

# **Transcultural Bodies – Transboundary Biographies. Border crossings in Asia and Europe**

**Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, India, 21. – 24.02.2010**

**University Research Priority Program *Asia and Europe*, University of Zurich  
Cluster *Asia and Europe in a Global Context*, University of Heidelberg  
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi**

## **Conference synopsis**

Recent research in transboundary travels of concepts, (institutional) practices, and material culture has provided new perspectives in cultural and historical studies. Not only have transcultural biographies been the subject of recent scholarly interest, but there has also been an increasing interest in questions of space. Research related to border crossing interrogates the boundedness of national political space. Research in this field, which focuses on global sites and migrant trails in the present and in the past, evinces a new interest in processes of border crossing as well as border making. The transnationalisation of law or the study of multicultural organisations provides yet other promising fields to investigate these processes.

This conference critically investigates border crossings in different media and in a variety of colonial and post-colonial contexts. It also explores the production of transcultural bodies and seeks to understand how biographical research is transforming our understanding of transcultural entanglements.

## Abstracts and bio data:

### I. Crossing borders: Daya Bai

**biodata**

### II. Negotiating cross-cultural knowledge

**Angelika Malinar**, University of Zurich

*Translating India – Annie Besant (1847-1933) between colonial and spiritual realms*

Annie Besant renowned, but also critically viewed as socialist, champion of atheism and birth-control, theosophist, medium, lecturer, public figure and political leader seems to embody more twists and turns in her life than most of her contemporaries. The paper shall focus on the ambiguities and paradoxes in Annie Besant's biography and in some of her publications in which she attempts to present the Indian tradition - and not the colonial regime - as the solution to political and spiritual crisis which connects India and Europe on different levels. Besant presents herself to the Indian public as the medium of ancient truths and to the European audience as a translator of Indian spirituality in a moment when the earlier enthusiasm about Indian wisdom has faded. Both these aspects of her work converge in her emerging as a political leader within the Indian Independence movement. In this connection she is regarded by the colonial rulers as of "these" rebellious and "unwomanly women" who seem to betray the colonial mission by turning into champions for the Indian cause. In the course of her activities she is sent to prison in 1917. Yet, given her biographical background, taking the role of the "unruly woman" was not something unfamiliar as she had earlier provoked some scandal in Britain with her campaign for birth-control and atheism. Seen from this perspective her "passage to India" in 1895 in order to take care of the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Madras does not so much indicate a shift from politics to spiritualism as some her critiques and biographers suggest, but a change in the constellation in which a political mission is blended with higher moral and spiritual aspirations. Moreover, India offered not only for her, but also for other women career opportunities that they would hardly get in Britain without losing "respectability" according to Victorian standards. 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. The paper will analyse this ambiguous, but also apparently promising historical and intellectual constellation which attracted not only Besant, but also other women to go to India. In post-colonial India they were collectively and paradoxically called "the occidental daughters of mother India".

Angelika Malinar is Professor of Indology at the University of Zürich. Her areas of research are the history of Hinduism, Sanskrit Epics and Puranas, Indian Philosophy and Aesthetics as well as contemporary South Asian religions and Hindi literature. Selected publications: *The Bhagavadgita: Doctrines and Contexts* (2007; paperback edition 2009), *Der Hinduismus* (2 vols.; 2009); *Time in India : Concepts and Practices* (editor: 2007), *Charisma and Canon: Essays on the Religious History of the Indian Subcontinent* (2001; co-editor).

**Axel Michaels** (University of Heidelberg)

### *Lost in disciplinary transitions – Heinrich Zimmer and his India*

Heinrich Zimmer (1890 – 1943) was one of the most influential indologists, especially in English speaking countries. He disliked narrow-minded academic circles, enjoyed life despite his depressing personal and political circumstances, and created his inner world that he sought to correlate with the “real” India. However, he was “among the first to try to decolonize the European mind” (Margaret H. Case) and in this transcultural aspect he was ahead of his time. The paper focuses on Heinrich Zimmer’s life in Heidelberg and his intellectual exchange with Karl Jaspers, C.G. Jung and others arguing that his neo-romantic propagation of an inner India is a telling example of the danger of transcultural studies and disciplinary border crossings.

Axel Michaels is professor for Classical Indology and Acting Director of the Cluster of Excellence *Asia and Europe* at the University of Heidelberg. Among his recent publications are (with Niels Gutschow) *Growing Up – Hindu and Buddhist Initiation Rituals among Newar Children in Bhaktapur, Nepal* (2008) and *Śiva in Trouble – Festivals and Rituals at the Paśupatinātha Temple of Deopatan* (2008).

**Jyotirmaya Sharma** (University of Hyderabad):

*'Religion as Mother and Teacher': Vivekananda and the Politics of Hinduism as Religion*

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, thinkers like Vivekananda sought to formally define religion. They did so in a variety of ways, creating a complex web of often confusing and contradictory explanations. Having defined religion in a variety of ways, they, then, attempted to define Hinduism as religion. In doing so, all the confusions and contradictions that arose in defining religion split over into defining Hinduism as well.

Defining religion and defining Hinduism as religion depended on a careful representation of the past, where an unbroken chain of textual, doctrinal and spiritual unity could be shown. Customs, traditions and rituals also had to be accounted for and explained. This exercise of defining religion and Hinduism as religion was not merely a theological exercise, but served as the foundation upon which arguments for building a Hindu nation rested.

To accomplish this purpose, Hinduism as religion had to be compared and contrasted with other faiths, especially Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. The first step towards this was to argue, as Vivekananda did in his speech at the World’s Parliament of Religions, that Hinduism was the mother of all religions and also had the ability to teach other faiths things they did not know. In the evolutionary schema of faiths, Hinduism had perfected itself, whereas all other faiths were in an infantile state, inferior and inadequate, but trying to keep pace with Hinduism as religion.

In arguing a case for Hinduism as the perfected religion, Vivekananda ironically repeats and re-enacts for Hinduism all those attributes that he considers to be the faults and follies of other faiths. He allows all the myths that represented the Hindus in the eyes of other faiths to invade his representation of Hinduism as religion, namely, the idea of the peace-loving, tolerant, other-worldly, non-materialistic, socially divided, doctrinally plural Hindu. At the same time, he absorbs within his definition of Hinduism as religion all the myths surrounding other faiths: unified, intolerant, violent, aggressive, this-worldly and unforgiving.

*Jyotirmaya Sharma* is professor of political science at the University of Hyderabad, India. His publications include *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (2004) and *Terrifying vision — M.S. Golwalkar, the RSS and India* (2007).

### **Rudolf G. Wagner**

*The migrant public sphere*

Habermas saw the public sphere as coterminous with the national space. Anderson dreamed of newspaper readers facing the same paper for breakfast forming an “imagined community”, which he saw as vital for supplementing the subjective side of nationhood. Historical evidence supports neither proposition. Both remain locked in a nation-state focused history and have to sideline large and crucial parts of the record. The paper will address the role of non-natives in setting up the first vernacular-language newspapers in Asia. The focus will be on the Shenbao newspaper in Shanghai (1872-1949). It involved border crossings of an individual (state borders, language, social networks); a medium (newspaper); a set of practices (rational public articulation on national and international issues by private persons); and the form of communication between state and society and between members of society. The Shenbao could do so only by shielding itself behind a new border – the one separating the Shanghai International Settlement from the rest of the Qing empire. It operated with great success among its Chinese-speaking audiences in the Qing empire, in South Asia and in Chinese-speaking communities elsewhere, and to the unending frustration of the British Foreign Office, which lacked the means to reign in the British national who was running the paper but had to face all the flak when Chinese officialdom felt offended by an article. For intellectual background, some of the questions asked by David Hancock for 18<sup>th</sup> century British merchants in his *Citizens of the Word* (1995) will be addressed.

Rudolf G. Wagner is Senior Professor for Chinese studies and Co-Director at Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe” at Heidelberg University. He has edited *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870-1910* (2007) and is the author of *A Chinese Reading of the Daodejing: Wang Bi's commentary on the Laozi with critical text and translation* (2003).

### **Sven Trakulhun** (University of Zurich)

*Negotiating cross-cultural knowledge in seventeenth-century Siam and France: Kosa Pan and Constantine Phaulkon*

The diplomatic intercourse between the kingdom of Siam and the court of Versailles during the reign of Louis XIV is one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of Europe-Asia relations in the seventeenth century. One of the main French objectivities was to convert the Buddhist king Narai (r. 1656-88) to Christianity in order to gain more political influence in the region. Yet Siam’s intentions were different. They had a strong interest in technical innovations coming from the West, but above all were seeking a counterbalance to the growing power of the Dutch in the country. In 1688 negotiations led to a diplomatic disaster. The Siamese court and the Buddhist *sangha* were hostile to France’s missionary endeavors and drove the foreigners out of the country after King Narai’s death in 1688. As a result, French-Siamese contacts were interrupted for the next 150 years.

This paper will assess cross-cultural negotiations of two men who figured prominently in these events: Constantine Phaulkon (1647-88), the Greek advisor of king Narai who strongly encouraged Franco-Siamese contacts and acted as an interpreter during the audiences held at the court in Ayutthaya; and the Siamese courtier Kosa Pan (or Okphra Wisutsunthun, d. 1700), who headed the Siamese embassy to France in 1686-7.

Sven Trakulhun is assistant professor for modern Asian history at the University of Zurich. He edited *Das eine Europa und die Vielfalt der Kulturen* (2003) and has written a book on *Siam und Europa. Das Königreich Ayutthaya in westlichen Berichten, 1500-1670* (2006). Prof Trakulhun is currently drafting a monograph on *Asian revolutions. Western conceptions of political change in the Orient, 1644-1818* (scheduled for publication in 2011).

### III. Gender crossings

**Barbara Mittler** (Heidelberg University)

*Transboundary Bodies: Eunuchs and the Making of (Event) History in China*

Next to women, eunuchs are arguably the most reviled group in Chinese historical writing. The dynastic histories are replete with constant complaints about them. Creatures caught between two sexes, they are depicted as sycophants, traitors, profiteers, spendthrifts and sex-addicts. As extraordinary beings, borders in their own right, they are continually forced to occupy positions of included exclusion: they are attributed with the most negative traits to be found both in men and in women. And yet, while everyone condemns eunuchs unanimously for their wickedness, no one ever invokes their permanent elimination.

What were then the causes for the loathsome reputation of the eunuch? Through his emasculation, he gave up his means to procreate and to continue the family line, thus committing the most heinous unfilial act. A eunuch, by his very being, thus challenged established notions of morality and became a marginal existence within the Chinese universe. At the same time, this marginality, the fact that only a sexless being had the possibility to live and work so close to the emperor, gave him an immense potential to wield influence and power. And this is why eunuchs have been made responsible for many an event that would cause the fall of a dynasty, for centuries they became the whipping boys and useful tools in the writing of cyclical history.

This paper aims to present a backward reading of eunuchs as transboundary bodies in Chinese history by looking at their changing image after another border-crossing: with the intrusion of foreigners into China since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century came along the adaptation not only of foreign machinery, weapons and goods, but of concepts and thoughts as well. Linear and evolutionist historical thought superseded the cyclical model of history writing and this became the moment when eunuchs were finally given a voice, when they were no longer exclusively and generally maligned but portrayed, at least in part, with sympathy: they became unbounded bodies, humans again.

It is my contention that the very representation of eunuchs as marginal characters in China's premodern historiography can be read as a fearful acknowledgement of their strengths. Eunuchs became (in)famous for their perversities because this was—according to Chinese historiography—the very secret to their powers. I will argue, however, that it is in the minds of China's traditional historiographers, alone, that eunuchs could actually function as borders and thus make and break event history in China.

Barbara Mittler is Director at the Institute of Chinese Studies in Heidelberg and Speaker of Research Area "Public Spheres" in the Cluster of Excellence at the University of Heidelberg entitled "Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows." She has published on Chinese avantgarde music (*Dangerous Tunes: The Politics of Chinese Music in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the People's Republic of China since 1949*, Harrassowitz 1997) and the early Chinese press (*A Newspaper for China? Power, Identity and Change in China's News-Media, 1872-1912*, Harvard University Press, 2004). She has recently finishing a

monograph dealing with the cultural and artistic production during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

**M. D. Muthukumaraswamy (National Folklore Support Centre, Chennai)**

*Imaginary Boundaries and Real Crossings Folklore of the Transgender Community in Tamil Nadu*

This paper presents and analyzes the life cycle ceremonies of transgender community in Tamil Nadu such as initiation, adoption, marriage with Aravan in the Mahabharata festival of goddess Tiraupati Amman temples, the consequent widowhood, and symbolic return to the world. The series of rites of passage facilitate the aspirant to cross the imaginary boundaries of gender inscribed in the body and consciousness. As the crossing is real it causes bodily mutilations, forms of celebration and formation of community bondings. The paper elaborates on the Kuvakam festival's recent emergence as the centre of transgender community's focal point for its organization and advocacy. The crossing over of the boundaries and limitations imposed are not without social difficulties and existential dilemmas. The mythologies of Mahabharata, life cycle ceremonies, and other associated folklore such as beliefs, simulated behavior, and epic singing endorse and enable the crossing of the boundaries. Imaginary construct the gender identity is, it calls for a whole assortment of folk and social imaginaries to break through its seams in order to achieve a sense of real. The paper is accompanied by a half hour video documentary made on the lives and lore of transgender community in Tamil Nadu.

M.D. Muthukumaraswamy has been working as the Executive Trustee and Director of India's National Folklore Support Centre (NFSC), from its inception in the year 1997. With his doctoral dissertation on Semiotic analysis of Paratakuttu: A study in theatrical communication he taught in the post-graduate department of folklore, St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu from 1987 to 1996 and guided students for advanced research. Further to his doctoral dissertation M.D.Muthukumaraswamy is currently pursuing D.Philosophy at the University of Oslo on Social Imaginaries of Divine: Selves, Spaces, and Simulations in Kañcipuram Tiraupati Amman temples.

**Laura Coppens (University of Zurich)**

*Lesbi in Jakarta: The construction and representation of queer bodies within transcultural circuits of queer knowledge*

Outside of Europe, global queer discourses, which are dominated by Western views, play as important a role as local social and political discourses. There is neither a homogenous global queer identity nor a homogenous national queer identity, as the asymmetry of perception of Western and local queer discourses shows. Ethnicity, class, religion and gender are important determining factors for the construction of different *gendered and sexual subjectivities* in Indonesia. In my paper I will map this transboundary travel of discourses and show how Indonesian *lesbi* biographies are produced within global *queerscapes*.

Furthermore, I suggest how the personal stories of Indonesian *lesbi* could be represented in a non-hierarchical way. Their personal experiences are the theme of an autoethnographic film that will be produced during my fieldwork in Jakarta in 2010. The filmic representation I am looking for begins from the inability to speak. So, it needs an experimental anthropological approach to filmic representation that appeals to the

limits of naming and the limits of understanding, and this is where it is most transformative. Drawing on the writing of Laura Marks (2000) and her exploration of “haptic visuality”, I seek to make a case for experimental cinema as a distinctive form of ethnographic film. Abandoning the traditional relation between a spectator-subject who sees, and an object who is seen, “haptic visuality” engages in a form of embodied spectatorship. What we as viewers earn through this kind of experimentation is not only an evocation of different cultures` ways of perceiving the world, but also a form of cinema that appeals to all our senses. I suggest that imaginative techniques are required if cultural anthropologists want to explore and represent other social realities. Thus, the representation of transcultural queer bodies in an experimental autoethnographic film is not only crossing methodological boundaries but gives also way to a new understanding of personal experiences in a globalised world.

Laura Coppens has studied Cultural Anthropology, Sociology and Latin American studies at Freie Universität Berlin and Melbourne University. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University Research Priority Program „Asia and Europe“ (Zurich University), where she is completing a thesis on lesbians in Jakarta. Apart from her academic work she is the director of ASIAN HOT SHOTS BERLIN, the first festival for Asian independent film and video art in Berlin. She is the author of *Films of Desire: Queer(ing) Indonesian Cinema*. In: Coppens, Laura and Yvonne Michalik (ed.): *Asian Hot Shots -- Indonesian Cinema*. Schüren Verlag: Marburg, 2009. *"A basket is not just a basket": Fibrescapes und Twined Modernities in Nordaustralien*, Berliner Arbeiten zur Erziehungs- und Kulturwissenschaft, Logos Verlag Berlin, 2009.

## IV. Aesthetic and religious transgressions

**Melanie Trede** (Heidelberg University)

*Otto Kümmel and East Asian art in Germany: Transgressing disciplinary categories but reaffirming borders*

Otto Kümmel (1874-1952) spearheaded the history of East Asian art as a discipline in Europe. He was both the founder of the East Asian Art collection and its first director at the Royal Museums in Berlin. New documentary evidence underscores two facets of his rich professional life: he transgressed disciplinary boundaries, and reaffirmed borders.

With his superior Japanese language skills (he had spent two years in Japan, 1906-1909), connoisseurial as well as historical knowledge, he challenged the amateurish predominance in the field of East Asian art studies. Additionally, he established modern East Asian aesthetic standards for the formation of art collections in Europe by postulating a clear-cut division between ethnographic and artistic objects. These principles were, of course, firmly rooted in European histories of art institutions.

These pioneering efforts of Kümmel's contrast with his activities that reaffirmed individual, professional, and national borders. His letters from Japan and other written documents prove his uncanny use of East Asian art to ascertain himself as the best connoisseur while creating a “unique”, “best”, “unsurpassed” collection for the Berlin museums and organise exhibitions of “unparalleled” dimensions. He thereby aimed to outdo rivals within Germany, and more importantly, in other colonial powers, especially France and England. Kümmel took part in a fierce competition between the European nation states in the 1920s and 1930s to establish German supremacy by proving supreme command over Asian culture and heritage in the guise of art exhibitions.

Melanie Trede is Professor for the Histories of Japanese Art at the Institute of East Asian Art History,

Heidelberg University. She is the editor of *Arts of Japan: The John C. Weber Collection* (2006) and the author of *Image, Text and Audience: The Taishokan Narrative in Visual Representations of the Early Modern Period in Japan* (2003). She is currently researching the mutual art exhibition strategies in Germany and Japan of the 1930s and 1940s, and working on the political iconography of narrative paintings in Japan.

**Franziska Koch** (Heidelberg University)

*Posing and disposing of a transcultural body and a transboundary biography: the Swiss collector Uli Sigg and his collection of contemporary Chinese art on display*

Chinese contemporary art - framed as a new, distinct and increasingly economic factor of the international art system - was only received since the beginning of the 1990s by a broad public audience in Europe and the US. Numerous group and panoramic exhibitions have been pivotal to this process of canonization vaulting a large number of artists from the People's Republic of China at a blow into prestigious Western museums. One marked characteristic of these group exhibitions dominating the mediation of Chinese contemporary art in the West up to the present day is that they are governed by a small circle of social agents. Among them we find a handful of prominent and powerful Western collectors, whose limited, personal selection of artworks shape the global (media) image of "Chinese Contemporary Art" considerably.

Taking the Swiss collector Uli Sigg and his blockbuster exhibition *Mahjong* (Bern 2005) as a showcase, I will analyze the key role of such collectors in the transcultural construction of Chinese contemporary art, often resulting in a preference for "Chineseness" or the claim to represent "China" by means of her art.

My paper argues that the role of the private European collector as a political, economical and cultural persona, whose agency is crucial in establishing, interpreting and marketing such categories to the local public, should be assessed with regard to the *dispositif* of the modern art exhibition and its historically Eurocentric foundations.

With the art theoretical assumption in mind that the modern art exhibition can be reconfigured as a *dispositif* (following-up Foucault's coinage of the term), the paper will explore *how* the transcultural (art) body and transboundary biography of the collector on different levels in this exhibition is both, *posed* and *disposed of* by power relations, which underpin the medium of the exhibition.

Franziska Koch is Assistant of Global Art History (Prof. Dr. Monica Juneja) in the Cluster of Excellence „Asia and Europe in a Global Context“ of Heidelberg University. She is the author of *Briefe aus der chinesischen Gegenwart. Eine offene Korrespondenz zweier Studenten zwischen China und Deutschland* (2005) and "China" on display for Western audiences? Three early group shows of Chinese contemporary art in Berlin, Hong Kong and Venice in 1993, in: Francesca Dal Lago (ed.), *China on Display* (forthcoming 2010).

**Rudolf C. Heredia** (Indian Social Institute, Delhi)

*Interrogations from the Margins: Conversion as Critique*

The convert is always at the margins of two traditions: the one left behind, which is never quite exorcised, and the one accepted, which is never completely internalised. At the margins of both the convert critiques both, implicitly or explicitly, in an effort that can creatively and constructively impact both traditions. Some illustrative examples



would be Newman, Gandhi, Ambedkar, Ramabai, Nivedita and the personal journeys each made.

Rudolf C. Heredia is at present a research fellow at the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi. He has his doctorate in Sociology from the University of Chicago (1979), and was the founder director of the Social Science Centre, St. Xavier's College Mumbai, 1980-1992 and director again in 1994-2003. In 1992-94 he was director, department of research, at the Indian Social Institute and edited the institute's journal, *Social Action*, 1993-95. He was a visiting fellow at Boston College for the summer of 1997. From 1998 – 2003 he was the rector of St. Xavier's College. His interests include issues related to religion, education, globalisation. His most recent publications include *Mobile and Marginalized Peoples: Perspectives from the Past* (2003), edited with Shereen F. Ratnagar, Manohar and *Changing Gods: Rethinking Conversion in India*, (2007). At present he is working on *Politicising Justice: Minority Rights and Affirmative Action in India*.

**Hans Harder** (Heidelberg University)

*The Indo-Bangladeshi Border and Hindus in Bangladesh: Dynamics of Border Crossing and Diaspora at Sitakunda*

This paper is an outline of research to be conducted in the course of the next two years. At the outset I will discuss some of the approaches of Border Studies, a rather recently established field of research, and then narrow down my focus on the Indo-Bangladeshi border and especially its eastern part. Sitakunda in Chittagong, some 20 km away from the border to Tripura / India, is considered one of the major Hindu pilgrimage centres in the region. There appears to be a constant flow of border-crossing pilgrims and religious publications into Sitakunda. More crucially, Sitakunda seems to have developed from a mainly Shaiva place to an all-Hindu pilgrimage site -- a feature I will try to explain by reference to the border and to the diaspora situation of Bangladeshi Hindus.

Professor of Modern South Asian Languages and Literatures and Head of Department of Modern South Asian Languages and Literatures, Heidelberg University. His recent publications include *Der verrückte Gofur spricht. Mystische Lieder aus Ostbengalen* (2004); Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's *Srimadbhagavadgita: Translation and Analysis* (2001).

**Roberta Tontini** (Heidelberg University)

*One thousand and one purity temples: Liu Zhi's creation of a ritual space for Islam in China*

Simultaneously a Muslim and a member of the Confucian elite, the Chinese scholar Liu Zhi devoted almost his entire life to the task of reconciling a dual cultural affiliation, not only for himself, but also for the broader Muslim community of China.

After a long journey throughout a constellation of Muslim villages and mosque-centered quarters scattered across the wide geography of the Chinese empire, Liu Zhi returned home enriched with a first-hand experience of the social reality of Islam in China. Determined to carve a space for Islam within Confucianism, he eventually identified the body in its ritual performance as the ideal recipient for a consistent synthesis of the two systems. Under his prolific brush, Islamic law and ritual gained a new cultural meaning, and were enabled to fit the new context while surviving their alienation from the original one.

This account illustrates how cultural meanings do not travel alone, but flow supported by individual carriers who become responsible for their actual or intellectual transposition. On one hand, this paper aims to shed some light on the motivations

behind Liu Zhi's intellectual enterprise as one of the most influential Chinese Muslim scholar of the eighteenth century, whose synthesis of Confucian and Islamic values was to become a milestone in the subsequent definition of Islam in China; on the other hand, it aims to re-establish a link between personal biographies and migrating cultural meanings, and to re-assess the role played by individual experience in synthesizing border crossing practices into new cultural paradigms.

Roberta Tontini is a PhD candidate of the Cluster for Transcultural Studies of Heidelberg University, Germany. Her doctoral thesis focuses on Islam in China and explores the formation of a specifically Chinese Muslim identity. Among her recent publications are: *Italian Grammar and Translation*, August 2008, Xiamen University Press; (with B. Chen) *Xiamen Mosque: Evolutions in the Islamic architectural canons of China*, in *Academic Exchange and Developments* – May, 2007; Hong Kong; *Contaminations: Islam in China - Islamic Art and Architecture in China*, in *Industria delle Costruzioni, Architetture in Cina* – May, 2006; Milano ANCE.

## V. Law and migration

**Andrea Büchler** (University of Zurich)

*Islamic Family Law in Europe? Legal transplants, normative pluralism and entangled legal histories*

In a number of European countries there are fears that foreign, particularly Islamic family law is becoming entrenched. All parties to this discussion see themselves as under threat. Migrant populations claim their right to cultural identity, while their host countries' domestic population sees a risk to social cohesion. Family law brings the underlying tensions into sharp focus. Cultural and religious identity and family law are inter-related in a number of ways and raise various complex issues. European legal systems have taken various approaches to meeting these challenges, many of which have been apologetic, and few of which have been informed by theory. I propose to examine this complexity and indicate areas in which conflicts may arise. I will include questions of International Private Law, comments on the various degrees of consideration accorded to cultural identity within substantive family law, and remarks on and evaluation of models of legal pluralism. My approach is comparative and aims at a European perspective. Nevertheless, the focus of attention will be the situation in England, namely the existing structures or normative pluralism, legal transplants and entangled legal stories. They raise various questions about cultural autonomy, gender, modernity and law.

Andrea Büchler joined the University of Zurich as Professor of Law in 2002. Her areas of research are: Family Law, Law of Persons, Comparative Law, Islamic and Middle Eastern Law, Medicine and Law, and Legal Gender Studies. She founded the Center for Islamic and Middle Eastern Legal Studies at the Faculty of Law of the University of Zurich in 2008. She is the co-director of the scientific board of the University Priority Research Programme "Asia and Europe". In 2003, she co-founded the Center for Family Sciences, a Switzerland-wide association which initiates, conducts and supports high-quality research in the field of the family.

**Ratna Kapur** (Centre for Feminist Legal Research, Delhi):

*Un-becoming citizens and subaltern migrants: law, gender and belonging in a global age*

I will examine the legal regulation of migrants in the contemporary period from a postcolonial perspective. Throughout this article I focus on the migrant who is semi-

skilled or unskilled, semi-literate, working class or lower middle class and unemployed. She occupies a subaltern position, which is not simply a descriptive term but also has a normative dimension. The subaltern is not merely a marginalized subject or a minority member, as understood within the terms of classical liberal thinking. The subaltern emerges from the specific ways in which the liberal project and imperialism operated during the colonial encounter, exposing the "dark side" of the liberal project and its exclusionary potential. The insights provided by the colonial past enable us to understand the operation of power through knowledge and how it sets the terms of inclusion and exclusion in the postcolonial present, though this understanding is not confined to postcolonial states. This perspective reveals how the migrant subject is deeply implicated in the constitution of citizenship, of who counts and who does not. My intention is to highlight how the migrant is addressed through a spectrum of legal rules based on normative criteria reminiscent of the colonial encounter. I examine how these criteria reinscribe citizenship within dominant racial, sexual, and cultural norms, as well as claims of civilizational superiority. Apart from reinforcing dominant sexual, cultural and familial norms, the legal responses to the migrant subject expose how the "excess," that which does not fall within the dominant norms and boundaries of citizenship, is regarded as transgressive and justifiably subject to restraint, persecution, censorship, social stigma, incarceration, and even annihilation.

Ratna Kapur is Director of the Centre for Feminist Legal Research, and lectures at the Indian Society for International Law. Among her published work are *Erotic Justice: Law and the New Politics of Postcolonialism* (2005), *Secularism's Law Sigh?* (co-authored, 2001) and *Subversive Sites: Feminist Engagements with Law in India* (co-authored, 1996) and *The Fear Factor: Gender, Belonging, and the Legal Regulation of the Migrant* (forthcoming, 2010).

**Pratiksha Baxi** (Centre for Law and Governance, JNU)

*Pyar Kiya To Darna Kya*: Notes on Law, Love and Violence

The reference here is to a popular Hindi song from a classic Hindi film "Mughale Azam" wherein a defiant Anarkali in a performance in the princely court sings and dances to a song (composed by Naushad) to the lyrics, 'pyar kiya to darna kya, pyar kiya hai chori to nahi ki, chup chup ke ahe bharna kya' (why live in fear when one has loved, one has loved not stolen, why should one sigh in secret)? This song dramatises love as resistance to the sovereign. Love is without guilt. It is posed in radical opposition to crime. Love is not theft. Love is not illicit. It is love that is all that law cannot be (see Raes 1998).

In this paper, I argue that as the worst form of transgression in caste sociality, the minor upper caste woman's body enters the law as "a scene of crime" where love can only be named as rape. Here, the social imagination of a dalit man's love for an upper caste woman can only exist in a mimetic relationship with upper caste imagination to substitute love by rape. The story of custodial violence narrated in this paper based on a case study of a rape trial in a district court in Ahmedabad [1996-98], is a revelation of the incommensurality between the legal subject's experience and the way she is named in law as a victim, witness and accused in the crime of and for planning to kidnap, abduct, and rape her own body. This is a stunning illustration of what Lyotard has called "differend". The police interpret the law to suggest that women can be constructed as abetting and committing rape on their bodies, which does not exist in women's experience.

Dr. Pratiksha Baxi is an Assistant Professor at the Centre for Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She holds a doctoral degree in Sociology from Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi. Her doctoral work, an ethnographic study of rape trials in a court in Gujarat, brings together her interest in sociology of law, feminist theory and violence. As the principal Researcher on an IDPAD Project entitled 'Mapping City Spaces: Communal Violence, Social Reconciliation and Documentary Practices of the State', Dr Baxi researched various aspects of the "Jurisprudence of the Riot". She was awarded the British Academy Visiting Fellowship, to conduct research for two months on "*Diasporic legalities: The discourse of "crimes of honour" in the UK and India*" at the Politics and International Studies Department, University of Warwick in May 2006.

## **VI. Jahaji Music**

*Jahaji Music* is an attempt to make meaning of aspects of contemporary culture in Trinidad and Jamaica, even as it is a witness to the nature and possibilities of artistic collaboration.

From the mid-nineteenth century Indian labourers arrived in the Caribbean on boats, bringing a few belongings and their music – the beginnings of a remarkable cultural practice. More than 150 years later musician Remo Fernandes travels to the Islands to explore potential collaborations and create new work.

India in the Caribbean is a record of a difficult, if unusual and complex, musical journey. We walk around Trenchtown with Bob Marley's teacher and rastafari philosopher Mortimo Planno; accompany calypso and soca singer Rikki Jai to Skinner Park; chat with visual artist Chris Cozier in the Savannah; follow Dancehall Queen Stacey to Weddy Weddy Wednesday; groove to Lady Saw's lyrics; record a new song with Denise Saucy Wow Belfon and are guests at an East Indian Hindu wedding. Endeavouring, through it all, to weave a story of memory, identity and creativity.

*Surabhi Sharma* graduated in Psychology and Anthropology from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. As part of the theater group Arpana, acted in plays directed by Satyadev Dubey and Sunil Shanbag. Studied at the Social Communications Media department of Sophia Polytechnic, Mumbai. Went on to do film direction at the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune. She has been working as an independent filmmaker since 2000. She has also been a guest lecturer at various design and media schools.

*Dr. Tejaswini Niranjana* has been teaching in the Department of English at the University of Hyderabad since 1988. She is the author of *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (1992) and *Mobilizing India: Women, Music, and Migration Between India and Trinidad* (2006).

## **VII. Biographies and identities**

**Christoph Uehlinger** (University of Zurich)

*(Re-)Discovering Assyria in the 19th century: a comparison of three intellectual profiles*  
(P.-E. Botta, A.H. Layard, Hormuzd Rassam)

The story of the discovery of ancient Assyrian monuments on various sites in the Mossul area, then belonging to the Ottoman empire has often been told from various angles. Border-crossing and cultural flow in this instance also meant moving tons of monuments from Upper Mesopotamia to Europe in view of public display and consumption. Three individuals took a particularly outstanding part in this process: French diplomat P.-E. Botta; British adventurer A.H. Layard; and a Mossul-born

Christian named Hormuzd Rassam, who first served as an assistant to Layard but then took over responsibility for further explorations. My presentation will focus on rather simple questions: how did the different backgrounds and connections (educational, political, institutional...) of these three individuals influence their account of what they drew from the ground? How did they, in their accounts designed for Western audiences, invest with meaning a civilization long-known through literary legacy only (including the Bible), which now became tangible through monuments, and particularly visual culture? And how, if ever, did they relate to local knowledge and tradition when dealing with a past they would first of all (if not altogether) claim for European interests? Motivated by sheer curiosity on my behalf, discussion could follow on a loosely related subject: being geographically situated halfway between Europe and India, how does (might?, should?) ancient Assyria be of interest to scholars working in India?

Christoph Uehlinger (\*1958), studied Catholic Theology and Biblical studies, ancient Near Eastern languages and cultures, and Egyptology. 1991-2003 senior lecturer University of Fribourg (Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern religions); since 2003 Professor University of Zurich (Study of Religions). Acting co-chair of the URPP Asia and Europe. Research areas: comparative religion, visible religion, religion and material culture. Selected publications: *Weltreich und 'eine Rede'* (1990); *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God in ancient Israel* (1992, engl. 1998); *Partnership in Archaeology: Perspectives of a Cross-Cultural Dialogue* (1997); *Images as Media* (2000); *Crafts and Images in Contact* (2005); *Könige am Tigris – Medien assyrischer Herrschaft* (2007). Editor *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* series.

**Somnath Batabyal** (Heidelberg University)  
*Transboundary biographies in environmentalism*

This paper uses COP15 as a nodal point to examine the rhetoric of climate change and its politics. It uses both the participant's proximity (the author was part of an NGO delegate) and the observer's distance to analyse the UN meet which after months of media sponsored hype, ended as a spectacular failure. Using observational data, I argue that COP15 was a hyper mediated event that had little to do with the victims of climate change who were unashamedly evoked to score brownie points both by state and non-state actors. The paper goes as far as to advocate against the transnational networks and cross border alliances which, supported by tremendous advances in media and communication technology, have worked towards entrenching the binary position of the rich and poor countries or developed and developing countries (Annex 1 and non Annex 1 countries, in official parlance).

Dr Somnath Batabyal is a Post Doctoral Fellow at the University of Heidelberg. His present research focuses on Environmental Activism: An Ontology of the actors and their politics, examines the changing sphere of green activism in the Global South. Taking special note of how communication technology and media reconfigures environmental awareness and understanding, the project examines transnational networks and the work of non-state actors in the present political ecology. Dr Batabyal finished his PhD in 2009 from SOAS, University of London. His first monograph is an ethnography of the politics of news production in Indian television and will be published by Routledge.

**Farhana Ibrahim** (Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi)  
*Performance and transgression: borderline identities among a pastoral community in western India*

This paper is based upon ethnographic work among the Muslim Jatts of Kachchh in Gujarat. The Jatts span a geographical area encompassed by Kachchh district in the Indian state of Gujarat and Pakistan's Sindh province. The paper explores the implications for the Jatts of their situation along the fault-lines of the nation-state, in a region which has been increasingly identified with growing sectarian and communal polarization. The ethnography is located both physically and analytically along boundaries, and suggests that the boundary is vital to the production of culture; it is not merely a product of an *a priori* cultural difference. By situating my analysis in the realm of everyday cultural production, I examine how the use of language, music, poetry or clothing preference helps to create powerfully entrenched, yet historically contingent, ideas of boundaries and frontiers, generating compelling notions of insider and outsider that may or may not coincide with the production of space and boundaries at the level of the nation-state.

Farhana Ibrahim is Assistant Professor of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. She is the author of *Settlers, Saints and Sovereigns: An Ethnography of State Formation in Western India* (Routledge 2009).

### **Henning Trüper (University of Zurich)**

*Lives, letters and other letters: subject-matters of scholarly biography in 19<sup>th</sup>-century oriental studies*

The notion that, in the history of research and scholarship, personal life and written oeuvre are neatly separable was and is widespread. In response to this conviction, the presentation will address some basic questions about what is entailed by a biographical perspective on the history of 19<sup>th</sup>-century oriental scholarship, and why it matters. Setting out from recent discussions of "the scientific life" (Steven Shapin), I will argue that the humanities in general, and oriental philologies in particular, presented a different model of the integration of person and work, lives and letters, than prevalent in the sciences. This model was based on writing, authorship and an intricate cultural pattern of personal experience and biographical investment. I will pursue these matters along the discussion of a number of case examples from the history of oriental studies. This latter field offers privileged access to the problem. More clearly than other disciplinary endeavours, it illuminates the cultural function of personal travel, across cultural borderlines, and of the handling of "other letters", that is to say, textual objects that were not of one's own making, nor of that of one's own history. From this perspective, it was relations between ownership and authorship that marked the nexus between life and letters, person and text, the presentation intends to explore.

Henning Trüper studied history, philosophy and German literature at Göttingen, Berkeley and Ghent; collaborator of the Max-Weber-Gesamtausgabe 2003-04; PhD EUI Florence 2008. Publications include: *Die VSWG und ihr Herausgeber Hermann Aubin im Nationalsozialismus* (2005); *Topography of a Method. François Louis Ganshof and the Writing of History* (forthcoming).

### **Rohit Jain (University of Zurich)**

*Biographicity, cultural translation and translocality in the representations of "Indianness" among second generation Indians grown up in Switzerland*

Second generation Indians grown up in Switzerland are confronted with plenty – and often contradictory – representations of “Indianness”. In Switzerland they are signified within the regimes of assimilation and exotic multiculturalism. Also, they face expectations of cultural tradition by their parents and the diasporic community. Interacting with their relatives and friends in India and being part of the greater Indian public they are confronted with discourses of „India” and the “West” within which they have to negotiate their role as PIO („person of Indian origin“).

In this paper, I will argue, that transcultural practices and experiences of second generation Indians grown up in Switzerland can be well understood within a framework of biographical contingency and discursive contexts. Drawing on several case studies, I will show, my informants translate representations of “Indianness” adopted by their parents, relatives and friends and Swiss or Indian media into own biographical projects of “Indianness”, which are embedded in translocal regimes of economic outsourcing, tourism and cultural consumption.

Rohit Jain has studied sociology, ethnology and economics at the University of Berne. His main interests are negotiations of ethnicity, gender and class in the context of migration, hegemony and globalization. He is completing a doctoral thesis at the URPP Asien und Europa (University of Zurich) on *Translocal subjectivities of second generation Indians in Switzerland*.

### **Tobias Delfs (University of Zurich)**

*A missionary gone astray in India. Lambert Christian Früchtenicht (1772 – ca. 1806) and the problem of border crossing*

Lambert Christian Früchtenicht (1772- ca. 1806) came to India in 1799 as a missionary of the Danish-English-Halle Mission. By 1801, he was already forced to leave because of his misdeeds: during this short period he was described in letters of complaint by his missionary colleagues as “rowdy,” “an alcoholic,” and “a gambler who has gamed away the money of the mission.” These letters resulted in calls for Früchtenicht to be suspended from working; in reaction to this Früchtenicht threatened to commit suicide. Eventually he was sent back to Europe, and suspended by the Danish missionary commission – after this he travelled from Copenhagen to Philadelphia, where he unsuccessfully carried out his threat to kill himself. The case of Früchtenicht is interesting on several counts: primarily, it presents an unstable person who is overwhelmed by the situation he is confronted with in India. It illustrates how the different parts of the missionary enterprise, both in India and Europe, reacted and worked together during a phase of general decline for the Danish-English-Halle Mission. Finally, it gives insight on an organisational level into the disciplinary mechanisms that the European missionary society and the Danish missionary committee used to solve this particular problem. The interaction of all of these elements will provide the focus of the presentation.

Tobias Delfs studied History at the University of Kiel. Since 2008 he is working at the URPP Asia and Europe (University of Zurich) on his PhD-project about the networks and the communication within the Danish mission in Bengal. He has published a book on *“Hindu-Nationalismus und europäischer Faschismus”* (2008) and is the author and co-editor of *“Die Reise eines niederadeligen Anonymus ins Heilige Land im Jahre 1494”* (2007).

## **VIII. Transboundary professionals – transcultural bodies**

**Madeleine Herren** (Heidelberg University)

*Cars and Pianos, performing the transcultural body in the League of Nations' secretariat 1920 – 1939*

Within an ongoing debate on a third, cosmopolitan United Nations, on transnational professionals, and on the shaping of a transnational capitalist class, the shifting interest from global governance to cosmopolitanism apparently brought back a well established Western concept. Cosmopolitanism helps to differentiate between 'good' and the 'bad' forms of global entanglement, between a Kantian view of global justice and border crossing terrorism, totalitarianism, and religious orthodoxies. In a first part on 'new cosmopolitanism and methodological historicism', the ongoing debates on cosmopolitanism in the social sciences will include a transcultural historical approach, which suggests operationalising Etienne Balibar's concept of the "polysemic nature borders". In the subsequent methodological part, territoriality and performativity explain how men and women on the payroll of the League of Nations between 1920 and 1946 provide empirical evidence for transboundary lives in a biographical approach. The League's staff policy constructed a cosmopolitan community which had to cope with different asymmetries and controversial expectations, and had to translate a hybrid form of cosmopolitanism into routines of everyday life. The question of how individuals managed the tensions between pretended national authenticity and a not less than hybrid cosmopolitan unity opens a perspective on shared beliefs and common concepts. Moving lists show what men and women on the payroll of the League expected and how they thought cosmopolitans should behave. While cars and pianos played a crucial role for a common cosmopolitan performativity, a typology of transboundary lives within the League of Nations shows contradictions and complex interactions between different polysemic borders.

Madeleine Herren-Oesch is professor of modern history and co-director of the Cluster of excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context. Shifting asymmetries in cultural flows" at Heidelberg university. Her fields of interest cover global and transnational history, the history of knowledge and information transfer, internationalism in the 19th century, the League of Nations and the United Nations' system, transcultural historiography and transboundary biographies. Her recent publication covers the global history of international organisations: *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865, Eine Globalgeschichte der internationalen Ordnung* (2009).

**Joachim Kurtz** (Heidelberg University)

*The Messenger of Zikawei: On the Trail of the Transboundary Life of a Chinese – Jesuit Journalist in 19th – century Shanghai*

This paper traces the transboundary life of the Chinese Jesuit Li Wenyu (1840–1911). Although forgotten today, Li was arguably the most productive Chinese-Christian author in the late Qing period, the most accomplished translator of his day, and one of the pioneers of modern Chinese journalism. Although he hardly ever left the Jesuit compound in Zikawei (Xujiahui) near Shanghai after entering the "Vatican of the Far East" at age 12, Li's life was shaped by the constant need to transgress boundaries of language, culture, religion, and nationality. Focussing on three critical episodes, I will use his biography as an illustration of the difficulties to assert a stable identity in the transcultural world treaty-port China.



*Joachim Kurtz is Professor of Intellectual History in the Cluster "Asia and Europe," Heidelberg University. His publications include *The Discovery of Chinese Logic*, 2010; *Selbstbehauptungsdiskurse in Asien: China–Japan–Korea* (with I. Amelung et al.), 2003; and *New Terms for New Ideas. Western Knowledge and Lexical Change in Late Imperial China* (with M. Lackner et al.), 2001.*

**Nikola Kosmatopoulos** (University of Zurich)

*How «ethnic conflict» was introduced as a novel border concept between war/peace after the Cold War and how transboundary expert biographies helped to do so in Lebanon*

Against all predictions, the end of the Cold War didn't bring the advent of a «new world order», let alone «the end of history». But what it did bring was a novel perception of *war/peace* on a global scale, two grand notions of modernity as first described in Hobbes' «Leviathan»; I contend that the concept of «ethnic conflict» was introduced as a hybrid category, or a border concept, between them.

In this paper I explore the uses of the border concept «ethnic conflict» in the case of Lebanon. Through an examination of different expert careers and discourses, mainly built on the premise of application of this novel concept in international politics, I show how transboundary biographies are instrumental in the birth of a new field of professionals that call themselves «peacemakers». Transboundary biographies are understood here not only in a strict geographical sense, but also and mainly as biographies constituted through the crossing of boundaries between different fields of expertise, such as diplomacy, academia, politics and NGOs.

*Nikola Kosmatopoulos is doctorate candidate in Social Anthropology at the University Research Priority Program Asia and Europe (University of Zurich) and Research Program Coordinator for the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries in Lebanon. Selected academic publications include articles on youth labor in Egypt, and forthcoming publications on state discourses and pacification efforts in Lebanon and Palestine. His PhD research explores the peace discourse in the Middle East through expert institutions and careers.*