched) Asian sources when compared to European testimonies, the constructedness of a curriculum vitae or the issue of text and context. Michael H. Fisher (Oberlin College, Ohio) illustrated the challenges of historical analysis as drawing on biographical sources by tracing two Indian travelers: Dyce Sombre and Sake Dean Mahomet. Both men moved from India to Great Britain in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and used autobiographical publica-

tions to (re-)create themselves in response to pre- or misconceptions they encountered in their new environment. Individually and together, their transcultural lives mirror the challenges as well as the chances for today's biographers, due both to multifarious and often contradictory source materials as well as to inherent cross-cultural interpretive issues. Siddharth Satpathy (KIIT University, Orissa) and Sven Trakulhun explored in their presentations how 19<sup>th</sup> century ego-documents such as journals and other autobiographical writings from Baptist missionaries in India and Siam can contribute to our understanding of the ways in which conflicting Western and Asian notions of religion, time, or labor were negotiated in everyday life.

#### Crossing multiple borders

Angelika Malinar (University of Zurich) analyzed the tropes of self-perception in texts of the renowned British socialist, theosophist and political leader Annie Besant (1847–1933). Her life between India and Europe shed light on the complex historical and intellectual constellation which attracted not only Besant, but also other women to go to India. The intersection of political and spiritual aspirations, of Indian reformist discourse and colonial hesitancy with regard to political reforms in India allowed European women to take leadership positions in India which they rarely acquired in contemporary Britain. Faisal Devji (Oxford) focused on the biographical dimensions implied in the contested perception of the Indian political leader and founder-father of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Biographers as well as the public are torn between an image of Jinnah playing a rather "sinister" role in the events leading to the partition of India and another that views him as a figure of light creating a separate state for the Muslims of the Subcontinent. The ambiguous perception of Jinnah contrasts with his own



Meeting of political thinkers: Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1<sup>st</sup> row, 2<sup>nd</sup> from left) and Annie Besant

silence with regard to his ideas about his life. Maya Burger (University of Lausanne) focused on the transcultural biography of Pandita Ramabai. The Indian author lived in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century and traveled across India, spending several years in the United States and England until finally settling down in India. Ramabai did not only cross geographical borders, but also social and religious ones when she fought for women's rights and became a Christian. Her conversion is the main subject in "Testimony" (1907), an autobiographical text that helps with tracing her silences, be they self-imposed or historically determined, and hints at the difficulties of living across boundaries.

#### Biography as a framework of meaning

In two papers, the role of art and artifacts in (re)constructing the biographical played a prominent role and allowed important insights into often neglected aspects of what constitutes a biography. Justyna Jaguścik (University of Zurich) explored the ways in which the poet Zhai Yongming (b. 1955) revisited Frida Kahlo's works and biography. She demonstrated how Kahlo's story is re-appropriated by Zhai into her own story: that of shared female body experience. In her

quasi-autobiographical lyrics and essays, Zhai refers to Kahlo's works firstly to argue for an ahistorical and universal sense of embodied femininity. Paola Wyss-Giacosa and Andreas Isler (Ethnographic Museum, University of Zurich) developed in their collaborative paper an object-based biographical approach when preparing an exhibition of Bornean artifacts. Wolfgang and Erika Leupold, who had inherited them from their parents, donated these objects to the museum in 2007. The objects appeared to be heterogeneous, but biography delivered a unifying frame: by perceiving them as pieces of 'contact-zones' between the Leupolds in Borneo and the local people, the artifacts developed a new meaning. The objects transgress cultural borders since, at the same time, they can be read as Bornean artifacts and as parts of the Leupold's life in the Dutch colony.

These and other papers provided new insights into the dynamics of constructing, writing and living transcultural biographies in Eurasian contexts. Also, the participants could present their work to experts with a similar background in an informal setting, which made it possible to also discuss ideas that might not yet be ready for publication.

# A Fresh Look at Postmodernity

The graduate student workshop “Asian Postmodernities and their Legacies” (Zurich, March 30–31, 2012) offered the opportunity to critically rethink the concept of ‘postmodernity.’

Sourav Kargupta

Limitation of space can mean both help and hindrance, it limits too often and too soon but also gives one excuse to do succinct formulations, take swift steps visiting varied themes. Therefore, contradictory it may sound, the planned shortness of this article might also give me the opportunity to touch upon as many issues as possible.

I arrived in Zurich via Freiburg, and this circuitous route already meant something. In Freiburg, I took part in a conference called the “Journey of Epistemologies,” which somehow set the tone for my journey to Zurich. The importance of the workshop “Asian Postmodernities and their Legacies” lay in raising precisely the epistemological question without compromising the particularities of located spaces (‘Asias’)<sup>1</sup>. The workshop tried to deal with the problematic of knowledge production head-on, without giving into the temptation of getting enclosed inside exclusive descriptions of ‘Asian differences.’ This goal was conditioned by the workshop’s interdisciplinary design as well as by its inner organization

1 One might object that a ‘postmodernist’ approach cannot be tied so readily with an epistemological program since the latter is not a ‘new’ question by any stretch of imagination. Yet, here one should remember Judith Butler’s remark that, “the pursuit of the ‘new’ is the preoccupation of high modernism; if anything, the postmodern casts doubt upon the possibility of a ‘new’ that is not in some way already implicated in the ‘old.’” See Judith Butler, “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of Postmodernism”, in: Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (eds.) (1992), *Feminists Theorize the Political*, Routledge, p. 6.

consisting of several interconnected yet varied thematic segments. The central aim was to map the postmodern trajectory. Accordingly, someone who might be exclusively interested in her own area, say ‘gender’ or ‘body,’ was invited to reflect on a theme like postmodern cityscape or tourism. In a time of increasing specialization when scholars tend to confine themselves to exclusive cocoons, the workshop set up a much-needed place for academic exchange.

## Between high theory and close readings

For me personally, it was a bit tentative to begin with since I realized that the set-up had a major tilt toward Chinese studies, which is not my area. The challenge for me, then, was about navigating unknown territories and facing scholars working on and from a very different context. I perceived my job as one of understanding the underlying methodological assumptions of the presentations and of connecting them to some general scholarly problematic. In short, I could enjoy a rather pure adventure in epistemological thought, which ironically was possible precisely because I could not fully relate to the concrete contexts of most of the papers. Such free interaction would not have been possible without the academic openness shown by the participants, who kept a nice balance between high theory and close readings of particular textualities. It provided me with a glimpse of that possible space of which I have always been confident: an open forum of dialogue over the narrow confines of research conceived as the labor of the individual.

It would be unfair to pick a few of the papers or sessions and concentrate exclusively on them. And yet, within the space-limit, it would also not be fair to dedicate single lines here and there to crucial themes discussed in the work-

shop. I will therefore isolate only one thread, which seems to me to be representative of the workshop’s general idea. To me, what came to the fore repeatedly even amidst the multi-voiced discussions was the need to think the ‘postmodern subject of ethico-politics.’ If I may put the problematic succinctly: how to think politics alongside a postmodernist critique of subjectivity. ‘Rights talk,’ as we know, almost always remains tied to an assumption of some essential category (be it ‘woman,’ ‘subject’ or ‘body’). But how can this tally with a (postmodernist) paradigm that is anti-essential to its core? This issue opens up the crack between a theory that questions ‘subject formation’ and a politics that must work with a ‘stable subject.’ To think of the two together may well be the most important theoretical challenge of our time. The workshop posed this question from diverse angles and was able to discuss it with an academic openness, which is, to my consideration, rare.

## The danger of essentialism

The workshop ended with some papers on ‘spectrality,’ or, to borrow from Jessica Imbach’s (Zurich) paper, the ‘politics of ghosts.’ What can be the shape of such a spectral politics, which bases itself on a subjectivity of the shapeless? This leads once again to the problem of thinking politics, which requires minimal essentialism in the form of a subject from within the framework of postmodernism that resists any predication of such a stable subject. Can the answer lie in a deconstructive double bind which thinks of the two in an ‘aporetic embrace?’<sup>2</sup> An embrace that posits the subject not as

2 “An aporia is different from a dilemma in that it is insoluble – each choice cancels the other – and yet it is solved by an unavoidable decision that can never be pure.” See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1996): *Spivak Reader*, Routledge, p. 282. It is in this non-righteous decision, which demands immense responsibility, that I am trying to situate the postmodern-political.



merely decentered but as always in the process of being produced?<sup>3</sup> I can only leave these questions open.

Liu Xiao's (Berkeley) paper dealt with another aspect of this tricky problematic when she tried to make a distinction between information and knowledge at the site of the 'literary.' Xiao's argument faced the formidable challenge of thinking a critique of commodified knowledge without falling back onto a concept of the 'proper,' pure knowledge. This again indicated the productive difficulty of postmodernism, which tries to do away with any notion of properness or ideal form<sup>4</sup>.

### Crisscrossing voices

This brings me to my own presentation, which was wonderfully set up by Justyna Jaguścik's (Zurich) paper, which already raised the question of the 'body' and of 'writing' in comparison with what she termed the "commodification of feminine representations." In my paper I tried to think how this very representation could be opened up through the deconstructive lever of 'writing.'

In closing, I hope I give voice to everyone's wish when I say that we look forward to another meeting of this kind: a meeting of 'everyone' who came together in a space that the map calls Zurich, only to drift apart a few days later. Yet they left behind traces and trails, crisscrossing voices in debates and dialogues that linger in their memories much like the sound of the sea deep within a shell.

<sup>3</sup> Deconstruction does not think of the subject as decentered; on the contrary, the work of its centering would be its concern. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1993): *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. Routledge, pp.131–32.

<sup>4</sup> The fragments of knowledge can only organize themselves around the constitutive pull of the subject (of knowledge) who might give them their *proper* place. But how to think of this subject *also* as fragmented? This reminds me of what Prof. Andrea Riemenschneider (Zurich) mentioned in her opening speech (by the way of Lyotard) as the 'empty dream of a loss' always unaccounted for.

## Notes on the Workshop

### Invitation to a Stroll

Justyna Jaguścik

The preparations for the graduate student workshop "Asian Postmodernities and their Legacies," jointly organized by the URPP Asia and Europe and the Institute of East Asian Studies, began in late fall 2011. The primary intention behind organizing Zurich-based Ph.D. candidates was to attract researchers from different fields who would bring various methodological backgrounds to the workshop. Although the geographical confines of our endeavors emphasized the east and southeast Asian borders, it was determined that the workshop should remain accessible for a wide range of academic fields. Our intention was to meet the Other in the disciplinary borderlands.<sup>1</sup>

The general topic resulted from our shared interests regarding current issues on the literary and cultural scene, as defined through their spatial embeddedness. Accordingly, the chosen title, "Asian Postmodernities," was intended to bring notions of space and time into the foreground. We determined a preliminary and somewhat vague list of interconnected issues to be discussed during the workshop. 'Loops'<sup>2</sup> like 'political and social legacies,' 'embodiments,' 'ecocriticism,' and 'history' emerged from the rhetorical tangles in which we often found ourselves.

Our identification of these focal points may be seen as akin to establishing convolutes<sup>3</sup> to be filled with notes on the present day. This association is drawn from the lecture of Walter Benjamin's unaccomplished "Arcades Project," which was our guide through Berlin-Paris-Moscow modernities in our Ph.D.

<sup>1</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Rey Chow, *Entanglements or Transmedial Thinking of Capture*, Duke University Press, 1–2.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982.

seminars in 2011. We expected participants invited to the workshop to join us in an unavoidably fragmentary, Benjaminian stroll through postmodern landscapes. The task with which we entrusted them was to help us to fill the convolutes on postmodernities.

### "Illusions of postmodernism"

As an example of how our preliminary thoughts materialized during the workshop, I would like to give a glimpse of the fourth session on "Culture and Literary Studies." This session's participants critically discussed various modern "dreamworlds and catastrophes."<sup>4</sup> They explored the mass culture dreamworld of semi-colonial Shanghai, that of emancipative socialist humanism, of technical and scientific progress, and of the dreamworld-cum-catastrophe of the Cultural Revolution.

Postmodernity might be seen as an attempt at coming to terms with the passing of these dreamworlds, which in their most practical guises represented a shattering of the entire construct of the Cold War world. After the utopian desire for social rearrangement turned into revolutionary terror and eventually gave way to global consumerism, one could say that nothing remains but the "illusions of postmodernism,"<sup>5</sup> to borrow the less than flattering words of Terry Eagleton.

The participants agreed, however, that the concept of postmodernity emerged as a critical space within the context of modernity. As a theoretical approach, postmodernism broke with safe conceptual schemata and reopened the questioning of subjectivity, materiality, discursivity, and knowledge. The notion of "Asian postmodernities" broadens their horizons even further.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*, MIT Press, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, Blackwell, 1997.

## On Uses of the ‘Third’ in Historical Studies

Ralph Weber

The international conference “*Tertium datur: The Third in History 1450–1850*” (June 21–23, 2012, organized by Francisca Loetz, Bernd Roeck, Marcus Sandl, and Sven Trakulhun, all of the History Department at the University of Zurich) explored ‘the third’ in history in an attempt to move beyond prevailing dualistic models in the discipline and to break ground for models able to handle paradoxical and hybrid historical relations. The illustrious group of assembled scholars approached the topic from a variety of perspectives structured along five panels. Throughout, the third was addressed in rather different ways (as triads, tertiality, triangles, or figures of the third), raising the question of whether there emerged at the conference a sense of the third that is clear enough to sustain the talk about the third in historical studies.

One way the conference addressed the third referred to its use in distinction (or in comparison), i.e. as a third that logically or otherwise grounds talk about two, as, for example, some common concept of Renaissance enables talk of different European and Bengali “Renaissances.” A rather different yet currently fashionable approach referred to a third invoked for the breaking up of binaries, dualisms or dichotomies – most properly referencing the *tertium datur* in the conference title. Another sort of in-betweenness referred to figures of the third such as the translator, the trickster, the envoy, the parasite, the prophet, the missionary, or anything that works as a medium or mediator. An intriguing example is the ransomer, the third party intermediary who facilitated the re-purchase of captives to their families in the early modern Christian-Muslim Mediterranean world. For all

the attractiveness of these figures, conference participants warned that excessive emphasis might backfire and contribute to reifying ‘the two’ between which these figures are said to stand as a third. Finally, there was a purely metaphorical way of talking about the third, which was used to tie it to all kinds of topics – although it was often far from clear why the number three was invoked at all and what exactly it was that sustained the metaphor. The easiness with which a number is tied to all kinds of topics and theoretical tools may of course lead to the problem of seeing threes everywhere (much like the proverbial trees), which either means to hypostatize the three metaphysically – which nobody at the conference tried to do – or to reduce drastically the added analytical value of talk about the third.

The sense that eventually emerged at the conference was perhaps that not everything is a third, but everything can be looked at as a third of something. Although increased attention on the third (in all or some of the above-mentioned variety) probably will not bring about a paradigm change in the discipline any time soon, it may certainly prove helpful in raising attention on hitherto understudied actor groups or phenomena, in re-adjusting ossified research perspectives (whether evolution or revolution, nature or culture, etc.) and in serving as one methodological tool among others employed by the self-aware and self-critical historian.

## Fluidity of Statuses

Sebastian Zylinski

In order to deal properly with the subject of the conference “*Transcultural Perspectives on Late Medieval and Early Modern Slavery in the Mediterranean*” (September 12–15, 2012), the hosts Juliane Schiel (History Department of the University of Zurich/URPP Asia and Europe) and Stefan Hanß (Freie Universität Berlin) divided the

conference into four sections that reflected the variety of perspectives. The first section treated “*Discourses and Social Practices*” of slavery in which, among other things, the debate emphasized discourses of legitimacy or questions of the way to emancipation. In the second section, “*Economic and Military Entanglements*” were discussed, focusing on aspects of slave trade and transfer. The following section covered questions of “*Society, Family, and Gender*” in terms of Mediterranean slavery. In this context, scholars focused on issues ranging from female delinquency to sexual services. In the fourth and last section, matters of “*Cultural Interconnectivities*” of Mediterranean slavery were discussed. Both demands of interlacing and comparisons with other geographical settings were presented. In the final discussion, Nicolas Vatin and Ludolf Kuchenbuch combined all results of the previous sections.

Vatin and Kuchenbuch mentioned the lack of consciousness in facing ‘slavery’ as just a linguistic category. Both contemporary witnesses and current historians defined the category of slavery in terms of a polysemous concept. In this context, Vatin and Kuchenbuch referred to a fluidity of servile statuses. For historical analysis, this treatment of the matter is a further step towards complexity. Furthermore, the commentators cautioned against generalizations of considerations because of problems caused by reasons mentioned earlier. However, in the macro level of history, case studies need a frame and a context in order to gain relevance.

To sum up the conference, the internationality and plurality of perspectives given by the speakers inspired researchers as well as numerous junior researchers in attendance. The stimulating debates raised the hope for further productive research of this barely explored aspect in the field of medieval history and of the early modern period.

## Different Ways of Advancement

**Doctoral students usually spend three years at the URPP Asia and Europe writing their doctoral thesis. But where do they go as funding comes to an end? Three alumni report on their individual track after leaving the URPP.**

Roman Benz

An employment at the URPP Asia and Europe enables doctoral students to work on their research projects for three years. Whether these students are reading relevant literature, carrying out field research, or discussing methodological questions with colleagues, the URPP offers the necessary time as well as a stimulating environment for thorough research.

But how have former doctoral students proceeded after their employment at the URPP Asia and Europe? Three alumni give insights into their later achievements, showing us that there is more than one way to succeed in academics or working life.

### **Better conditions for foster children**

After studying social and cultural anthropology, Claudia Nef Saluz joined the URPP Asia and Europe to work on a doctoral thesis on Islamic student activism in Indonesia. She spent more than a year carrying out field research at Indonesian universities where she interviewed student activists, especially members of the pan-Islamic organization Hizbut Tahrir. As funding through the URPP came to an end, follow-up financing for one year was granted by the University of Zurich's *Forschungskredit*, enabling her to finish the doctoral thesis.

Claudia Nef Saluz has in the meantime altered her field of work substantially. She works now as a research associate at the Department of Social Work of the University of Applied Sciences St. Gallen, having joined a project

aimed at understanding the necessary conditions for healthy development in foster children.

How can Claudia Nef Saluz use her abilities developed during her stay at the URPP Asia and Europe? She recognizes advantages at different levels. Practically, she benefits from her experience in conducting interviews. To ob-

**“My work is politically highly relevant and not without consequences for the Swiss financial sector and for the international reputation of the country.”**

Catherine Chammartin

tain a solid foundation for her actual research, she interviews former foster children and their foster parents. In analyzing the data, she can rely on the theoretical skills refined in many discussions and seminars at the URPP Asia and Europe: “I learned to question normative claims, which are often secretly guiding our perception.” As an example, she mentions the term ‘child welfare’ that is often used in the

context of foster children, but often in a superficial manner. She finds the clarification of various concepts behind terms like ‘child welfare’ to be an interesting and worthwhile challenge.

### **Coins of interest**

The career of ancient historian Marco Vitale is focused on his special field of interest, the ancient Near East. His doctoral project explored the administrative organization of Asia Minor under Roman rule. Today, he conducts research on the symbolic representation of subject peoples and territories in the Persian, the Hellenistic, and the Roman periods. The main sources for his habilitation project are ancient coins and reliefs depicting personifications of subject peoples or triumphal processions carried out after successful campaigns.

Marco Vitale's actual research is supported by grants from the Committee for Academic Career Development of the University of Zurich and the Gerda Henkel Foundation. He lives in Oxford and is affiliated with the Faculty of Classics at the University of Oxford. Before his stay in England, he finished his doctoral thesis in Münster, Germany, funded by a fellowship from the Swiss National Science Foundation.



Claudia Nef Saluz works as a research associate at the University of Applied Sciences St. Gallen.



Marco Vitale emphasizes that he benefited a lot from the methodological discussions held at the URPP Asia and Europe. "In ancient history, modern theories don't play an important role, because we are following a traditionally hermeneutical and source-oriented approach," he explains. These discussions required him to grapple with modern theories, helping him to realize that they would impose unnecessary restrictions on his research. The scarcity of available sources for ancient history means that each discovery of new source material threatens to overthrow an existing theory.

### Managing different views and positions

Holding a degree in law and in economics, Catherine Chammartin decided to look for a challenge outside the university environment. After finishing her doctoral thesis on state-owned banks in China and in Switzerland, she took up employment with the Federal Department of Finance in Berne. She is now head of section at the State Secretariat for International Financial Matters and deals with international tax policy. Among other things, she participated in the negotiations over the withholding tax agreements with Germany, the United Kingdom and Austria as well as in the elaboration



After finishing her doctoral thesis, Catherine Chammartin became an expert in international tax policy.

tion of the Swiss government's financial center strategy.

Catherine Chammartin appreciates the practical aspects of her work. "It is politically highly relevant and not without consequences for the Swiss financial sector and for the international reputation of the country," she says.

While most doctoral students are employed by the URPP Asia and Europe, Catherine Chammartin worked as a research associate at the Faculty of Law. At the same time, she was a member of the URPP and to this day she benefits from the experiences she gained from it. "At a university you

tend to spend most of your time with people studying the same subjects," she recalls. At the URPP she became acquainted with people holding quite divergent opinions and she learned how to handle these differences. This is helpful in her present field of work as well, where she has to mediate between many different views and positions.

As these brief portraits show, doctoral studies at the URPP Asia and Europe open up different ways to advance in one's field. Accordingly, personal inclinations and arising opportunities should not be underestimated.



Thanks to discussions at the URPP Asia and Europe Marco Vitale improved his knowledge of modern theories.

### Doctoral Program

The former doctoral students portrayed in the text above joined the URPP Asia and Europe before the structured "Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program Asia and Europe" was established in the 2009 Fall semester. Nowadays, doctoral students at the URPP pursue their Ph.D. within the framework of curricula serving to deepen and expand both interdisciplinary and disciplinary competencies along with transferable skills. There is a minimum requirement of 30 credit points. The core of the program is the writing of a doctoral thesis.

## News

Starting in September 2012, **Anne-Sophie Bentz** (political science/URPP Asia and Europe) accepted a position as associate professor of South Asian history at Paris Diderot University.

**Samir Boulos** (Islamic and Middle Eastern studies/URPP Asia and Europe) completed his doctoral thesis “Cultural entanglements and missionary spaces: European evangelicals in Egypt (1900–1956).”

**Laura Coppens** (social and cultural anthropology/URPP Asia and Europe) was awarded a Fellowship for Prospective Researchers from the Swiss National Science Foundation, enabling her to continue her research at New York University.

**Lisa Indraccolo** (URPP Asia and Europe/Chinese studies) was awarded a research fellowship from the Fonds zur Förderung des akademischen Nachwuchses (FAN) of the Zürcher Universitätsverein (ZUNIV).

**Justyna Jaguścik** (Chinese studies/URPP Asia and Europe) was awarded a Forschungskredit from the University of Zurich for the completion of her doctoral thesis and she works now as a research associate at the University of Zurich’s Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies – East Asian Studies.

**Nikolas Kosmatopoulos** (social and cultural anthropology/URPP Asia and Europe) completed his doctoral thesis “Governing Conflict: Expert networks in Lebanon and beyond.” Additionally, he was selected for the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program, allowing him to spend 18 months at the Columbia Global Centers – Europe at Reid Hall in Paris and a semester at Columbia University in New York City.

**Linda Maduz** (political science/URPP Asia and Europe) took up a position in September 2012 as a project collaborator at the University of Zurich’s Department of Political

Science and she was awarded a Fellowship for Prospective Researchers from the Swiss National Science Foundation.

**Angelika Malinar** (Indian studies/URPP Asia and Europe) has been awarded a research fellowship at the Max-Weber-Kolleg of the University of Erfurt. From September 2013 onwards she will be joining the research group on “Religious Individualization in Historical Perspective.”

**Simone Müller** (Japanese studies/URPP Asia and Europe) submitted her habilitation “Das zerrissene Bewusstsein: Wiederholung und Differenz im japanischen Intellektuellendiskurs (chishikijin ron) der Zwischen- und Nachkriegszeit” to the University of Zurich and successfully completed her habilitation review.

**Claudia Nef Saluz** (social and cultural anthropology/URPP Asia and Europe) completed her doctoral thesis “Living for the Caliphate: Hizbut Tahrir Student activism in Indonesia” and took up a research position at the Department of Social Work of the University of Applied Sciences St. Gallen.

**Matthäus Rest** (social and cultural anthropology/URPP Asia and Europe) is a visiting fellow at the University of Oxford thanks to a Fellowship for Prospective Researchers from the Swiss National Science Foundation.

During July and August 2012, **Raji C. Steineck** (Japanese studies/URPP Asia and Europe) held a visiting professorship in ethics at Doshisha University in Kyoto.

**Sven Trakulhun** (URPP Asia and Europe/history) submitted his habilitation “Asiatische Revolutionen: Europa und der Aufstieg und Fall asiatischer Imperien, 1644–1818” to the University of Konstanz and successfully completed his habilitation review.

In April 2013 **Christoph Uehlinger** (study of religions/URPP Asia and Europe) will hold a visiting professorship in ancient Levantine iconography, epigraphy, and religion at Doshisha University, Kyoto.

## Junior Scholars

With the last Fall semester, several doctoral candidates and postdocs took up their research at the URPP:

- Joëlle Affolter, M. A. (Islamic studies)  
*The Transformation of Islamist Movements in Tunisia*
- Robert Leach, Ph. D. (Indian studies)  
*Taxonomies of Religious and Philosophical Knowledge in Sanskrit Literature*
- Virginia Y.-Y. Leung, M. A. (Chinese studies)  
*Journey to the South: Transmutations of the European Genre “Bildungsroman” in Hong Kong Literature During the 1950s*
- James Weaver, Ph. D. (Islamic studies)  
*Organising Disagreement in the Long Ninth Century: On the Use of the Term ‘iḥtilāf’ in the ‘Abbāsīd Period*
- Tobias Weiss, M. A. (Japanese studies)  
*Digital Media and Civil Society in Japan: News Coverage and the Anti-nuclear Movement after the Fukushima Accident*
- Helena Wu, M. A. (comparative literature)  
*Between Words and Image: A Cultural Study of the Transnational Imagination in Places, Bodies and Things*

## Visiting Fellow

The URPP Asia and Europe welcomes **Dr. Aymon Kreil** as a visiting fellow in April 2013. For his work “Du rapport au dire: Sexe, amour et discours d’expertise au Caire,” he has received a joint doctorate from the University of Neuchâtel and the Ecole des hautes Etudes en Sciences sociales (EHESS), Paris. His current research focuses on class perceptions in narratives of the Egyptian revolution.

**Ralph Weber** (URPP Asia and Europe/political philosophy) was appointed as “Book Review Editor (Europe)” of the journal *Philosophy East and West*, edited by Roger T. Ames (University of Hawai’i).

# Events 2013

February 21–22, 2013, 9:30–18:00, Workshop

## Mercury in Medicine: Fluid Economies of Knowledge and Trade

Convenor: Dr. Dagmar Wujastyk, URPP Asia and Europe  
Location: Room WIE F-07, Wiesenstrasse 7/9, 8008 Zurich  
Registration required: dagmar.wujastyk@uzh.ch

March 7, 2013, 14:15–16:00, Public Lecture

## Psychoziale Konsequenzen des 11. März 2011: Eine empirische Untersuchung

Dr. Carola Hommerich, German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ), Tokyo  
Location: University of Zurich, Main Building, Room KOL F-123, Rämistrasse 71, 8006 Zurich  
A Cooperation between the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies – East Asian Studies and the URPP Asia and Europe

March 8, 2013, 10:15–18:00, Workshop

## Cross-Cultural Comparison

Inaugural Event of the joint training module “Methodological Challenges in Area Studies”  
Location: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, Klosterberg 21–23, 4051 Basel  
A cooperation between the Center for African Studies, University of Basel, and the URPP Asia and Europe  
Registration required by March 3: veit.artl@unibas.ch

March 18, 2013, 18:00–19:30, “Talk im Turm”

## Auf Weltreise: Indische Götter und ein chinesischer Philosoph

Prof. Dr. Angelika Malinar, Indian Studies UZH and Director URPP Asia and Europe, and Dr. Ralph Weber, URPP Asia and Europe  
Location: Restaurant uniTurm, Rämistrasse 71, 8006 Zurich  
Organization: “magazin. Die Zeitschrift der Universität Zürich”  
Registration required: www.talkimturm.uzh.ch

April 17–20, 2013, Graduate Student Conference

## 7. Schweizerische Nachwuchstagung der Asienwissenschaften

Organized by the Swiss Asia Society, Swiss Society for the Middle East and Islamic Cultures, and the URPP Asia and Europe  
Location: Appenberg bei 3532 Zäziwil

April 23, 2013, 18:15–20:00, Guest Lecture

## Numbers in China: Global Concepts and Local Narratives

Prof. Dr. Andrea Bréard, Université des Sciences et Technologies Lille 1/International Consortium for Research in the Humanities, Erlangen  
Location: Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies – East Asian Studies, Room 416, Zürichbergstrasse 4, 8032 Zurich  
A cooperation between the URPP Asia and Europe and the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies – East Asian Studies

April 24–25, 2013, Graduate Student Workshop

## Political Protests, Social (Non-)Movements and the Role of Digital Media

Location: Room WIE F-07, Wiesenstrasse 7/9, 8008 Zurich  
Convenors: Joëlle Affolter, Amir Hamid, Tobias Weiss, all URPP Asia and Europe  
Registration required: tobias.weiss@uzh.ch

May 5, 2013, Workshop

## Intersectionality Revisited

Convenors: Laura Coppens, Prof. Dr. Bettina Dennerlein, Prof. Dr. Mareile Flitsch  
Location: Room WIE F-07, Wiesenstrasse 7/9, 8008 Zurich  
A cooperation between the URPP Asia and Europe, the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies – Gender Studies and the Ethnographic Museum  
Registration required: laura.coppens@uzh.ch

May 10–12, 2013, International Symposium

## Entangled Landscapes: Rethinking the Landscape Exchange Between China and Europe in 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Location: Villa Schönberg, Seminar Room, Museum Rietberg, Gablerstrasse 15, 8002 Zurich  
Convenor: Dr. Yue Zhuang, URPP Asia and Europe  
A cooperation between the URPP Asia and Europe, the Institute of Art History, Section for East Asian Art, and the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies – East Asian Studies

May 10– June 10, Exhibition

Monday–Friday 6:00–22:00 / Saturday 7:00–17:00

## Constructing Qing Imperial Landscapes, Exhibition of the Qing Yangshi Lei Architectural Archives

Opening Ceremony: May 10, 2013, Foyer in front of the Semper Aula, ETH Main Building, Floor G, Rämistrasse 101, 8006 Zurich, 19:00–22:00  
Organization: Dr. Yue Zhuang, URPP Asia and Europe  
A cooperation between the ETH Zürich, Department of History of the Modern World, and the URPP Asia and Europe

May 23, 2013, 18:15–20:00, Guest Lecture

## Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia: Reassessing the Confucian Asian Values Debate

Prof. Doh Chull Shin, Center for the Study of Democracy, UC Irvine and Wissenschaftskolleg Berlin  
Location: Room KO2 F-152, Karl Schmid-Strasse 4, 8006 Zurich  
A cooperation between the URPP Asia and Europe and the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies – East Asian Studies

June 6–8, 2013, Workshop

## The Chinese Communist Party and the Politicization of Traditions

Location to be announced  
Convenors: Dr. Simona Grano, Philipp Hetmanczyk and Dr. Ralph Weber  
A cooperation between the URPP Asia and Europe and the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies – East Asian Studies  
Registration required: simona.grano@aoi.uzh.ch

June 10–14, 2013, Summer School

## Interdisciplinarity and Methodological Challenges in Area Studies

Venue: University of Basel, Centre for African Studies, Petersgraben 11, 4051 Basel  
Organization: Centre for African Studies in cooperation with the URPP Asia and Europe  
Registration required by March 31: veit.artl@unibas.ch

August 28–30, 2013, International Conference

## The Gender of Authority: Celibate and Childless Men in Power: Ruling Bishops and Ruling Eunuchs, 400–1800

Location to be announced  
Organization: Prof. Dr. Almut Höfert, Dr. Matthew Mesley, Hans Peter Pökel, and Serena Tolino  
A cooperation between the History Department and the URPP Asia and Europe  
Registration required: serena.tolino@uzh.ch

September 4–6, 2013, Conference

## Masters of Disguise? – Conceptions and Misconceptions of ‘Rhetoric’ in Chinese Antiquity

Oechslin Library, Luegeten 11, 8840 Einsiedeln  
Organization: Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Behr and Dr. Lisa Indraccolo  
A cooperation between the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies – East Asian Studies and the URPP Asia and Europe

Fall Semester 2013, Public Lecture Series

## Positionen aktueller Mohammed-Forschung

A cooperation between the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies – Islamic Studies, the URPP Asia and Europe, and the Institute of the Study of Religions

October 25–26, 2013, International Conference

## Travelling Norms and the Politics of Contention

Annual Conference of the URPP Asia and Europe  
Location to be announced

## University of Zurich

### New Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies

Founded in January 2013, the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies (AOI) brings together the disciplines of Chinese studies, Indian studies, Islamic studies, Japanese studies, and gender studies, all of which have been hitherto divided between three departments (Department of Indo-European Studies, Department of Oriental Studies, and Department of East Asian Studies).

The goal of the new institute is to strengthen research and teaching concerned with Asia and the Orient at the University of Zurich. The AOI itself comprises seven chairs: Chinese studies, traditional China; Chinese studies, modern China; Indian studies; Islamic studies; gender and Islamic studies; Japanology; social science of Japan.

The AOI collaborates closely with the URPP Asia and Europe.