

fate

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INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM
for Research in the Humanities

Schicksal, Freiheit und Prognose. Bewältigungsstrategien in Ostasien und Europa



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Ten Years of Research on Fate, Freedom, and Prognostication

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Fate, Freedom and Prognostication. Strategies for Coping with the Future in East Asia and Europe

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INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM
for Research in the Humanities



INTERNATIONALES KOLLEG
für Geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung

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'Käte Hamburger Center (KHC) – Advanced Study in the Humanities'

is the official name of the ten 'International Consortia for Research in the Humanities' that are funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research. We are therefore sometimes referring to the 'IKGF' (Internationales Kolleg für Geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung) as KHC in our publications.

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Dear Readers,

With this 17th issue of our newsletter, *fate*, we report on the IKGF's activities during the winter term 2018/2019. In this issue, we also take a moment to look back at our ten years of research on fate, freedom, and prognostication. In his editorial, IKGF Director Professor Michael Lackner describes what our "project" has achieved so far and how we aim to continue to shape the field of prognostication studies in the near future. With our focus article, you may glance behind the scenes as we share with you several photos and a selection of reflections by our current and fellow IKGF team members.

Like previous issues, this edition of *fate* contains summaries of talks presented by our guests, visiting fellows, and staff during the IKGF Lecture Series. Furthermore, a short essay by Matthias Heiduk informs us about the final workshop held by the editors of the "Prognostication in Medieval European and Mediterranean Societies" handbook and the state of this ambitious project.

We sincerely hope that you will enjoy reading our newsletter and welcome your suggestions! In these times of Coronavirus, when the future seems even more uncertain than ever, may fate smile upon you!

Dr. Rolf Scheuermann
(Research Coordinator)

Title page: Astrologer's box, Collection Marc Kalinowski
(Photo: Georg Janßen, Germanisches Nationalmuseum)

Ten Years of Research on Fate, Freedom, and Prognostication



Prof. Dr. Michael Lackner, director of the IKGF

After more than ten years of research, it is time for a retrospective view. Over the past decade, the IKGF has organized 65 conferences and workshops; we are associated with 382 monographs and articles written by both visiting scholars and permanent staff and have captured numerous events, interviews and teaching materials on 268 videos. The outreach of our studies was also amplified by a bibliography containing 10,778 entries that is highly sought after amongst international scholars. A book series and journal (both with Brill publishers) will contribute to the continuity of our research.

Evoking continuity implies prospects for the future.

People in the fields of science management and administration often describe endeavors like ours in terms of a "project"; and, according to this logic, a "project's" initial targets should be fully met within a given time, the sooner the better. However, scholars in the humanities think along different timelines: in 2015 and 2018, two independent evaluations of the Faculty of Letters (*Philosophische Fakultät und Fachbereich*

Theologie der Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg) were conducted by international committees and their statements concerning the IKGF offer strikingly similar perspectives. The 2018 report ("Assessment of the Faculty's Research Potential") emphasizes the need for consolidation on a permanent basis because the IKGF "with its immense productivity (...) reflects the Faculty's potential to overcome Eurocentric perspectives." Moreover, the 2015 report ("Evaluation of the Faculty Structure") also opted for long-term stabilization, adding: "According to the evaluation panel, the IKGF's impact both on national and international research is exceptionally high. (...) The impact on Sinology and across China history fields is stupendous. With regard to European medieval studies, the IKGF stimulated debates on Europe as a region and a productive review of the impact of Eurocentric assumptions on philological and historical methodology, intellectual traditions and historiography. The IKGF outperformed the funding scheme's expectations in several instances: disciplinarily quite distant fields of expertise have been rewired and innovative perspectives are developing in new forms of cooperation. Cross-disciplinary communities have been formed and advanced original methods. The so-called 'Kleine Fächer' are markedly reinforced. The cooperation partners are exceptionally well matched."

Both assessments underline the enduring importance of the IKGF's research topic and proffer several suggestions for enhancing our research scope, such as, for instance, 1) taking into account more civilizations and 2) expanding our research to include the current forms of prediction and forecasting. Following the first piece of advice, we linked up with an increasing number of scholars from various disciplines (e.g. African Studies, Mesoamerican Studies, European Early Modern Studies) and, regarding the second suggestion, we organized a conference on present-day prediction with participants from the fields of meteorology, climatology, empirical electoral research, psychology, genetics, health care, and insurance research. Notwithstanding the manifold differences between premodern and modern methods of prediction, several continuities can be observed: the unavoidable role of human (!) intuition in the interpretation of data, the "divinatory paradigm" (Carlo Ginzburg) that is still present even when composing and understanding algorithms (Elena Esposito), and the ethical responsibility of the experts vis-à-vis their clients and the public sphere.

The assessments mentioned above as well as our recent activities testify to the overarching impact of prognostication studies and the need to establish them on an even broader basis in the future. In order to prepare the theoretical terrain for cross-cultural studies of prognostication in ancient and modern times, we will organize, for the winter term 2020, a workshop with leading experts in the field of sociology and technology assessment, computational sciences, social

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psychology, and forensic medicine scholars – with the title (“Vorausschauen, Vorausdenken, Vorausberechnen”), “Critical Reflections on the Functions of Prediction in Modern Societies.”

Another outreach approach conceptualized by the IKGf is an exhibition that will launch on December 2, 2020 (“Zeichen der Zukunft,” *Signs of the Future*, with the Chinese title 此命當何). For the first time in its long history, the Germanic National Museum in Nuremberg (*Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg*) will host treasures from a non-European civilization: in a dialogical arrangement, a display of the material culture of divination shall provide evidence of the commonalities and differences between mantic practices in the Far East and Europe. Objects from the collection of the Institute of History and Philology of Academia Sinica, the National Museum of Taiwan History, the Lanyang Museum, and private collections will be paired with their European counterparts, and it is hoped that visitors will be astonished to see physiognomy and palm-reading charts, calendars and almanacs for choosing auspicious days, dream books, the methods for casting lots, and numerous other techniques designed to help people cope with the future and its contingencies. There undoubtedly exists a good deal of

discrepancy between these methods and not all of them can be “matched” appropriately and accurately (e.g. *fengshui* is unknown in Europe, and there are only a few traces of Ptolemaic astrology in China), but the parallels in terms of both systematic elaboration and interpretation are simply overwhelming.

It goes without saying that this exhibition is a result of the long-standing cooperation between scholars in Chinese Studies and experts in European history, and we are looking forward to celebrating this milestone in cross-disciplinary research.

Several years ago, a close colleague from Fudan University, Shanghai, told me: “It is of no importance whether you believe in predictions – traditional or modern ones – or not: it is simply fun (好玩) to study their intrinsic architecture and design, their agency, their reception and their consequences in terms of verification or falsification.” I sincerely hope that we will continue to have a lot of fun during our study of prognostication.

Prof. Dr. Michael Lackner
(IKGF, Director)

FOCUS

The IKGF behind the Scenes

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the IKGF in 2019, we wished to give our directors and staff – both past and present – an opportunity to reflect on the time they spent in Erlangen and the days that lie ahead. We hope that this intellectually inspiring environment, which all of us have come to cherish over the years, will continue to thrive in the future!

Michael Lackner

In 2022, it is hoped that the IKGF will...

...continue to serve the international community as a hub for scholarly exchange on “Fate, Freedom, and Prognostication.” This topic has gained considerable momentum, not only because of one or more imminent crises, but also because prediction is a constant in human life, in both traditional and modern societies. Relying on over a decade of research, we are not only able to meet the challenges associated with the present-day, “science-based” forms of prognostication and their relationship with planning, but are also in



Opening Ceremony of the International Consortium 2009 (Photo: IKGF)

a position to evaluate the ethical dimension of any kind of forecasting in the crucial moment of its verification. I am increasingly convinced of the need for a research institution dealing with “Critical studies on Prognostication” to be established on a permanent basis.

Klaus Herbers

Before the IKGF started...

...the study of “Fate, Freedom and Prognostication” was a marginal field of research within the realm of Medieval History. To bring it to the forefront, the different scattered departures that existed had to be brought together. This included, particularly, the fields of apocalypticism, prophecy, but also hagiography, astrology and the calendar sciences. The IKGF was designed to provide the ideal platform for accomplishing this task, especially as the many scholars working on these topics came from a range of different countries. The first few years of academic work indicated that far more research and knowledge were available and could be mobilized. We were also able to take up the initiatives that had been developed at the preparatory stage, which led to the creation of synthetic handbooks during the second funding phase, which have not only documented the path that we have travelled, but also indicated potential routes for future research.

Matthias Schumann

Before I started working at the IKGF...

... I would never have thought that Erlangen could be so quiet in the evenings. Once an endless stream of vehicles has exited the Siemens premises around 4pm, few people remain in the area of Hartmannstraße. Fortunately, there is always the companionship of colleagues and fellows as well as the cleaning personnel roaming the floors of the IKGF late in the evening. ;-)



Long Night of the Sciences 2015 (Photo: IKGF)



Ceremony to mark the new funding period 2015 (Photo: IKGF)

Petra Hahm

For me, the personal encounters within the IKGF family are a sustainable enrichment of my life.

Matthias Heiduk

What I like most about the IKGF...

...is the international and interdisciplinary environment for discussion and vivid exchange.

Hans-Christian Lehner

The tenth anniversary of the IKGF – naturally, such a long time contains a great deal of memories. In retrospect, it was particularly the first funding phase that held many special moments. This was surely due to a combination of the magic of a fresh beginning, the beautiful site of the “blue house,” the splendid community of young, optimistic fellows, and the vision that, even in academia, serious

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results originate all the better in a pleasant atmosphere. In this regard, credit appertains to Esther-Maria Guggenmos, who achieved this superbly. Highlights of the first five IKGF years were the annual excursions of staff and visiting fellows to Munich, Regensburg, Bamberg, Rothenburg, as well as the China Academic Visits. A personal favourite was an IKGF-skiing trip to Garmisch, where at one point our bus got stuck in the snow, and several distinguished professors pushed as hard as they could to get it back on the road. The atmosphere that developed through such occurrences was the basis for many successful academic events in Erlangen and beyond. Against this background, the second funding period was able to adopt a different approach and focus more on the concrete results of our research, which are truly impressive.

Yung-Yung Chang

After working just a few months at the IKGF...

...I noticed that the center is like a 'big corporation,' not because of the profit it can garner but because of the fruitful resources it possesses. Like a research hub, the IKGF has attracted many international scholars and researchers to exchange innovative ideas and carry out original projects. The partnerships and cooperation that the IKGF has developed and cultivated are not only cross-border but also cross-discipline. The conferences, workshops, lectures and exhibitions organized by the IKGF have facilitated extensive communication between academia and society. Among others, I most appreciate the internal training and cultivation of a friendly working environment. After years of efforts and development, the IKGF is now a responsible, sustainable academic institute.



China Academic Visit 2013 (Photo: IKGF)



Otto the Snowman, Dr. Guggenmos, and Sophia Katz in front of the Blue House 2013 (Photo: IKGF)

Fabrizio Pregadio

Having spent several years in Erlangen...

...I can say that the IKGF provides an ideal research environment. From the beginning, the project has attracted many of the best scholars worldwide, working in a large number of disciplines. The continuous exchange of information, views, and research methods — through lectures, colloquia, text readings, and publications, but also in more informal settings — is the most valuable aspect of this project. It was, for me, a pleasant surprise to discover this place when I arrived in Erlangen way back in 2011, and I soon came to understand how difficult it would be to leave. Almost nine years later, I'm writing this note from my office at the IKGF, which proves that I was right.

Lisa Walleit

Working at the IKGF had an impact on my...

...understanding of how important atmosphere, working environment and teamwork are in creating an output of excellent science. Both the collegial cooperation of the staff members and the stimulating exchange of and with scientists from all over the world — either as visiting fellows or during workshops and conferences — has enabled the coalescence of history, sinology and other humanities, enriching my research with a wide range of fascinating topics.

Esther-Maria Guggenmos

After more than ten years of research and work at and with the IKGF...

...— first as a research coordinator, later representing Prof. Lackner as deputy chair of sinology and, since 2018, as a visiting fellow at the IKGF) — I can say without hesitation that the consortium has been an essential element of my professional path. This fills me with true gratitude. As a young postdoc, I was allowed to immerse myself in an international *fluidum* of research exchange at the highest intellectual level. My academic work would have been impossible without this vibrant communication during personal exchanges, conferences, and workshops. My habilitation on the relationship between Buddhism and divination grew in this context and came to a fruitful completion. Last but not least, friendships have developed that will accompany me throughout my life. For this, I wish to thank everyone at the IKGF, our director Michael Lackner, but also our university and our generous donor, the BMBF. With the IKGF, the German Ministry of Research and Education has created a unique format for research in the humanities, which deservedly enjoys the highest recognition within the international research community.

Rolf Scheuermann

I am particularly proud...

...to have worked with basically each and every individual who has spent time at the IKGF. The work atmosphere here is highly stimulating and often feels a bit like speed-dating for academics. Unfortunately, the visiting scholars are usually with us for only a short period of time. At times, it is also slightly humbling to find yourself surrounded by so many bright individuals who are specialists in their respective fields. To be honest, Erlangen has been an adventure for me right from the start and I am



Fate, Longevity, and Immortality: Europe – Islam – Asia, International Conference 2016 (Photo: IKGF)



Reception following the book launch of 'Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China,' ed. by Donald Harper and Marc Kalinowski 2018 (Photo: IKGF)

unsure whether I truly understood what I was signing up for. As a Tibetologist, I was thrilled that, on my first day working at the IKGF, a Tibetan Lama arrived at the Consortium for a short stay. In the context of the Tibetan prognostic tradition, this could be interpreted as an auspicious coincidence (*rten 'grel*) and I am delighted by the fact that, to date, Tibetan Studies have continuously contributed to the IKGF's activities in many different ways.

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Alanah Marx

At the IKGF, it is always good...

...to be prepared for the unexpected. One day, you might find yourself acting as a PA to a documentary production and the next you might be descaling the entire stock of kettles and pots in the IKGF's kitchen. The extent of limescale in these pots led me to believe that I could apply some sort of divination technique to them.

Philipp Hünnebeck

The IKGF is where I had the opportunity...

...to meet many sinologists whose books I had read during my studies and whom I thought it unlikely ever to meet in person. Moreover, it is the place where I learned about the immense value of direct intellectual exchange regarding the creative aspects of research in the humanities – be it during a reading session, workshop, talk, conference or informal tea-time.

Max Kruse

The IKGF, beyond teatime and barbeques, means working from home but being in the office at the same time. It's like a big family with an intellectually inspiring atmosphere, where a chat in the kitchen or on the corridor can provide the seed for great ideas to grow.

Eric Schlager

Working at the IKGF...

...while studying at the FAU has provided me with supportive, tolerant colleagues in a highly academic environment. I have been encouraged to participate in (and not merely assist with) several research projects. From the first day, I had a chance to take a look behind the scenes and experience what daily intellectual work in the Humanities looks like. Fortunately, I could make use of my language skills – above all, in Latin and Spanish – during the process of collecting and translating medieval sources that deal with the predictability of future events.

Leonie Sterzel

The most rewarding experience at the IKGF was...

...meeting and listening to many interesting people with very different fields of expertise. I've learned so many new things which might be helpful in the future.



Annual summer BBQ 2019 (Photo: IKGF)



Excursion to the Haus der Kunst, Munich 2010 (Photo: IKGF)



Oracle bone cracking experiment, 2012 (Photo: IKGF)

Lena Sahaikewitsch

Working at the IKGF has helped me...

...to realize how the smallest detail can change the view from every perspective.

Masami Hirohata

I enjoy every design project at the IKGF. Each request challenges me to create new optic vocabulary. Whether the *fate* newsletter, a flyer, a poster or any graphic inquiry, it is my pleasure to contribute to finding a visual solution in the right format on time. When there is no image, then I try to obtain essential information, conceptualize the idea and materialize it through a variety of images. This is the most difficult but exciting creative process for me.

LECTURE SERIES

Tuesday Evenings 6:15 - 7:45 p.m.

During the semester, the IKGF holds a lecture series at which the visiting fellows are given the opportunity to present results of their research and invited guests lecture on the topic of the consortium from the perspective of their respective expertise. In the following the presenters of the past summer semester 2018 summarize their contributions. The lectures of the winter semester 2018/19 will be part of the next issue of *fate*.

LECTURE SERIES WS 2018/2019

Overview of the lectures in the winter semester 2018/2019

16.10.2018: The Future of Human Rights at Stake: Responding to Recent Dystopias

Heiner Bielefeldt (*Human Rights and Human Rights Politics, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg*)

30.10.2018: Caught in Destiny: The Propagation of the Notion of Fate in Contemporary Taiwan

Stéphanie Homola (*Ethnology, Elite Master's Programme "Standards of Decision-Making Across Cultures," Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg*)

13.11.2018: On Short Notice and in the Long Term: Conceptualizing Future in Late Medieval Visual Art

Daniela Wagner (*Art History, University of Tübingen*)

20.11.2018: Between After Death and Afterlife: Conceptions of the Time Between Individual Death and the Day of Resurrection in Christianity and Islam

Katja Thörner (*Oriental Philology and Islamic Studies, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg*)

27.11.2018: Revelation, the Promulgation of Christ, and Prophecy: The Past as Memory of the Future in Rupert of Deutz

Miriam Czock (*History of the Middle Ages, University of Duisburg-Essen; IKGF Visiting Fellow*)

04.12.2018: Decision-Making between Path Dependencies and Freedom of Choice: Ethical Reasoning in Public Policy Advising

Sven Grundmann (*Political Sciences, Elite Master's Programme "Standards of Decision-Making Across Cultures," Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg*)

11.12.2018: A Different Kind of Vision? Agency and Genre in Late Antique and Medieval Journeys to the Afterlife

Nicole Volmering (*Irish and Celtic Languages, Trinity College Dublin; IKGF Visiting Fellow*)

18.12.2018: Empire and Asceticism: On the Role of the End Times in Late Antique Christian Historiography

Veronika Wieser (*History of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna*)

08.01.2019: Securing the Past and Shaping the Future: The Strategic Deployment and Modus Operandi of Tibetan Prophecies

Per Kjeld Sørensen (*Tibetology, Leipzig University*)

15.01.2019: Fixing Foreign Sciences: On the Contingency of Knowledge and the Transformation of Epistemology of Science in Maoist China

Marc Matten (*Chinese Studies, Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg; IKGF Visiting Fellow*)

22.01.2019: The *Mirror of Ice* (Bingjian 冰鑑): A Manual of Chinese Physiognomy

Philipp Hünnebeck (*Chinese Studies, Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg*)

29.01.2019: Ragnarök: Prophecies and Notions of the End Time in Old Norse Religion

Thomas Krümpel (*Scandinavian Studies, Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg / Ludwig-Maximilian University Munich*)

05.02.2019: Archaeology of Osteopyromancy in Early China: New Discoveries and New Perspectives

Maria Khayutina (*Sinology, Ludwig-Maximilian University Munich; IKGF Visiting Fellow*)

The Future of Human Rights at Stake: Responding to Recent Dystopias

Heiner Bielefeldt (*Human Rights and Human Rights Politics, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg*)

While most of the contemporary discussions about the future of human rights focus on how the concept of human rights should develop in the face of the risk posed by new technologies in the internet era, this talk engaged with the question of whether there is a future for the concept at all. In the recent academic literature concerned with the topic, we can observe a wave of critical studies radically deconstructing universal human rights as a myth. One critic, Stephen Hopgood, argues that the project of universal human rights proved insufficiently powerful to transform the world as expected. His main charge against the human rights project is that it constitutes a manifestation of Western, anthropocentric hubris rather than an act of a visionary idealism. Under this line of reasoning, human rights merely replaced former acts of civilizing arrogance, such as the crusades in the Middle Ages or the civilizing mission of the colonial powers. In Hopgood's view, human rights appear to be a surrogate religion, created to fill the normative vacuum left in European culture by the death of God, as proclaimed by Nietzsche; or they are a civil religion of European descent, but — again — with a hubristic global aspiration.

This critique is not limited to the realm of scholarship but has striking parallels in reality. A clear indication of a crisis within the human rights project can be seen in, for example, the U.S. decision to withdraw from the UN Human Rights Council in June 2018, and the lack of reaction to this decision. Straightforward declarations of this kind could be positively interpreted as hailing the end of hypocrisy, but they also reveal an open cynicism.

Another aspect that contributes to the crisis of the human rights project originates from our attachment to the idea of "progress." The big narratives of the 19th century (Hegel, Marx, Comte) implied that progress is ingrained in the course of history. Even though a thorough disenchantment arose with those ideas in the 20th century, we remain, to some extent, under their influence. This influence is indicated by our belief that certain institutional developments should be irreversible — that, once established, they will last forever. In reality, however, not even the most significant developments in history are irreversible.

Taken together, the above suggests that the institutional dimension of the human rights project is currently under severe threat. However, the human rights project itself is not a very bureaucratic enterprise. The core message



Heiner Bielefeldt at the IKGF (Photo: IKGF)

is straightforward: equal dignity and equal freedom for all. The simplicity of this message makes it easily understandable to everyone around the globe, regardless of their level of education. Even though it may not be fully compatible with all cultural and religious traditions, it can resonate in various contexts and inspire change. Indeed, the concept of human rights — by definition — depends on the idea of shared ownership. Moreover, it has gained plausibility due to a noticeable tendency of pluralism both within as well as across societies which enables the negotiation of difference. Indeed, the human rights project depends on the free articulation of diversity, even if this includes beliefs or ideas that some may consider "heretic." Given that such articulation occurs in a variety of modes and languages, it requires intellectual curiosity and openness to various cultural contexts. The essence of the human rights projects, then, is the opposite of hubris — it is modesty. It should be focused on creating the conditions

under which people can speak freely for themselves — not on speaking on their behalf. This may be particularly difficult in countries in which human rights are not respected, where freedom of speech is limited. In addition, despite the institutional crisis within human rights, there are also success stories. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, for example, successfully linked international standards and national infrastructural development.

Institutions such as human rights depend on the ongoing commitment of many and cannot be left to professional administrators. The future development

of human rights calls for a specific kind of optimism: a modest anti-fatalism. There is no natural law dictating a positive turn of events, just as there is no law predicting the eventual destruction of human rights. Instead, they depend on our sense of responsibility.

(Marta Dziwer)

Caught in Destiny: The Propagation of the Notion of Fate in Contemporary Taiwan

Stéphanie Homola (*Ethnology, Elite Master's Programme "Standards of Decision-Making across Cultures," Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg*)

The language of fate permeates people's everyday world in Taiwan. During both informal conversations and formal divination consultations, when discussing personal crises and rumors about others' misfortunes, within gossip about neighbors and relatives and during intimate exchanges, the language of *mingyun* 命運 — generally translated as "fate" — is ever-present.

In this talk, I drew on extended fieldwork among fortune-tellers and their clients in the Taipei region (Taiwan) since 2007, to explore how the multiple configurations of *mingyun*'s "malleable fixity" are brought into being and actualized in people's everyday lives through this language. My argument was that, it is through a language of fate — in its multiple genres, registers, and qualities, each with specific contexts and effects — that the concept of *mingyun* emerges most potently as a tangible presence in people's lives, a force able to affect and inflect choices, events, and life-trajectories. By focusing on three distinct genres through which this language operates in social and intimate life — the language of rumors, the language of personal crisis, and the language of misfortune — I showed how the language of fate acquires traction and power by effectively "catching" those involved in its fated logics. Rather than constituting a mere "trope" — a typical lexical theme of biographical narratives — or a "second best" entry point into the ethnographic concept and experience of *mingyun*, I argue that the language of fate is the very material and substance of *mingyun*.

Coined by anthropologists working on witchcraft, "being caught" refers to "being bewitched." Drawing on the fact that, in many societies, fate and witchcraft are the two main methods employed to answer questions about contingency and chance, I explored how the language of witchcraft can

be compared in productive ways with the language of fate, arguing that the study of the notion of fate can benefit from the fieldwork and theoretical findings of witchcraft studies. The language of fate effectively catches those involved in its fated logics by requiring human participation, responsibility, decision — and even creation —, operating through the constitutive tension between fixity and motility that lies at the heart of the ethnographic concept of *mingyun*.



Stéphanie Homola at the IKGF (Photo: IKGF)

On Short Notice and in the Long Term: Conceptualizing Future in Late Medieval Visual Art

Daniela Wagner (Art History, University of Tübingen)



André Robin: Northern Rose Window (Detail), ca. 1451–54. Angers, Cathedral, Transept. Karine Boulanger: Les vitraux de la cathédrale d'Angers, Paris 2010 (Corpus vitrearum: France 3). Centre André Chastel (UMR8150), C. Gumiel.

Based on three case studies, this talk discussed the different ways of understanding, conceptualizing and coping with the future that become visible in late medieval art. The aim was to demonstrate how concepts, formations, and ideas were implemented in artworks and how art can reveal to us more about how time and the future were understood not only in the medieval theological scholarship but also among the non-academic laity. The term “future” was understood as an idea derived from the concept of the plurality of times and, therefore, covered a variety of configurations. The first case study dealt with late medieval images of Saint Christopher and examined the relatively short period of one day and the need to cope with things on short notice. Secondly, the talk examined the political perspective and conversion of earthly continuity into transcendent eternity. These dynamics were studied in Ambrogio Lorenzetti’s *Allegory of Good and Bad Government* (1338/39) in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena. The third example investigated the organization of the end time, showing how the last days of the world were made tangible through temporal systematics and schemes in the north rose window of the Cathedral in Angers. The three examples revealed how time unfolds in and from the visual arts. They provide a first impression on how time, especially the future, was not only made visible but also how it was perceived. In the artworks discussed, the outlined future is represented by particular qualities: Saint Christopher creates a safe day, in Siena, the future is prosperous and stable, and the Fifteen Signs in Angers represent a period of natural disasters and fearful threats. The aspect of quality leads to another point: the future is characterized as a time that is different from both the past and the present.

Between after Death and Afterlife: Conceptions of the Time between Individual Death and the Day of Resurrection in Christianity and Islam

Katja Thörner (Oriental Philology and Islamic Studies, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg)

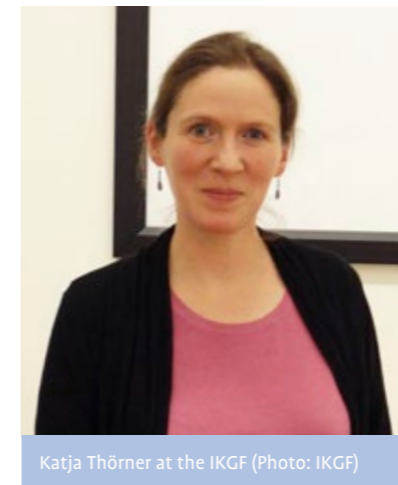
Descriptions of the Day of Judgment, the joys of heaven and the torments of hell are omnipresent in the Qurʾān as well as the New Testament. However, neither of these two works provides detailed information about the process of dying, the transition to the realm of the dead, or the question of what happens to the deceased until they are resurrected.

Despite, or possibly because of that, these questions became the topic of extended discussion and exuberant speculation in the Islamic as well as Christian traditions. Central ideas in the Islamic tradition were the interrogation of the deceased by two angels called “Munkar and Nakīr”, the notion of “punishment in the grave” (*adhāb al-qabr*) and the concept of “barzakh”

as a place where all souls reside after death until Judgement Day. Similar ideas can be found in the Christian tradition, especially in the Roman Catholic Church, where the concepts of “purgatory” and “limbo” became official doctrines about an intermediate state between death and resurrection.

Even though the term “barzakh” is mentioned in the Qurʾān and the ideas of “limbo” and “purgatory” can be linked to some passages in the New Testament, the conception of an intermediate place between this world and the hereafter is elaborated neither in the sacred scripture of Islam nor in that of Christianity. Therefore, it can be assumed that there must have existed other sources that were used by theologians to elaborate in detail their ideas about what occurs between death and the afterlife. Examples of such sources, which were largely based on (the common) Jewish heritage, are the Hadiths and non-canonical Christian scriptures like the “Apocalypse of Peter.”

From a systematical point of view, one may ask whether it is even valid to search for answers to questions that require unattainable knowledge. Maybe the “scriptures” are mute on the question of what happens between death and the Last Judgment because it is unimportant to know anything about it. Several theologians held this view, while others tried to find systematical answers to a question that inevitably emerges from the doctrines of the resurrection and the Last Judgement. These discussions did not arise purely out of curiosity, but can be traced back to systematical questions about sin and salvation. Islamic as well as Christian thinkers filled in the blanks in the New Testament and Qurʾān with pre-existing sources. Islam and Christianity are rooted in a closely-related cultural area, which is why we find many commonalities between them. However, if one looks closer at the respective theological scholarship, there also existed great differences.



Katja Thörner at the IKGf (Photo: IKGf)

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Revelation, the Promulgation of Christ, and Prophecy: The Past as Memory of the Future in Rupert of Deutz

Miriam Czock (*History of the Middle Ages, University of Duisburg-Essen; IKGF Visiting Fellow*)

The liturgy is the medium through which Christianity ritualizes its beliefs. The fact that liturgy was an imposing system of rituals in which every medieval Christian should participate made it a socially far-reaching instrument. Although we know very little about how far it was understood by the lay participants, there can be little doubt that it played a crucial role in everyone's life and that it communicated, however rudimentarily, the Christian way of life. Given the importance of liturgy, it is worth exploring how it was interpreted in medieval Europe. One of the most influential medieval interpretations of liturgy was Rupert of Deutz's (ca. 1070-1129) commentary *De divinis officiis*, which he wrote between 1108 and 1111/1112.

His commentary belongs to a genre that has largely been overlooked by historians and church historians alike until recently: liturgical exegesis. The principles of the method of exegesis derive from the interpretation of the Bible. Even now, researchers tend to consider biblical exegesis in terms of its relation to biblical and salvation history, thus seeing it as either an interpretational mode for understanding the biblical past or a meditation on eschatology. Thereby, the interpretational strategy was centered either on how the Old Testament was brought into correspondence with the New Testament or on the end of times, as foreseen in the book of the Apocalypse. However, based on Rupert's commentary of the liturgy, I shifted the present perspective to another genre, from the interpretation of scripture to the interpretation of the liturgy. Moreover, I also changed the perspective on exegesis from a theological exploration of the future, in which the anticipated coming of Christ and the Apocalypse are subjects of interpretation, to one in which the future and foreknowledge shape the epistemological mode of exegesis as an act of interpretation. Thus, instead of considering the role of the end of time in theology as such, I examined exegesis as an interpretative tool of the cultic present. I understood liturgical exegesis as a tool that establishes the historical relationship between the liturgical present and incarnation in the act of interpretation. This relationship is linked to the Old and New Testaments, or rather the whole of biblical history, through the lens of the Apocalypse.

Ultimately, I understood Rupert's arguments about liturgy by examining how temporal ideas structured them. From this perspective, it emerges that Rupert used temporal structures in a highly intricate way to define his different subjects of thought. While liturgy is an invention with a human historical past as well as a biblical past, the business of interpreting liturgy, although



Miriam Czock at the IKGF (Photo: IKGF)

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not explicitly connected to any temporal ideas, seems to be a mode of the present. It is only in liturgy itself that a future dimension is revealed through the preacher's interpretive powers and task of proclamation, which simultaneously make him a prophet. The future, however, is a present realization of the incarnation of Christ and his ascension, and therefore a reminder of his second coming.

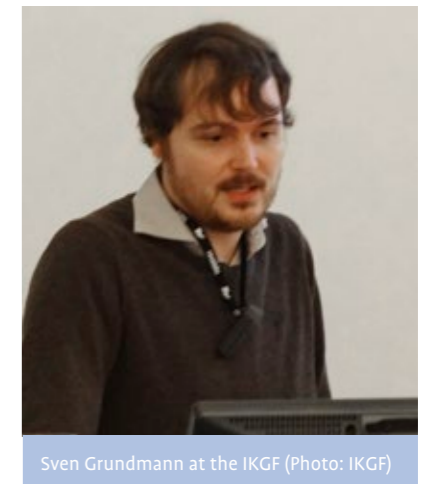
Liturgy, as characterized by Rupert, thus commemorates a past and a future. However, while the past is only recalled as something bygone, the future is something that has already been revealed and, as such, can be known and remembered in the present. This means that there is also a future in which humankind will be resurrected and, therefore, a future that can only be anticipated. For Rupert, liturgy is the representation of the past and the future in the present, while being mindful of the future.

Decision-Making between Path Dependencies and Freedom of Choice: Ethical Reasoning in Public Policy Advising

Sven Grundmann (*Political Sciences, Elite Master's Programme "Standards of Decision-Making Across Cultures," Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg*)

Although political science cannot predict the future and has no specific expertise regarding concepts such as divination, destiny or karma, the discipline can offer empirical insights into how past actions can influence and shape the future. In his presentation, Grundmann introduced the audience to the concept of path dependencies and pointed out how this can help to explain structural patterns, make projections based on trends or design institutions that promote more sustainable decision-behavior.

The key point during the presentation was the role that ethics can play in difficult decision-making. In reference to sociological organizational theories, Grundmann argued that path dependencies can create "Vicious Circles" as well as "Virtuous Circles." On the one hand, peer pressure and ideological frameworks can be the ingredients of path dependencies that restrict the freedom of choice in decision-making processes and result in poor outcomes. On the other hand, political institutions can be designed to create path dependencies for processes of ethical reasoning that extend the freedom of choice and foster well-reasoned decisions.



Sven Grundmann at the IKGF (Photo: IKGF)

A Different Kind of Vision? Agency and Genre in Late Antique and Medieval Journeys to the Afterlife

Nicole Volmering (*Irish and Celtic Languages, Trinity College Dublin; IKGF Visiting Fellow*)

In literary journeys to the afterlife of the Late Antique and early medieval period, the visionary is typically suddenly removed from his or her body and taken to see various places in the afterlife. Such a visit is usually didactic, and the visionary is restored to life in order to report back to the living, emphasizing the continuous interaction between the secular and supernatural planes. Scholars often refer to these narratives as 'tours of heaven and hell,' 'Jenseitsreisen,' or 'otherworld journeys,' but they often appear in texts titled or classified as a 'vision' (e.g. *Visio S. Tnugdali*) or 'apocalypse' (e.g. the *Apocalypse of Peter*). Traditionally, the respective text-types of 'vision' and 'apocalypse' are differentiated on the basis that visionary literature increasingly centers on the fate of the individual soul whereas apocalypses are linked by more general historical con-

cerns. The fact that this dichotomy is unfounded was demonstrated by the Apocalypse Work Group's study on the genre of Apocalypse, published in 1979, which set the tone for nearly all of the subsequent scholarship on Apocalypses, but not visions. In this talk, I therefore revisited the notion of visions and apocalypses as 'twin offspring,' to borrow Bernard McGinn's phraseology (1979). I argue that, through undertaking a close examination of genre structure and agency, it is possible to gain a more nuanced

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understanding of the development of the generic structure that informs both visions and apocalypses and that we should perhaps revisit the understanding of these texts as separate genres.

Harnessing the landscape in the service of the text's eschatological argument is central to the rhetoric of both journey-based apocalypses and visions. A comparison with, for instance, Himmelfarb's analysis of the spatial aspect of apocalypses reveals that various aspects of this functionalization of the landscape represent a continuous development between the Late Antique and medieval period rather than a medieval invention. Under the influence of the development of the concept of 'interim punishment,' however, representations of the landscape and the protagonist's interaction with it become increasingly functionalized and metaphorical, so the landscape, to an extent, assumes the functionality of judgement. Simultaneously, the characterization of the protagonists changes, moving away from the model of the prophet toward the model of the inspired saint or the religious conversion of secular protagonists. These subtle changes work together to change the dynamic and rhetoric of these narratives and make the representation of space and agency the significant parameters of the diachronic changes within the development of the genre. This is not to say that there are no apocalypses in which *ex eventu* prophecy and cosmic transformation dominate over a concern with personal eschatology but, rather, that common ground between all of these texts represents an ongoing

dialogue with the human expectation of the afterlife and so we should seek the nuances in the adaptations of the genre as an expression of these changing contemporary interests.



Nicole Volmering at the IKGF (Photo: IKGF)

Empire and Asceticism: On the Role of the End Times in Late Antique Christian Historiography

Veronika Wieser (*History of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna*)



Veronika Wieser at the IKGF (Photo: IKGF)

In the increasingly Christianized world of Late Antiquity, different notions of eschatology found their way into late Roman society. Hand in hand with deliberations about the future of the Christian community, apocalyptic interpretations were integrated into the political discourse in which the end of the Empire became an increasingly plausible scenario. Particularly around the turn of the fifth century, Christian theologians and the church authorities attempted to interpret the political and military challenges of that time by means of the Bible in order to explore their eschatological dimension. Goths and Huns could thus be interpreted as the apocalyptic peoples of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38/39 and Revelation 20), while questions about the duration of the empire could be answered according to the interpretations of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the Book of Daniel (Dan 2).

When examining such expressions of apocalyptic thought and the efforts of contemporaries to understand the world in which they lived, it becomes apparent, however, that reality was often more complex than the straightforward parallels between, for instance, Goths and apocalyptic peoples would suggest. This is a central topic of my research. I examine the intersection of historiography, political and religious developments and the use of the Bible during the transformative period of the fourth and sixth centuries in order to embed various modes of apocalyptic thought within a larger

social context. In my talk entitled 'Empire and Asceticism', I explored these questions by analyzing two historiographical works, which were composed at a time when the field of Christian history writing was thriving: the world chronicle of Sulpicius Severus, written at some point between 400 and 406, and the chronicle of Hydatius, Bishop of Aquae Flaviae, composed in the 460s. I analyzed how both works built on the ancient and Christian historiographical traditions, while at the same time developing individual approaches toward history and time and integrating apocalyptic thought into their works. Although their approaches to the end of history appear to be relatively straightforward, given that these were based on the calculation of the end and the tribulations that would accompany it, the added value of both chronicles lies in the intertextual approach the authors adopted, thereby creating a dialogue between the Bible and historiography.

Securing the Past and Shaping the Future: The Strategic Deployment and Modus Operandi of Tibetan Prophecies

Per Kjeld Sørensen (*Tibetology, Leipzig University*)

Prophecies have played a prominent role in the religious and political life of the Tibetans throughout history. To the medieval mind, supernatural or otherworldly agencies, or divine beings, regularly intervened in order to indicate their approval or rejection of human endeavors. This was considered completely rational. Dreams, visions, miraculous manifestations, and prophetic voices were significant and sensible components within the political, social and ritual discourse. The *modus operandi* often remained obscure or vaguely understood by outsiders. Tibetan medieval historical and religious narratives abound in examples of the transformative power of rituals, and prophetic utterances interacted with politics within a historical context.

This lecture offered a sort of taxonomy of the operative function of such context-bound prophecies, highlighting and classifying their different forms (written and spoken, often as transcripts or certificates), their nature and their etymology. An overview was provided regarding their time-frame types (largely *ex eventu* or postdictions), the authority or sources (divine) authenticating them as well as the vehicle through which they were transmitted (often a divinatory source or gifted person). Following this, the rhetoric or language was discussed, which often uses images entextualized from a common pool of tropes. The prophetic content was highlighted, as it is divided into different, context-bound *modi*, such as prophecies of signs in time, prophecies concerning the Three Times, early



Per Kjeld Sørensen

warning types, etc. A final issue was the prospective outcome and validity of these foretellings.

All in all, these prophecies are one of the most stable components in medieval Tibetan literature. The prophetic message or verdict principally stood unchallenged,

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bespeaking infallibility and instantiating unalterable veracity. In the end, the foretelling served spiritual, social and not least political ends. As such, they were instrumentally used and misused as the final verdicts in disputes or conflicts. The dialectics of prophecies analyzed indicate that we can define Tibetan historical writings as a sort of historiographical

providentialism, often functionally serving to eschew or abolish the barriers between the past and future and hence enabling the memorialization and instantiation of the future of the past.

Fixing Foreign Sciences: On the Contingency of Knowledge and the Transformation of Epistemology of Science in Maoist China

Marc Matten (*Chinese Studies, Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg; IKGF Visiting Fellow*)

This project analyzes the formation and transformation of science epistemologies in the People's Republic of China during the Cold War era. It questions the assumption that, the more liberal a political system was, the less one observes political interventions in the process of knowledge production that gave room to a number of (seemingly) anti-scientific phenomena in Maoist China (1949-76) – such as Lysenkoism, traditional Chinese medicine and alchemy – that could coexist with their “scientific” counterparts.

that there continuously exists an opposition between correct knowledge and wrong knowledge. Correct knowledge can only be found in “objective reality” (*keguan shiji qingkuang* 客观实际情况), and identifying this reality means finding “truth” (*zhenli* 真理). As contradictions never cease to exist in both nature and human society (as claimed by Mao *On Contradiction*), this truth is not static but constantly changing: any truth is relative because it is a reflection of the human cognition of things.

In the first years of the PRC, historical materialism was considered a source of reliable knowledge and a bulwark against the remnants of superstitious and idealist knowledge. It no longer saw progress and development as a result of fateful coincidence, but as the result of thoughtful planning. This included learning from the Soviet Union, which – having sent a huge number of experts to China – supported the modernization of the neighboring country. The growing conflict between both socialist states, that began in 1956, however, led to emancipation on the Chinese side. Ideologically this change was made possible during the Hundred-Flowers Movement (1956-57) by a re-reading of Mao Zedong's 毛泽东 (1893-1976) earlier philosophical writings. Based on his texts *On Practice* (*Shijianlun* 实践论, 1937) and *On Contradiction* (*Maodunlun* 矛盾论, 1937), philosophers such as Chen Jingyu 陈靖宇 and Wang Xin 王辛 contributed to the Sinicization of materialist science epistemology that facilitated a consideration of knowledge from capitalist systems. According to Mao, knowledge production is a circular process that is, by its very nature, endless. In the daily practice of the scientist and technician, Chen and Wang argue

The impossibility of achieving absolute insights into nature and society, however, did not lead to despair. Rather, it denied the existence of an absolute authority. It made it possible to reject Lysenko genetics and other pseudo-scientific phenomena of the SU while replacing them with either indigenous knowledge or technologies from the so-called capitalist West. In other words, although science and technology formed an integral part of planned economy and were subject institutionally, organizationally and financially to the political leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, there was still room for continuous learning from capitalist countries (nor was innovation reduced). Taking the Institute of Scientific and Technical Information of China (ISTIC) founded at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in 1956 as an example, one can identify a number of technological fields during the height of the Cold War in which knowledge was increasingly translated from languages such as English, French, Japanese and German in order to serve the socialist cause. In other words, Maoist China was less isolated from the global community of scientists and academics than is usually assumed in the historical research on the Cold War.

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Poster: “Study the Soviet Union, to advance to the world level of science” Xuexi Sulian, xiang shijie kexue shuizhun jinjun (学习苏联, 向世界科学水准进军). Designer: Li Lang 李浪 (August 1958), Publisher: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe 上海人民美术出版社, <https://chineseposters.net/posters/e15-427.php>. This image is part of the IISH / Stefan R. Landsberger / Private Collection.

The Mirror of Ice (*Bingjian* 冰鑑): A Manual of Chinese Physiognomy

Philipp Hünnebeck (*Chinese Studies, Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg*)

Being among the more frequently published manuals on Chinese physiognomy, the *Bingjian* enjoys an enduring popularity. The lecture focused on the question of how this popularity can be explained. In order to approach this question, two aspects were of importance: the authorship (and therefore the transmission) and the content of the text.

The *Bingjian* is a short manual, consisting of seven chapters on various physiognomic topics (such as bones, beards, eyebrows, voices, etc.). The chapters are fragmentary and fail to elaborate on the conceptual

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Illustration from a 17th century physiognomic manual, in Fan Shuang 范暎, ed., *Renxiang shuijing ji quanbian* 人相水鏡集全編, 1680, Bavarian State Library, https://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb11129326_00595.html.

issues of physiognomy. By using these short notes, the *Bingjian* enables the reader to assess people's appearance in order to predict their future success or individual character traits.

To this day, the text is attributed to Zeng Guofan 曾國藩 (1811-1872). Zeng – an outstanding Confucian scholar and renowned commander of the Hunan Army, successfully quelling the Taiping Uprising – has become inseparably linked to the *Bingjian*. A closer examination of the history of the transmission of the text, however, shows that Zeng's authorship is an invention. The earliest extant print of the *Bingjian* dates to 1829 and explicitly states that the text has no author. The Chinese scholar Zhang Quanhai shows that the *Bingjian* was first attributed to Zeng Guofan in 1937 in the *Qinghe Newspaper* (*Qinghe zazhi* 青鶴雜誌). From this point onward, the story of Zeng's authorship has been perpetuated, in large part, by modern authors publishing on the *Bingjian*.

The prefaces to the modern prints of the *Bingjian* also provide insights into the legitimization strategies of the authors with regard to publishing on a topic like physiognomy. As their field of interest was under threat of being discarded as feudal superstition, recent authors have employed various strategies to justify their interest in traditional Chinese physiognomy. An analysis of these prefaces clearly shows that the most frequently used strategies are built around the authorship of Zeng Guofan. Thus, his success in selecting able, talented members for the army is often presented as proof of the functionality of physiognomic knowledge.

Ragnarök: Prophecies and Notions of the End Time in Old Norse Religion

Thomas Krümpel (*Scandinavian Studies, University of Greifswald / Ludwig-Maximilian University Munich*)

This lecture dealt with the pre-Christian eschatological ideas of the Germanic-speaking peoples. While, in the West Germanic area, only fragments of an indigenous eschatology (*Muspell*) are preserved, the North Germanic tradition offers a richly elaborated, complete end time myth, which is described using the Old Norse term Ragnarök ('Fate of the Gods'). The focus of this lecture was on universal eschatology as handed down in the North Germanic tradition.

Only the poem *Völuspá* – the 'Prophecy of the Seeress' – from the late 10th century (which is part of the so-called Poetic Edda) and the mythography of the Icelander Snorri Sturluson, *Gylfaginning* – the 'Tricking of Gylfi' – (part of the so-called Snorra-Edda or Prose-Edda) from the early 13th century offer a coherent representation of the entire eschatological events. Thus, they can be described as the main sources for the Ragnarök notions and were, therefore, at the center of the investigation.

As far as the content of the Ragnarök myth is concerned, the causes of the downfall were first considered, before dealing with the Ragnarök in the narrower sense – i.e., the actual doomsday scenario – and finally with



Thomas Krümpel

the subsequent renewal of the world and the gods. In doing so, different ways of analyzing the narrative's motifs and interpreting the eschatological events were presented. Above all, the question arose regarding the significance of the Ragnarök as a notion to Nordic mythology as a whole. This was followed by a further discussion about the background and origin of the Ragnarök myth. First, the coherence of the entire eschatological narrative was discussed. Another question concerned the prevalence (i.e., spread) of the Ragnarök notions during the Viking age. One of the main concerns when discussing the Ragnarök theme is the question of whether the extant eschatological myth was a result of the encounter with advancing Christianity or whether it originated in the indigenous pre-Christian traditions.

In view of the rich insights offered by comparative research on mythology, it was argued that the Old Norse Ragnarök narrative was a coherent, culturally-anchored, and widespread pre-Christian myth about the downfall and renewal of the world, which was deeply-rooted in even older, common Indo-European eschatological notions.

Archaeology of Osteopyromancy in Early China: New Discoveries and New Perspectives

Maria Khayutina (*Sinology, Ludwig-Maximilian University Munich; IKGf Visiting Fellow*)

Osteo-pyromancy, or pyro-osteomancy, designates a divination technique by applying heat to pre-treated animal bones to produce cracks that a diviner might interpret as an oracle. In China, the technique's heyday was during the Late Shang dynasty (ca. 1300-1046 BCE), before it was ousted from the cultural mainstream by other prognostication techniques, such as yarrow stalks. However, elsewhere it survived, even until today. Notably, when Emperor Naruhito ascended to the Japanese throne in May 2019, court officials performed an osteo-pyromantic ceremony using the shells of green sea turtles to determine where to grow sacred rice for the new leader's first autumn harvest ritual.

Oracle bone inscriptions

Roughly 155,000 inscriptions on turtle shells plastrons and the shoulder blades (*scapulae*) of oxen, excavated in the Late Shang capital in present-day Anyang, indicate that Shang court officials used them to prognosticate about ancestors and their

influence on natural phenomena, agricultural activities, royal hunts, wars, and the health of the monarch. Scholars long thought that the Shang kings monopolized divination and acted as the sole intermediaries between the world of humans and the world of deities. The discovery of non-royal inscriptions in Huayuanzhuang (a village in Anyang) in 1991, however, revealed that other members of the Shang elite had also engaged in osteo-pyromancy and employed their own diviners. Polities on the Shang periphery also used this technique: over 17,000 oracle bones were found under the foundations of a palace or temple on the Zhou Plain, the seat of the rulers of the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BCE) during ca. 1200-771 BCE. As a matter of fact, nearly every sizeable settlement site of the second to mid-first millennium BCE yields some oracle bones, suggesting that osteo-pyromancy was in wide use. The majority of the bones are not inscribed. As a comparison, inscribed bones constitute ca. 10% of all bones from Anyang, and only ca. 1.5% of the bones from the Zhou Plain. Nevertheless, during the 20th c., historical,

linguistic and palaeographic approaches dominated the scholarship. Primarily valued either as sources of history or sources of the history of language, oracle bone inscriptions were included in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 2018, which was a project of special note to the current PRC president Xi Jinping. However, investigations of un-inscribed oracle bones can shed fresh light on various aspects of early Chinese society.

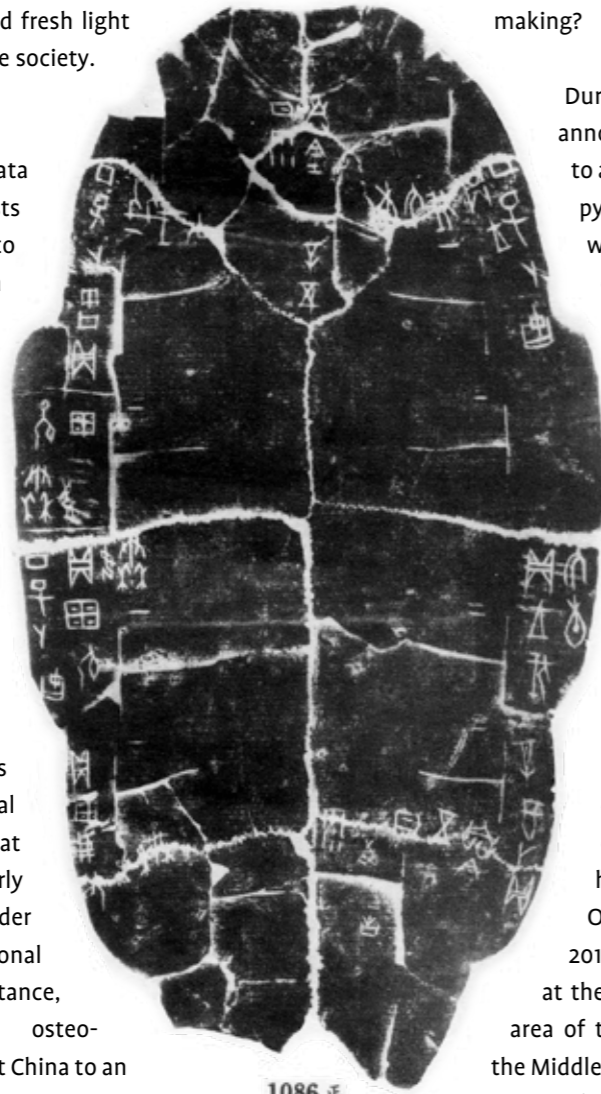
New trends in the 21st century

Following the accumulation of data from various places, archaeologists and anthropologists began to explore osteo-pyromancy from a different angle. Two main foci of the current research include the materiality of the media and the social contexts of divinatory practices. Scholars focusing on materiality study bone pre-treatment techniques, revealing regional and temporal specifics, while zoo-archaeologists identify local or non-local, domestic or wild species that were used as the donors of bones. Scholars assuming an anthropological viewpoint attempt to reveal what role divination played in early Chinese societies from a broader chronological and inter-regional perspective. Rowan Flad, for instance, demonstrated that, whereas osteo-pyromancy spread from Northwest China to an ever-wider area during the Early Bronze Age, divination techniques became ever more elaborate but were not yet standardized. In many societies, “they were one of many sources of social power.” Only during the Late Shang period, did “the use of divination by the ruling elite to establish and maintain their positions of authority” require systematization and standardization.¹

¹ “Divination and Power: A Multiregional View of the Development of Oracle Bone Divination in Early China.” *Current Anthropology* 49.3 (2008): 403–37.”

Contextualizing osteopyromancy

Acknowledging that prognostication was sometimes, but not always, instrumentalized by the political elite, we may further ask what other kinds of people came into contact with this practice. If osteo-pyromancy spread to broader social circles, what was it used for beyond political decision-making?



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Oracle Bone, *Jiaguwen heji*, ed. Hu Houxuan.

During my stay in Erlangen, newly announced discoveries drew my attention to a previously unknown aspect of osteo-pyromancy; namely, its relationship with craftsmanship. The excavation of the Middle Shang period’s (1400–1300 BCE) Taijiasi site in Anhui province revealed a small moated settlement with a long multi-room house and several single-room buildings, including one bronze-casting facility. Bronze-casting debris, such as slag and ceramic mold fragments, also included oracle plastrons with traces of drilling, chiseling and burning. This suggests that bronze craftsmen practiced osteo-pyromancy and indicates that divination could be an integral part of bronze-making — a complex and highly risky technological process. Oracle *scapulae* were similarly found in 2018, together with bronze-casting debris at the foundry site near the palace-temple area of the Huanbei Shang city, presumably, the Middle Shang period’s (1400–1300 BCE) Shang capital. By scrutinizing the excavation reports from several other sites of the Shang and Zhou periods during the following months at the IKGf, I collected further evidence that osteo-pyromancy and other divination techniques fell within the scope of the activities of specialized bronze-casting craftsmen and, moreover, were associated with some (but not all) forms of specialized craftsmanship and other economic activities. The publication of this investigation, including a detailed documentation, is currently in preparation.

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

The Entangled History of Medieval Prognostication - Handbook Workshop V, October 22-23, 2018

The editorial board of the IKGf handbook project “Prognostication in Medieval European and Mediterranean Societies” met on 22–23 October 2018 in Erlangen. The participants were: Avriel Bar-Levav (The Open University of Israel), Charles Burnett (Warburg Institute London), Michael Grünbart (University of Münster), Matthias Heiduk (IKGf), Klaus Herbers (IKGf), Hans-Christian Lehner (IKGf), and Petra Schmidl (University of Erlangen-Nürnberg). The participants discussed the concrete shape of the handbook and its contributions, which will be published under the title “Prognostication in the Medieval World: A Handbook” at the time of the publication of this newsletter.

The handbook takes into account the Middle Ages in a broader sense and does not focus only on those parts of Europe under the authority of the Roman Church which employed Latin as their common liturgical and scholarly language. It also takes account the heterogeneity of Medieval Europe and its entanglement with other cultural spheres. The contributions of the handbook, therefore, consider European cultures prior to their Christianization, the Western-Latin as well as the Eastern-Greek sphere of the Christian dominated areas, as well as the Jewish traditions and the neighboring Islamic World. While the handbook is broadly structured along the time period of the medieval millennium between 500–1500 and the geographical distribution of the dominating confessions, these merely serve as heuristics to establish a framework for the study of prognostication in the medieval world. The handbook neither assumes the existence of a homogenous “Western Christian” or “Islamic” World, nor aims to apply the Middle Ages as a distinct period to Jewish, Byzantine, or Islamic history. This widened horizon, rather, allows comparisons of developments in the history of prognostication as well as perspectives on the manifold entanglements, especially regarding the transmission of knowledge and cultural techniques beyond boundaries. The following remarks provide a few glimpses of these entanglements and possible comparisons.

In terms of knowledge transfer, Byzantium and the Islamic World in particular were entangled during different time periods. The precondition for such a transfer was the mobility of scholars who alternated between the imperial Byzantine court and the court of the caliph, providing their services despite the principally conflict-ridden rivalry between these centers of political power. As early as the eighth and ninth centuries, Greek scholars were among the Byzantine emissaries and offered their services to the caliphs, who were increasingly interested in the treasures of ancient knowledge in the fields of science and philosophy. Regarding prognostication, some of the most-coveted treasures included, for example, the medical prognostics of Hippocrates and Galen, standard works on astronomy and astrology, such as those by Ptolemy or Dorotheos, and the “meteorology” of Aristotle. In the ninth and tenth century, Syria in particular became an important link for the transfer of knowledge due to the direct confrontation there between the empires — a confrontation that was not always destructive. This transfer was not one-sided. Since the tenth century until the last phases of Byzantium, Arabic and Persian texts were also translated into Greek, especially treatises on astrology.

A decisive impetus for the history of medieval prognostication arose from the entanglement between the Western-Christian and Islamic worlds, as well as on a smaller scale between the Western and Eastern sphere of Christendom. The starting point was the several translation movements that began at the end of the eleventh century and lasted until about 1300. They brought about fundamental changes in many areas of the tradition and sparked fresh intellectual interest in the discussion and appraisal of mantic practices. Numerous texts by ancient writers and scholars from the Greek East and Islamic world, which had hitherto been inaccessible, were translated into Latin and exerted an enormous impact on the concepts and practices of prognostication. The astrology and geomancy of the Latin West thereby gained a theoretical and methodological foundation. The interpretation of dreams, physiognomy, and scapulimancy

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increasingly became the subjects of treatises and were more frequently applied in practice. The translation of fundamental works also opened up new possibilities in the areas of medical prognostication and mathematical calculation. It took some time for the transfer, organization, and reception of knowledge to take effect, with varying results in different places, but its consequences were felt throughout the Latin West. Profound changes in the fields of science and education helped people to absorb the new knowledge. Above all, the newly-founded universities but also the study centers of the mendicant orders, and the princely courts as centers of art and erudition, created an enormous demand for new texts and new knowledge. The high mobility of students and scholars – many of whom travelled all over Europe – promoted the exchange of knowledge, which also began to be presented and categorized in new works, such as encyclopaediae, mirrors for princes, *summae*, comments, and text books. Most of the translations that resulted from the knowledge exchange with Byzantium and the Islamic world were created in Southern Italy or on the Iberian Peninsula; areas where people from different cultures congregated. Jewish scholars often played a key role as translators from Arabic. There is also sporadic evidence of the transfer of the mantic traditions between the Latin and Hebrew cultures.



The methods of transmission already hint at important points of comparison. On the one hand, they illustrate the shared heritage of knowledge and cultural techniques related to prognostication within the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions. Despite regionally-specific adaptations and transformations, it was ancient shared fundamental ideas and

travelling episteme that were extended and enriched during the medieval reception. On the other hand, the history of their reception ran along a temporal incline, whereby the Christian occident at the bottom, which was centuries behind, was catching up. The comparison also reveals significant differences, especially regarding the socio-political conditions for the historical development of prognostication. In Byzantium, the whole of socio-economical life was focused on the political center in Constantinople, so even the historical evidence on prognostication mainly stems from the context of the imperial court – from the use of different mantic methods for decision-making and military campaigns to the casting of lots for the starting positions in the imperial hippodrome chariot races. The political centers of the Islamic World were also hubs for the adaption and distribution of knowledge, which is why the majority of our sources that bear witness to practices such as horoscopy or geomancy likewise originated in the environs of

the courts of Islamic rulers. However, unlike the situation in Byzantium, there emerged several centers, including Cordoba, Cairo, Damascus, Bagdad and finally Istanbul, which made a sizable cultural impact due to the political and confessional fragmentation of the Islamic World. The political crises in those centers also sparked a cultural decline, that can be observed in the

tradition of prognostication. In the Western-Christian World, for a long time, there were few such centers of political and cultural activity and even those that existed might have vanished after only a short period of blossoming, such as the imperial court of the Carolingians. However, in the High Middle Ages, this situation began to change and there emerged a greater diversity

of centers at which worldly courts and communal institutions were competing against monastic schools and religious orders as well as universities. These competitive centres proved highly beneficial for the adaption and distribution of knowledge.

The handbook also brought to light a disparity in the amount of scholarship undertaken with regard to the different traditions of prognostication. By the end of the Middle Ages, the historical sources in the Western-Christian World had become far more numerous and diverse, which certainly benefitted research. These more numerous and in-depth studies of the Western traditions, however, cannot be explained simply by with more favorable conditions for the preservation of historical sources. Here, one should also take into account the different academic “cultures” existing within the various disciplines. In the Jewish traditions, for example, many sources of magic and mantic knowledge belonged to mystical movements that lay outside the orthodox mainstream, so the research on these traditions has a relatively short tradition in Jewish studies and

the exploration of the material frequently occurs at the very beginning. Similarly, historical evidence on prognostication seldom plays an important role in Islamic studies, but occasional field research, for example in Yemen and East Africa, already point to a very rich historical heritage even outside the former political centers of the Islamic World, which remain to be explored. Where the role of prognostication in everyday life is concerned, i.e., outside the courts of rulers and scholarly discussions, the different disciplines again face similar problems. On the one hand, there is a lack of written sources and artefacts concerning practices that are only transmitted orally. On the other hand, the perspective of research is often disguised by a one-sided examination of only normative texts. As such, the comparative synopsis undertaken at the workshop shows that a handbook on medieval prognostication can only herald the beginning of further research.

(Matthias Heiduk)

VISITING FELLOWS



Dr. Carola Föllner, History Department, University of Erlangen-Nürnberg; research-stay: January 2018-December 2018; research topic: Strategies for Coping and Arguing with the Future in Early Medieval Italy.



Dr. Nicole Volmering, Department of Irish and Celtic Languages, University of Dublin, Trinity College; research stay: October 2018-September 2019; research topic: From Revelation to Ritual: Comparative Perspectives on Agency and Authority in Journeys to the Afterlife, 600-900.



Prof. Dr. Marc Matten, Institute for Near Eastern and East Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Erlangen, Nürnberg; research stay: October 2018-March 2019; research topic: Fixing Foreign Sciences – Political Interventions in Transnational Knowledge Transfers in Maoist China.



Prof. Dr. Mario Poceski, Department of Religion, University of Florida, research stay: January 2019-December 2019; research topic: Premonitions and Predictions of Future Events in the Chan Tradition of Chinese Buddhism.

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Keyan Liu, Shandong University; research stay: December 2018-November 2019; research topic: The Interpretation and Overseas Dissemination of Zhu Xi's Yi-ology.



Dr. Vèrène Chalendar, Collège de France; research stay: January 2019-December 2019; research topic: Is prevention better than cure? The place of hemerology within Mesopotamian medicine.



Dr. Wen Zhao, College of Philosophy, Nankai University; research stay: March 2019-July 2019; research topic: The Sinification of Western Astrology from the Aspect of the Taoist Canon.



Prof. Dr. David Pankenier, Department of Modern Language and Literature, Lehigh University; research stay: March 2019-June 2019; research topic: Long-Export Astrological Prognostication in China.

OBITUARY



Dr. Miriam Czock

It is with great sadness that we learned that our dear colleague and former visiting fellow Dr. Miriam Czock passed away on March 6, 2020, at the young age of 43 due to a serious illness.

Miriam visited the IKGF from October 2018 until September 2019. Throughout her time in Erlangen, she enriched our daily lives with her friendliness, open-mindedness and interest in her colleagues' research.

Miriam studied philosophy, history, German philology, and English literature at Trinity College Dublin and at the Ruhr-University Bochum from which she graduated with a PhD in medieval history in 2009. She worked and taught at the Technical University Dortmund, the Freie Universität Berlin, the University of Tübingen and since 2012 served as an assistant professor and lecturer at the Department of Medieval History of the University of Duisburg-Essen.

At the IKGF, Miriam studied Rupert of Deutz' use of exegesis as a tool for perceiving and interpreting the future. She focused in particular on his *De divinis officiis*, a liturgical commentary written in the early 12th century. The study of liturgical texts constituted one of her main research areas and had already been central to her dissertation thesis (published in 2012 with De Gruyter), in which she analyzed the evolution of the sacralization of church buildings from late antiquity until the tenth century. Her other research interests included secular and church law in the early Middle Ages as well as perceptions of space in premodern times.

We feel truly blessed for the time that we were able to spend with Miriam, as well as for the many joyful events that she shared with us, including her birthday last year. She will be dearly missed by all of us and we extend our heartfelt condolences to her family.

IN BRIEF

- Prof. Herbers was co-opted in January 2020 as a correspondent member of the prestigious Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid, that was formerly established by royal decree in 1738.
- In November 2019, IKGF research partner Petra G. Schmidl started her research project "The sultan and the stars." She will focus on the *Kitāb al-Tabṣira fī 'ilm al-nujūm* ("Enlightenment in the science of the stars") written by the future Rasūlid sultan al-Ashraf 'Umar (Yemen, d. 1296) and, during the next three years, prepare an edition, English translation and analysis. This will include an elaborate study of the reasons that make the Tabṣira so valuable, the prominent social position of its author, the didactical claim formulated in the preface and specific features of its wide range of contents, astronomical, astrological, mathematical, and geographical knowledge as well as the calculation of prognostic and magic practises.

Her project is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation), project no. 423760106 and kindly hosted by the IKGF. Further

information is available at <https://tabsira.hypotheses.org/>, where new chapters of the Tabṣira will be published on a regular basis.

- Prof. Dr. Fabrizio Pregadio, a former IKGF research fellow, has also recently been awarded a three-year research grant by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). His project, hosted by the IKGF as an "additional activity," focuses on the concepts of human nature (*xing*) and destiny (*ming*), which as a dyad have played a major role in the history of Chinese thought and religion. The project examines their place and function in the thought of Liu Yiming (1734-1821), an eminent Daoist master associated with one of the main lineages of Neidan, or Internal Alchemy. His large corpus of writings amply demonstrates that the concepts of human nature and destiny, as used in Neidan, are closely related to analogous ideas developed within early Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism, and Chinese Buddhism. Particular attention will be devoted to an analysis of the different views of destiny within Daoism. The results of the research will be published in the form of articles and a book monograph.

THE NEXT fate

The next issue of *fate* will contain:

- the workshop “The Classic of Changes in East and West” in collaboration with the International Association of Yijing Studies” (School of Philosophy, Renmin University of China), May 2019.
- the joint workshop by IKGf and SDAC “Rethinking Interdisciplinary Approaches to Decision-Making: Choice, Culture, and Context,” June 2019.
- the international conference “Spirit-Writing in Chinese History,” June 2019.
- the conference “Die Zukunft der Prognostik“ (The Future of Prognostics), July 2019.
- the workshop “Divination and Decision-Making by Lot and Randomization in East Asia and Europe,” September 2019.

