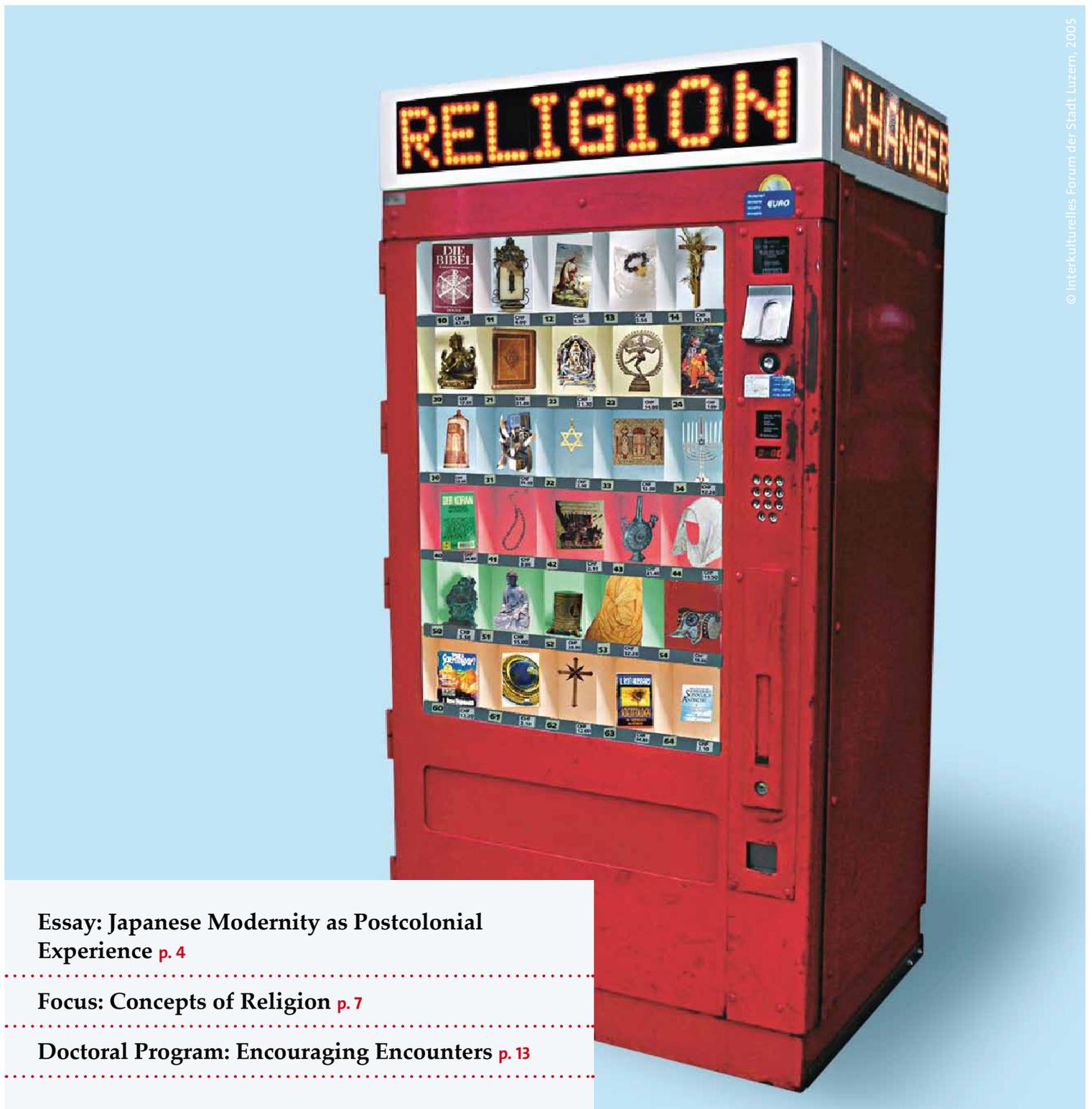




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News & Events

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University of Zurich
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Editors

Prof. Dr. Andrea Riemenschneider, Dr. Inge
Ammering, Roman Benz

English Language Editors

Breanna Lasater, Phillip Lasater

Articles by

Prof. Dr. Jun'ichi Isomae
International Research Center for Japanese
Studies, Kyoto
Research Fellow at the URPP Asia and Europe in
Fall Semester 2011

Dipl.-Reg.-Wiss. Ulrich Brandenburg, M. A.
Doctoral Candidate at the URPP Asia and Europe
(Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies)

Philipp Hetmanczyk, M. A.
Doctoral Candidate at the URPP Asia and Europe
(Study of Religions)

Eliza Isabaeva, M. A.
Doctoral Candidate at the URPP Asia and Europe
(Social and Cultural Anthropology)

Dinah Zank, M. A.
Doctoral Candidate at the URPP Asia and Europe
(East Asian Art History)

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Editorial

Dear Readers,



During the past months many of us have been very busy contributing to our new bulletin, and I now have the great pleasure to present the first issue to you! It has been created to offer detailed information concerning the research and teaching activities at the URPP Asia and Europe. This first issue features an essay by Professor Jun'ichi Isomae, who was a visiting scholar at the URPP Asia and Europe during the fall term of 2011. His essay

discusses shifts in the “West versus rest” positioning of intellectuals taking place within the scientific community during the current, allegedly post-colonial era. Isomae describes his own experiences as a Japanese scholar working at European and American universities, and argues for a less polarizing, transnational and transdisciplinary outlook cutting across—and moving beyond—the academic disciplines. The photograph attached to Isomae’s essay was taken by his wife Reiko Isomae in the city of Onagawa, located at the North-East coast of Honshu, after the devastating March 2011 tsunami.

Our three research groups have been very prolific again during the past year. In their research, members of the first of our three research fields, *Concepts and Taxonomies*, currently focus on the analysis of concepts of religion: they organized a lecture series by the title of “Concepts of Religion in the Modern Age” in the fall term. Philipp Hetmanczyk offers his insights by summarizing the gist of this lecture series. The group is currently organizing an international conference “Concepts of Religion between Asia and Europe” that will take place in the fall term of 2012. Raji C. Steineck and Christoph Uehlinger, coordinators of the research focus “Religion,” elaborate on their research questions, aims, and trajectories in a dialogue with Ulrich Brandenburg.

Having established an interdisciplinary doctoral program in 2009, the URPP Asia and Europe has welcomed two generations of graduate students to join and study with us in what we consider to be a substantially improved environment. How do the doctoral students themselves feel about this program? Eliza Isabaeva portrays three participants and takes an insider’s perspective on the motivation and goals of these young researchers.

Last November, the Institute of East Asian Studies—in cooperation with the URPP Asia and Europe, the Department of Cinema Studies and the Department of Indian Studies—carried out an international workshop on “Ghosts in Asian Cinemas” at the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich. In her report on this workshop, Dinah Zank writes about the varieties and manifestations of ghosts in Asian movies as well as about the fine line between near-death experiences and ghostliness.

Our Bulletin has been designed to provide firsthand information that includes our latest news and upcoming events. The next lecture series “Circulating Norms: Human Rights and Gender in a Globalized World,” organized by Research Field 3: *Norms and Social Order(s)*, will take place on March 20, May 15, and May 29, so please save the dates.

Our visiting scholars Jun'ichi Isomae (International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto) and Jakob de Roover (Ghent University) left us by the end of 2011. We would like to thank both of them for their admirable engagements in various teaching and research activities during their time in Zurich. At the same time we would like to welcome Fabian Schäfer who, as our new senior research associate, will be affiliated with Research Field 3.

Finally, let me express our special thanks to the doctoral students Ulrich Brandenburg, Philipp Hetmanczyk, Eliza Isabaeva and Dinah Zank for their valuable contributions to this volume.

Prof. Dr. Andrea Riemenschneider
Academic Director

Japanese Modernity as Postcolonial Experience

During the fall semester 2011 Jun'ichi Isomae joined the URPP Asia and Europe as a visiting scholar. In his essay he ponders the notion of traveling theories as well as the importance of postcolonial studies for non-Western experiences.

Jun'ichi Isomae



In my experience, I have been astonished at the substantial intellectual shifts among East Asian scholars in both Europe and America. Recently, I had the opportunity to teach critical theories at European universities before a student body consisting primarily of Europeans and Americans. Nobody displayed discomfort at the notion of learning theory from a non-Westerner, especially from one like me who did not receive a Ph. D. from a Euro-American University.

Almost ten years ago, however, at a well-known American university, I was treated as a native informant. They expected me not to lecture on theory, but rather to supply a first-hand Japanese perspective. In my Japanese religions seminar, an American professor suddenly made me stop lecturing after my elaboration on the subject matter. "Now it is our [the

Americans] turn to interpret this information about Japanese religion with which Jun'ichi [the Japanese native] has provided us," he stated. Their attitude as colonizers angered me, so I criticized them: "Contrary to what you think, your understanding of Japanese religion is artificial. Today I will problematize your monolithic concept of it through my way of interpretation." The atmosphere of my classroom turned drastically worse, so that many professors turned silent and appeared baffled. They seemed unhappy with this dissent from a Japanese scholar whom they apparently presumed would be quite cooperative in the role of native informant. By the following week, everyone had withdrawn from the seminar with the exception of a few students and administrators, reducing what was originally a group of over twenty to a group of three. Gradually, several more (non-Western) graduate students and administrators—but no professors—joined the seminar.

Area studies in the service of the Cold War
That experience occurred nearly ten years ago. Almost immediately after

the publication of Harry Harootunian's and Masao Miyoshi's edited book *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies* in 2002—a criticism of the political commitments in U. S. area studies during the Cold War when American intellectuals, bureaucrats, and politicians sought information about how to establish anti-communist governance in Asian countries—the *Death of a Discipline* was declared for area studies. It was an identity crisis for this field of inquiry, whose rhetoric of collegiality had masked the inequality

Japan now has the experience of Fukushima — an experience of suffering they must relate to others in the world without narcissistically stressing their sense of victimhood.

between American theorists and native informants. Harootunian's view suggests that it was not coincidental that the people who joined my seminar were not American Anglo-Saxon professors but rather Asian graduate students and administrators: they found an opportunity to speak out by themselves not as native informants but as people engaging theories.

It was also an epoch-making time for postcolonial studies in general. For example, Homi Bhabha, an Indian



Devastation after the tsunami disaster on March 11, 2011: Ruins and car wrecks in the town of Onagawa (Miyagi prefecture) © Reiko Isomae

scholar, became a professor in Harvard University's department of English Literature, which had theretofore been occupied almost exclusively by American Anglo-Saxon professors. Around the same time, Edward Said of Columbia University passed away. However, Said's promotion of postcolonial studies along with Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak helped to bring these studies to the forefront of American academia. They succeeded in making it possible for non-Western scholars to speak out as theoretical intellectuals before a Western audience. Western scholars do not occupy all theories, though a number of conservative scholars continue to operate under the influence of the Western theorist/native informant dichotomy. Said explains the transplantation of theory in terms of "traveling theories:"

"Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel—from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another. [...] Such movement into a new environment is never unimpeded. It necessarily involves processes of representation and institutionalization different from those at the point of origin."¹

Hybridity instead of purity

Now, several years later, I am in Switzerland at the URPP Asia and Europe teaching young scholars from both European and non-European backgrounds about how, from an East Asian perspective, to use theories ranging from postmodernism to post-secularism, post-democracy, and post-colonialism. These young scholars do not mind receiving instruction from a non-native and non-English speaker. Based

chiefly on intellectual curiosity, they seek to understand the viewpoints of figures such as Talal Asad, Said, Spivak, and Bhabha. Each one of these theorists is non-Western: they are Palestinian, Indian, Parsi, and Saudi Arabian, respectively. Yet they have utilized English to express non-Western experiences of hybridity in order to be heard internationally. They never insist on the polarity of the West and the rest. On the contrary, each one has had to survive under the postcolonial situation of hybridity (that is, the denial of any "pure" cultural origin). We should not forget the fact that these postcolonial, non-Western intellectuals have close Western ties, mainly to the U.S. They were educated and now teach at American-European universities. Furthermore, even though postcolonial studies began with a Palestinian and

an Indian, they have gradually expanded to other areas in East Asia, including Korea, China, and Japan. Spivak has stated her dissatisfaction with India-centric postcolonial studies:

"I'm saying that a postcolonial criticism that is based upon the South Asian model is out of date. [...] [Y]ou cannot think about Latin America according to South Asia and you cannot think of what has happened in the post-Soviet world according to the South Asia model and certainly the role of Japan, Korea, Taiwan, in what you call Asia, cannot be thought of by the South Asian model."²

In Korea, for example, Yun Haedong insists on the concept of a "grey zone" in order to criticize the anti-Japanese idea of a purity of Korean national identity that has played a crucial role in advancing Korean society's modernization following the liberation from Japanese empire. During the colonial period, however, it was difficult for Koreans to maintain a sense of "Korean-ness" distinct from "Japanese-ness" inasmuch as Korea was under continual cultural and political pressure to be subject to Japan. This subjection was necessary for the securing of political rights and, correspondingly, for attaining equality with the Japanese. For Korean Lim Jiehyun, the postwar Korean nationalism was a reaction to the so-called "grey zone" that resulted in a hybrid Korean-Japanese identity. He characterized this nationalism as self-victimization.

Korean scholars who have studied and now teach in Korea have the ability to criticize the Korean political situation for the sake of the Korean people. Based on their experience of Korean modernity, they can differentiate their writings as distinct from South Asian postcolonial studies.

Japan's Janus-headed situation

We also have the case of Japan, which involves an ambivalent experience of modernity not only as a colonizer of Asian countries but also as a place oc-

cupied by the U.S. Indeed, Japan has been represented as Asia to the West and as the West to Asia, swaying between these two poles. Japanese people have the potential advantage of conceptualizing their own history in terms of both perpetrator and victim, though their post-imperial status as a nation state often leads to a forgetting of their role as perpetrator. Through its experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan often recognizes itself as the victim of war in order to advocate international peace.

Even in an academic context, we should be skeptical of words like "inter-national" or "inter-disciplinary," since each of them presupposes the ideas of nationalism and established disciplines.

But Japan must nevertheless articulate its experience not only as victim but also as invader. Recognizing this dual position in modern world history can enable the Japanese to share their singular experience with others through transnational theoretical work, which Kojin Karatani, Naoki Sakai, and Haruki Murakami are already pursuing in the humanities and literary studies.³ Recalling Said's phrase, we can say that each one of our experiences can undergo translation through "traveling theories." In addition, Japan now has the experience of Fukushima—an experience of suffering they must relate to others in the world without narcissistically stressing their sense of victimhood. By now, the country has learned several lessons from this disaster: firstly, the notion that social security provides complete protection for people in advanced industrial societies is an illusion; and secondly, economic structures have maintained this illusion as a means of exploiting poor, marginal areas to the satisfaction of rich, metro-

politan areas. The existence of nuclear plants has received support from this capitalistic, exploitative structure that has promoted Japan's postwar economic prosperity. The Japanese should problematize this structure in order to address a worldwide audience under global capitalism.

Overcoming nationalities and disciplines

Only through theories can we conceptualize reality. Theory comprises the lens through which we recognize what is real. Lacan stated that we cannot perceive naked reality, an observation that underscores the importance of theoretical work. Theory has the capacity to open up space for communication all over the world, but it also carries the risk of closing this space through national particularisms. Even in an academic context, we should be skeptical of words like "inter-national" or "inter-disciplinary," since each of them presupposes the ideas of nationalism and established disciplines. At the same time, we don't need to be multiculturalists who want to homogenize each individual culture. Rather, we should intend to show new directions toward trans-national and trans-disciplinary work, heterogenizing our experience and enabling an imagination- and compassion-based sharing between people without personal knowledge of one another.

1 Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1983, 226.

2 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Position without Identity—2004: An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak by Yan Hairong," in *Other Asias*, Malden, Oxford & Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2008, p.251.

3 Kojin Karatani, *Origin of Modern Japanese Literature*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993. Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. The esteemed work of Haruki Murakami requires no introduction.

Asian Conceptual Taxonomies 'Before Religion'

On the occasion of the 2011 fall semester lecture series "Concepts of Religion in the Modern Age," professors Raji C. Steineck and Christoph Uehlinger elaborate on the current re-search agenda of Research Field 1: "Concepts and Taxonomies," one of three research fields at the URPP Asia and Europe.

Interview: Ulrich Brandenburg

Professors Steineck and Uehlinger, after the last two years' preoccupation with the topic of philosophy, Research Field 1

is at present mainly concerned with the concept of "religion." What is the rationale behind this interest in religion in intercultural contexts?

Raji C. Steineck: The objective of Research Field 1: *Concepts and Taxonomies* is a closer examination of the fundamental theoretical terms and concepts that frame our research but that, at the same time, derive from a specific European tradition. The accusation can accordingly be made that they pre-determine the research perspective in a way that may not do justice to the issues under consideration in non-European countries. For example, the



Raji C. Steineck: "In Japan, there are many interested parties who have appropriated the concept of religion."

The Research Fields of the URPP Asia and Europe

Within its comprehensive interdisciplinary research structure, the URPP Asia and Europe focuses on three thematically differentiated 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.

Research Field 3: Norms and Social Order(s) is devoted to the study of the social and political negotiations that take place when norms and ideas about social and political order circulate across and between different places and social contexts, including, but not limited to, questions of economic and political interdependencies, the transnationalization of law, the interaction of individuals, local communities, national and international organizations, as well as global discourses on statehood and development.

two contemporary terms “philosophy” and “religion” are demarcated rather clearly from each other in European contexts, suggesting a clear distinction between the socio-cultural fields and academic disciplines related to them. Among other things, one may ask whether this sharp distinction is not distorting things when applied to non-European contexts, especially pre-modern ones.

Christoph Uehlinger: Our research topic is not “religion” as such but “concepts of religion.” The question involves the place and level of significance a concept like “religion” or “philosophy” occupies in a culturally determined conceptual order. Someone who wishes to explore religion should know what to include or to exclude. This is a relatively easy matter in discursive settings where “religion” is used as a concept, but what about contexts where such a concept seems to be lacking? What we are doing is groundwork, so to speak. As for the change in emphasis—from “philosophy” to “religion”—, we are proceeding from the current competencies and projects at the URPP Asia and Europe. Philosophy was at the forefront because several members of the research program were engaged with philosophical-historical or, more specifically, philosophical-conceptual inquiries, histories of philosophy in specific non-European contexts etc. Religion now follows because the study of religions has ever been part of the research program and proven to be of interest for several among us. It was briefly debated whether or not the concept of “theology”—rather than “religion”—should be placed alongside “philosophy.” We decided not to do so in order not to restrict and precondition our discussions.

But the concept of religion is also fraught with tension.

Steineck: Fraught with tension, absolutely—but that does not mean that it

is inapplicable or futile in Asian contexts. In Japan, for example, there are many interested parties who have appropriated the concept of religion. In the various responses to Western imperialist pressure, religion came into play as a positive identifier of Asian-ness, East-Asianness, or specifically Japaneseness, functioning as something from the past that could possibly lead towards—or beyond—science, technology, and modernity. It is accordingly not merely a concept with which Europeans approached Asia in order to categorize what they found there. It is a concept that was adopted and continues to be used affirmatively as much as it was criticized.

So does this activity in the context of contemporary Asia have ongoing relevance or do you see your research in more exclusively historical terms?

Steineck: All of it plays a role in current arguments, but concerning our program we don’t want to follow the dictates of actual discourses. Our focus is on fundamental issues, and for that reason we have recently decided to explore historically distant sources and above all to ask ourselves what cognitive and normative categories existed prior to the emergence of the modern concept of religion. We are not geared to the pursuit of relevance for contemporary social issues, although our research does have implications insofar as it sheds some light on certain ideological uses of these traditions in the present.

Uehlinger: Within the labor division at the URPP Asia and Europe, our research field works from a deliberate “history of concepts” perspective, which involves the historical analysis of language systems and taxonomies within which these concepts operate. Accordingly, one question of particular interest to us is how Asian conceptual taxonomies operated “before religion,” that is before they came into contact with European notions of “re-



Christoph Uehlinger: "Increasing media talk on 'religion' does not necessarily correspond to an intensification of religious practice."

ligion" and adapted to it in various ways. "Religion" is usually considered to be an essentially European concept, which is correct in historical terms. The question is whether there was no such thing in Asian contexts before, whether we can observe analogous concepts in pre-modern Asian conceptual taxonomies, and more generally, how these taxonomies were structured and operated—"before religion."

Nowadays there is often talk of a "revival of religion." For your research, is this consequently only a marginal interest?

Uehlinger: This area is not central for us, though one could of course formulate a concept-historical investigation on contemporary uses of the term "religion" and its functions in post-modern societies. Regarding your question, assessments differ greatly within contemporary studies on religion whether one should speak of a "revival of religion" as such, or whether it is in fact the concept of religion

which experiences a revival, notably in globalized media. Increasing media talk on "religion" does not necessarily correspond to an intensification of religious practice.

The narrative is of course what adapts here in relation to, for example, the theories of secularization.

Uehlinger: Precisely. As a theme, then, there is a "revival of religion," probably by virtue of the definite decline in secular ideologies that explained "religion" as false consciousness, ideology etc. and put a taboo on religious practice in various ways. Today the field seems more open to being occupied anew with religious discourse of various kinds.

Then is your own research also participating in the revival of the concept?

Steineck: I don't think so, mainly because the concept has never been "dead" in the study of Asian cultural histories. In this sense, our research contributes to the reflection and partial

revision of earlier studies of Asia—whether European or Asian—based on the insight, that the concept of religion initially applied to the study of Asian religious traditions was a concept strongly shaped by certain Christian, especially Protestant, notions. That insight profoundly changed the historiography of Japanese religions, calling for a certain revision and a process of reflection. This work of revision has begun in the last twenty years and remains far from complete.

Professors Raji C. Steineck (Japanese Studies) and Christoph Uehlinger (Study of Religions) coordinate the research group focusing on the concept of religion. Together with Prof. Angelika Malinar (Indian Studies) and Dr. Ralph Weber (Chinese Studies), they were responsible for the lecture series "Concepts of Religion in the Modern Age."

The Annual Conference of the URPP Asia and Europe (November 1–3, 2012) will be dedicated to the "Concepts of Religion between Asia and Europe."

Variations in Secularization

In the fall semester 2011, the URPP Asia and Europe invited five distinguished scholars to participate in the public lecture series “Concepts of Religion in the Modern Age.” As an outcome, the event demonstrated the important role of political discourse in the process of secularization.

Philipp Hetmanczyk

The topic “Concepts of Religion in the Modern Age” of the lecture series in fall semester 2011 is not only of special interest for historical research on the concept of religion and its transformations, but also refers to the question about the diverse political and social dynamics that have been set in motion by concepts of religion in Asia and Europe alike. Accordingly, the five lectures covered a broad array of subjects ranging from religion in the context of colonial encounters to modern nation-building and secularization.

Prof. Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (University of California, Santa Barbara) provided an in-depth analysis of the developments that have taken place since the early 20th century, tracing concepts and ideas concerning the modernization of Chinese religions including the People’s Republic’s religious policy up to current trends and tendencies. In her lecture, Prof. Yang characterized “religion” and “superstition” as political terminology to qualify or disqualify certain forms of religious practices. She provided information about the development of conflicts and political consequences for religious groups in China accompanied by such a normative concept of religion.

A concept of religion *avant la lettre*

Prof. Patrick Franke (University of Bamberg) delivered a lecture on Islamic traditions of writing about other religions. His main thesis built on Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s conclu-

sion about Islam as an exceptional case with its notion of religion, since Islam when employing the word “*dīn*” seems to express with it a concept close to the modern Western one. One reason for this similarity, Prof. Franke argued, may be seen in the religious plurality of the Near Eastern region at the time when Islam came into being. This situation of plurality seems to have fostered the development of a vivid Islamic tradition of writing about neighboring traditions. The word “*dīn*” was the preferred denotation of Islam while the others were referred to as “*milal*” (communities) or “*madhâhib*” (teachings/directions).

Religion-like constructs

Prof. Christine Axt-Piscalar (University of Göttingen) spoke from the perspective of Protestant Theology on the meaning and function of religion in the modern age. Referring to current debates about the shortcomings of the secularization thesis, Prof. Axt-Piscalar argued for the important role that religion plays as a moral voice in public discourse—a role that became even more important under conditions of modernization. In her discussion, Prof. Axt-Piscalar followed Habermas’ argument on discursive reason as the necessity for the moral condition of modern society.

Prof. Jun’ichi Isomae (International Research Center for Japanese Studies Kyoto and Fellow at the URPP in fall 2011) identified a paradox in the introduction of the modern concept of religion in Japan: on the one hand, it was affirmed as a sign of civilization and a modern form of individual subjectivity. On the other hand, it brought with it a corresponding “other,” the concept of superstition. This was crucial for the formation of State Shinto as a “national/imperial” ideology, since it dis-

tanced itself from new and folk beliefs which were seen as superstitious. Furthermore, State Shinto had an interest in distancing itself from a notion of religion that was associated with Christianity—namely, any “Western” concept incompatible with the essentialist idea of “Japaneseness.”

The last talk was held by Prof. Richard King (University of Glasgow). He reflected on the influence of colonialism on religious policies in India. Prof. King is one of the first scholars who introduced the critique of Orientalism into the field of the study of religions, and he focused his lecture on the diverse problems that arose with the concept of religion within the colonial context of India. Following his discussion of the colonial encounter and its consequences for the political discourse about “Hinduism,” Prof. King concluded that concepts such as “religion” are embedded in political frameworks and that the deconstruction of “religion” is thus more than a theoretical agenda within postcolonial scholarship. It is instead an intervention into political discourse.

Notions of religion and nation state

The different sessions of this lecture series consistently highlighted one issue in particular: the question of religion and modernity is hardly a problem that can simply be identified and embraced by the term “secularization.” To the contrary, the encounter with a special concept of religion, that is based on a differentiated sphere of church-like structures and personal faith can be seen as a central feature of the modern framework in which the political debates about civilization and rational speech have taken place. As a result, the different modes of secularization like those in north-western Europe, China, India or Japan point to the important role of different taxonomies of religion that are at play in the production processes of the modern nation state and its subjects.

Picturing Spectral Transition

An international workshop on “Ghosts in Asian Cinemas” reflected on the re-sumption and transformation of ghost narratives in contemporary Asian cultural production, especially in cinema, and scrutinized the formation of a new Global Gothic.

Dinah Zank

On November 4–5, 2011, the Institute of East Asian Studies, the URPP Asia and Europe, the Departments of Cinema Studies, and the Department of Indian Studies at the University of Zurich gathered together an international and academically diverse group of experts for a workshop on “Ghosts in Asian Cinemas.” In the historical atmosphere of the Ethnological Museum of the University of Zurich, the

three panels on “Urbanity, Nature, Modernity,” “Spectral Kinship,” and “Global Gothic” were accompanied by several movie screenings.¹

The keynote speech by Prof. Dr. Andrea Riemenschneider, Director of the URPP Asia and Europe, invited the audience to consider different notions of spirits, ghosts and ghostliness in various Asian contexts. Through examples of both the restructuring of Chinese cities during a growing post-modern urbanization and a trend to neglect the historicity of environments—each of which forces traces of the past to vanish—she explained not only how vengeful spirits and haunted houses, but also common buildings and urban landscapes have come to be considered as possessing a transcen-

dent ghostliness. This phenomenon was called the *déjà disparu* by Hong Kong-based cultural critic Ackbar Abbas, whereby Abbas refers to the German philosopher Walter Benjamin’s notion of modern history as an endless accumulation of ruins.

Tricked by the evil fox spirit

This encounter of the non-modern with the modern, the past with the present, and the rural with the urban also stood at the center of the first panel “Urbanity, Nature, Modernity.” It began with a screening of “Ugetsu monogatari” (J1953), a folktale-like movie by Kenji Mizoguchi based on an 18th century novel by Ueda Akinari. Its story develops during the 16th century Japanese civil war, where the potter Tobei leaves his village in favor of easy pickings in a nearby town. He is temporarily tricked by the evil fox spirit of a



Ghost in the woods: Filmstill from “Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives” © Sayombhu Mukdeeprom / Illumination films (past lives) & kickthemachine

deceased woman, but eventually rescued by a Buddhist monk. Following this screening, Dr. Elisabeth Scherer (University of Düsseldorf) explained how elements from Japanese spirituality, folk belief, and later Kabuki plays such as the "Tôkaidô yotsuya kaidan" (1825) evolve into popular ghost and horror movie elements and how female characters like Sadako from "Ringu" (J 1998, Hollywood adaptation "The Ring" in 2002), through the same iconography of the female, become vengeful ghosts.

As described by Dr. des. Natalie Böhler (University of Zurich), the aura of ghostliness can be described not only in terms of uncanny feelings provoked by an embodied ghost (i.e. the style of the contemporary horror film genre), but also in terms of spiritual reminiscences accompanying the transition between life, death, and reincarnation. She presented a dream-sequence from the Thai movie "Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives" (2010), a film directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul that alludes to the 2010 riots in Bangkok. In a short screening, the audience experienced the voice of Boonmee who was at the brink of death, his utterances mingling with visions of his past and future. This paper led to a discussion about where the state of reminiscence ends and ghostliness begins. Marie Laureillard (Université Lumière Lyon) pointed out in her paper on ghostly visions from the movie "What Time is it There?" (2001, by the Taiwanese director Tsai Ming-Liang) that not only physical objects or people but also time itself can be haunted and thus create an overlapping, imaginary space which the living and the dead are shown to inhabit together without really having a chance to meet.

Circumventing censorship

In the Philippine horror cinema, the relation between time and ghostliness is also visible as a form of temporal

translation similar to what Bliss Cua Lim (University of California, Irvine) described in her talk on the monstrous, viscera-sucking Aswang figure. This character's supernatural agency is reformulated in modern secular terms and hints at a fantasy of a singular national time, emphasizing shifting temporalities of transnational reception. In addition to these aspects of time and space, the second panel on "Spectral Kinship" not only focused on the questions of why and how ghostly representations are actually bound to the world of the living,

Where does the state of reminiscence end and ghostliness begin?

but also how ghosts function as media for expressing views on social taboos and political events that might otherwise be subject to regional censorship laws.

Along these lines, in the first part of the panel during a talk on female ghosts in Indonesian horror films, Laura Coppens (URPP Asia and Europe, Zurich) introduced the spirit of the Pochong: a Muslim ghost that seeks revenge on behalf of raped virgins and who in the last decade has been transformed from a male spirit into a female one. Furthermore, Arnika Fuhrmann (University of Chicago) explored how in "Tropical Malady" (Thailand 2004) the director Apichatpong Weerasethakul uses a tiger spirit to hint at the way homosexuality ambivalently haunts both the political and aesthetic present in Thailand. Jessica Imbach (University of Zurich) analyzed the use of traditional Chinese operatic figures like the exorcist Zhong Kui and exorcist puppets in Yu Xiaoyang's movie "The Shore of Mist" (1992/3). She offered insights into the connections between Chinese concepts of theatricality and the spiritual world and indicated how the film im-

plicitly engages with the trauma of the cultural revolution through these "stubbornly anachronistic" figures.

Spirits and technological progress

Broadening the discussion of ghostly visions' cultural moulding, the third panel "Global Gothic," dealt with the impact of Western gothic narratives on Asian horror movies and the growing transculturalism in contemporary Asian cinematic ghost iconography. Relatedly, Dr. Katarzyna Ancuta (University of Bangkok) illustrated how the change in function and appearance of traditional Thai spirits as terrifying punishers and caring protectors through karmic retribution, redemption, and repetition is not only a matter of globalization but also of the technological progress visible in ghostly appearances through TV-screens, mobile phones, and other high-tech goods. This dehumanization of the ghost is further promoted by improvements in cinematic technology. For example, the late 1970's appearances of ghosts as masked humans are replaced by 3-D computer animation. This improvement creates space for mingling spirits of local folk belief with the monstrous beings from Western Gothic movies, purposely awakening an allusion or even a *déjà vu* experience in the mind of the viewer. This phenomenon of "cinematic haunting" is also prominent in the Japanese horror movie "Cure" (1997, by Kurosawa Kiyoshi), which, as Dr. Kayo Adachi-Rabe (Humboldt University of Berlin) explains, is based not on Japanese ghosts but rather on Western interpretations like those of director Carl Theodor Dreyer. Kurosawa therefore does not visualize actual ghosts but a kind of hypnosis, where ghosts function metaphorically as a kind of spirituality.

1 See also Jessica Imbach's review of this workshop at: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=35223>

Encouraging Encounters

At the multidisciplinary Doctoral Program Asia and Europe, transcultural research and discussions alike are shaped by the variety of ideas, concepts and disciplines among its participants. In addition to offering glimpses of their individual backgrounds, doctoral candidates talk about their current alma mater. Their experiences and expectations reveal what renders the program special to them.

Eliza Isabaeva

At the University of Zurich's University Research Priority Program (URPP) Asia and Europe and its multidisciplinary Doctoral Program research between Asia and Europe finds its place. Uniting various departments and teaching staff, the URPP proves to be a unique platform for both graduate and post-graduate students from different countries and with different academic backgrounds and interests in Asia and Europe.

What do the URPP doctoral candidates think about their current alma mater? Justyna Jaguścik, a graduate student in Chinese studies, first came to Switzerland with a 6-month scholarship and spent her time at the Department of Chinese Studies of the University of Zurich. She recalled those times with admiration, saying how deeply impressed she was by resources such as the library and academic supervision. In Poland, her native country, she had studied social sciences—sociology and gender studies, to be precise—along with Chinese studies. At the URPP she saw the possibility to combine the topics and fields that interest her the most.

Methodological diversity

Aliya Khawari, a political science student, likewise acknowledged her interdisciplinary background that pre-

pared her well for her graduate studies at the URPP Asia and Europe. In Pakistan she had covered public policy, public administration, management, accounting and statistics. In Germany, where she moved in 2000, she studied European studies taking courses in sociology, law, politics and economics. Working mainly with qualitative research methods, she was glad to be supervised by a professor who is more interested in working with quantitative data. "For someone who wants a mix of both methods, it is a perfect platform," she says. When Aliya's professor moved to the University of Zurich, she recommended that Aliya apply for the URPP, which is known for its interdisciplinary program. After completing the steps of the application process, Aliya was accepted into the Doctoral Program Asia and Europe.

Good luck was also on the side of Philipp Hetmanczyk, a doctoral candidate in both study of religions and Chinese studies, who by chance discovered an opening at the URPP Asia

and Europe and applied for the position. He said he gave his best in order to get this position; after all, he had spent a year after his MA studies at the University of Leipzig writing and elaborating his proposal for a doctoral thesis.

An ongoing dialogue

But what makes the URPP Asia and Europe special to these doctoral candidates? All three unequivocally

"You should learn to sort out what is relevant and important for your topic from what is less relevant and important."

Philipp Hetmanczyk

agreed that the interdisciplinary program of the URPP is what accounts for its uniqueness. The Students describe it as an enriching experience to encounter different ideas and perceptions from different fields, professors, and students. "I did not want a research position where I would be on my own. I wanted to have the possibility to get into a dialogue with other



Aliya Khawari appreciates the methodological variety at the URPP Asia and Europe.

doctoral candidates, to get to know other theoretical approaches and perspectives. And I think I have broadened my horizon immensely,” stated Philipp. Justyna emphasized the practicality of working together and cooperating across academic borders and combining different methodologies. And finally Aliya reminded us about a “booming” student life filled with numerous activities such as student working groups, colloquiums, seminars, conferences and lectures, all of which raise interesting questions, open people’s eyes, and make people think.

Don’t lose your own point of view

Having listened to all these responses, another question arose: How do doctoral candidates manage to keep up with their studies? Laughing, they pointed out that too many extra-curricular activities can pose a certain danger. On the one hand, being engaged in many activities is good and useful; but on the other hand, these very activities can also result in a lack of time for students’ main work—reading for and writing their dissertations. Accordingly, good organization, discipline, responsibility, and time management are of utmost importance when one sets a goal to pursue graduate studies.



Justyna Jaguścik is impressed by resources such as the library and academic supervision.

Although the interdisciplinary nature of the URPP is its definite advantage, it can also be a challenge. What should a student do when he or she receives feedback from different academic fields? How can students incorporate it into a research project? Philipp gave a good tip: “You should learn to sort out what is relevant and important for your topic from what is less relevant and important.” Nevertheless, being aware of other points of view is never bad.

The students agreed that generous financial support was very much appreciated. Not having to look for a job

greatly eases students’ lives and enables more time for both their thesis and their graduate studies. According to Aliya, “that’s a big benefit that we do not have to look for funds and apply; you save a lot of time and effort.”

Across academic borders

Friendly colleagues are also one of the URPP’s many strengths that contribute to a pleasant working atmosphere through people’s interaction with one another. The students enjoy each other’s company both in and outside of the institute.

How do the URPP doctoral candidates feel about the larger world? Being confident that the knowledge and practical experiences gained at the URPP will help them in their future careers, they want to strengthen the bridge between Asia and Europe by being a part of and playing key roles in cultural corporations as well as international and developmental organizations. They also do not exclude the possibility of deepening their knowledge by pursuing interesting post-doctoral research projects and laying groundwork for their academic careers.



Philipp Hetmanczyk discovered by chance an opening at the URPP Asia and Europe.

For further information on the Doctoral Program Asia and Europe, please see www.asien-undeuropa.uzh.ch/teaching.html

Visiting Fellows

Prof. Jun'ichi Isomae (International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto) was a visiting scholar at the URPP Asia and Europe in the Fall 2011 semester. His research emphasizes religious discourse in early-modern and modern Japan as well as Japanese mythology. Recently, he published both *Japanese Mythology: Hermeneutics on Scripture* (2010) and *Overcoming Modernity: East Asian Community and the Kyoto School* (2011, co-edited with Naoki Sakai).

Dr. Jakob De Roover was a visiting scholar at the URPP Asia and Europe from October to November 2011. His research focuses on the development of liberal-democratic ideas about secularization and religious tolerance in modern Europe as well as their implementation in colonial and postcolonial India. Together with S.N. Balagangadhara, he has written multiple essays on these topics. Jakob De Roover is a member of the research group Comparative Science of Cultures at Ghent University.

New Staff Member

Dr. Fabian Schäfer (Japanese Studies) took up the position of a senior teaching and research associate and coordinator of Research Field 3: *Norms and Social Order(s)* in February 2012. In 2008 Dr. Schäfer received his doctorate at the University of Leipzig with his work on *The Origins of Media and Communication Studies in Prewar Japan: Early Theoretical Approaches to the Press, Journalism and Public Opinion, 1920–1937*. He was a fellow of the Japan Foundation at the Tokyo University, a postdoctoral-fellow at the University of Leiden, and worked as a lecturer at the University of Leipzig from 2005 to 2012.

News

Katajun Amirpur (URPP Asia and Europe/Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies) was appointed to the W3 Professorship for “Islamische Studien/Islamische Theologie” at the University of Hamburg on October 1, 2011.

Norman Backhaus (Geography/URPP Asia and Europe) was appointed as an adjunct professor of the Faculty of Science at the University of Zurich.

Benedikt Korf (Geography/URPP Asia and Europe) received the 2011 KfW Exzellenzpreis für praxisrelevante Entwicklungsforschung for his investigation of the role of hierarchical structures in Sri Lanka. He pursued this topic together with Pia Hollenbach (Geography/URPP Asia and Europe).

Raji C. Steineck and **Thomas Hüllelein** (both Japanese Studies/URPP Asia and Europe) have received support from the Swiss National Science Foundation for a three-year research project entitled “Die Normative Wirkung des Gesundheitsbegriffs von der Revision des Eugenik-Schutzgesetzes 1995 bis zum Gesundheitsförderungsgesetz 2007.”

Seven new **doctoral candidates** and four new **postdocs** took up their research at the URPP at the beginning of the Fall semester. The doctoral candidates pursue their doctorates within the framework of URPP Asia and Europe's doctoral program.

Henning Trüper (History/URPP Asia and Europe) was awarded a two-year Marie-Curie Fellowship from the European Union. He started his research at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris in February 2012.

Samir Boulos (Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies/URPP Asia and Europe), is a visiting fellow at the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies for the academic

year 2011/2012 thanks to the Swiss National Science Foundation's Fellowship for Prospective Researchers.

The film “Children of Srikandi,” which **Laura Coppens** (URPP Asia and Europe/Social and Cultural Anthropology) filmed with her co-directors as part of her dissertation project, had its world premiere at the 62nd Berlin International Film Festival 2012 in the section “Panorama Dokumente.” Furthermore, this film is among those being considered for the 26th Teddy Award, the world's most prestigious prize for Queer Film.

Aliya Khawari (Political Science/URPP Asia and Europe) was awarded a one-year Marie Heim-Vögtlin fellowship from the Swiss National Science Foundation. The fellowship is for her dissertation project “The Political Economy of Microfinance: Case Studies of MFIs in India and Pakistan.”

Nicolas Kosmatopoulos (Social and Cultural Anthropology/URPP Asia and Europe) was awarded a Fellowship for Prospective Researchers from the Swiss National Science Foundation, enabling him a year of research in the Department of Anthropology of Columbia University, New York.

Claudia Nef-Saluz (Social and Cultural Anthropology/URPP Asia and Europe) was awarded the University of Zurich's Forschungskredit, effective December 1, 2011, as a one-year fellowship for the completion of her dissertation “Contemporary Forms of Islamic Student Activism in Indonesia.”

Dilyara Suleymanova (Social and Cultural Anthropology/URPP Asia and Europe) began work on January 1, 2012 as a teaching and research associate in the University of Zurich's Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology.

Events 2012

March 13, 2012, 18:30–20:00, Public Panel Discussion

Ein Jahr nach Fukushima – Die Debatte zu Atomenergie in Asien und Europa

with Prof. Dr. David Chiavacci, Dr. Simona Grano, PD Dr. Patrick Kupper, Prof. Dr. Shalini Randeria and Dr. Fabian Schäfer
Rämistrasse 71, Room KOL F-118, 8006 Zürich

March 22, 2012, 18:15–20:00, Public Guest Lecture

Von der Schonung zur Nächstenliebe: Begriffsgeschichtliche Variationen der Zuneigung

Dr. Christian Schwermann, University of Bonn
Institute of East Asian Studies, Zürichbergstrasse 4, Room ZUB 416, 8032 Zürich
Organized by the Institute of East Asian Studies, in cooperation with the URPP Asia and Europe

March 30–31, 2012, 9:00–17:00
Graduate Student Workshop

Asian Postmodernities and their Legacies

Institute of East Asian Studies, Zürichbergstrasse 4, Rooms 416 & 410, 8032 Zürich
Organized by the URPP Asia and Europe, in cooperation with the Institute of East Asian Studies, Department of Chinese Studies
Registration required: justynaa.jaguscik@uzh.ch

April 18, 2012, 14:00–15:30, Public Guest Lecture

Recht und Schrift in der altorientalischen Welt

Prof. em. Dr. Dr. Jan Assmann, University of Konstanz
Faculty of Theology, Kirchgasse 9, Room KIR 200, 8001 Zürich
Organized by the Faculty of Theology, in cooperation with the URPP Asia and Europe

April 25, 2012, 18:15–19:45, Public Guest Lecture

Koranexegese als politische Theologie: Türkische Vordenker im Ringen um eine islamische Gesellschaft

Dr. phil. Dr. theol. habil. Felix Körner SJ, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rom
Karl Schmid-Strasse 4, Room KO2 F 174, 8006 Zürich
Organized by the Oriental Institute, in cooperation with the URPP Asia and Europe

April 29, 2012, 11:00–12:00
Public Literature Reading

Liaozhai – Gedichte, Essays, Erzählungen, gelesen auf Kantonesisch und Deutsch/Englisch

Von und mit dem Hongkonger Lyriker Leung Ping-kwan
Einführung und Kommentar: Prof. Dr. Andrea Riemenschneider
Kantonesisch: Prof. Dr. Leung Ping-kwan
Deutsch/Englisch: Prof. Dr. Andrea Riemenschneider, Helen Wallimann
Museum Rietberg Zürich, Vortragssaal Parkvilla
Rieter, Gablerstrasse 15, 8002 Zürich
No entrance fee
Jointly organized by the URPP Asia and Europe and the Museum Rietberg Zurich

May 11, 2012, Workshop: 10:00–17:00, Public Panel
Diskussion: 18:30–20:30

Mao – Mao Bibel – Mao Fieber: Maoismen in China und Europa

Registration for the workshop required until May 7, 2012, with: wernsdoerfer@vmz.uzh.ch
Ethnographic Museum, Pelikanstrasse 40, 8001 Zürich
Organized by the Ethnographic Museum, in cooperation with the URPP Asia and Europe

May 21, 2012, Workshop, 10:00–12:00

Shaping Spaces in Asia and Europe: Global Places and Local Practices

with Prof. Dr. Saskia Sassen, Columbia University, New York
Location to be announced
Registration required: olga.rix-isakov@uzh.ch

May 21, 2012, Public Lecture, 18:15–20:00

Expulsions: Inequality's Next Frontier

Prof. Dr. Saskia Sassen, Columbia University, New York
Location to be announced

June 21–23, 2012, International Conference

Tertium datur: Das Dritte in der Geschichte (1450–1850)

Rämistrasse 71, Room KOL E-13, 8006 Zürich
Organized by the History Department at the University of Zurich, in cooperation with the URPP Asia and Europe and the NCCR Mediality

June 25–27, 2012, Summer School

Canonical Processes and the Development of Noncanonical Traditions

Swiss Youth and Education Centre, Einsiedeln
Organized by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Zurich, in cooperation with the joint degree Master's program Antikes Judentum, University of Zurich and University of Bern, and the URPP Asia and Europe

July 6, 2012, Workshop

Sor-hoon Tan's *Confucian Democracy*: Author Meets Critics

Renmin University of China, Beijing
Jointly organized by the School of Philosophy, Renmin University of China and the URPP Asia and Europe

September 20–21, 2012, International Workshop

Biography Afield in Asia and Europe

URPP Asia and Europe, Room WIE F 07, Wiesenstrasse 7–9, 8008 Zürich

September 12–15, 2012, International Conference

Transcultural Perspectives on Late Medieval and Early Modern Slavery in the Mediterranean

Rämistrasse 69, Room SOC 1-106, 8001 Zürich
Organized by the History Department at the University of Zurich, in cooperation with the SOAS, London, the Free University, Berlin, the URPP Asia and Europe, and the Oriental Institute at the University of Zurich

November 1–3, 2012

Annual Conference of the URPP Asia and Europe

Concepts of Religion between Asia and Europe

Location to be announced

Public Lecture Series

Circulating Norms— Human Rights and Gender in a Globalized World

Norms and conceptions of order circulate along with people, goods and money in a globalized world. Transnational human and women's rights are of great significance in this context. Despite their claim to universal validity, such norms have not only a concrete historical origin, but also a specific institutional form as legal-political standards. Their circulation and implementation at a variety of scales stretching from the supranational to the local are mediated by several actors ranging from supranational institutions to nation-state actors and from transnational NGOs to local grassroots initiatives.

Public Lecture Series

March 20, 2012, 18:15–20:00

Normative Frameworks for Women's Rights and their Circulation at the International Level.

Prof. Dr. Deniz Kandiyoti, School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London
Karl Schmid-Strasse 4, Room KO2 F-152, 8006 Zürich

May 15, 2012, 18:15–20:00

Making International Women's Rights Local: The Vernacularization of Global Norms.

Prof. Dr. Sally Engle Merry, Department of Anthropology, New York University
Karl Schmid-Strasse 4, Room KO2 F-152, 8006 Zürich

May 29, 2012, 18:15–20:00

Gleichheit auf Reisen / Equality on the Road: Konflikte um Grund- und Menschenrechte

Prof. Dr. Susanne Baer, Faculty of Law, Humboldt University, Berlin
Karl Schmid-Strasse 4, Room KO2 F-152, 8006 Zürich

Seminar for PhD Students

with Prof. Dr. Deniz Kandiyoti, Prof. Dr. Sally Engle Merry and Prof. Dr. Susanne Baer

Coordination: Dr. Fabian Schäfer

Dates:

February 29, 2012: 9:00–10:30

March 21, May 16, May 30, 2012: 9:00–12:00

Wiesenstrasse 7/9, 1. Floor, Room WIE F-07, 8008 Zürich

Registration required: olga.rix-isakov@uzh.ch