

fate

01|17



INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM
for Research in the Humanities

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



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On September 7, 2016, a workshop on the topic of Chinese traditional fate-calculation (*mingli xue*) was held at Fudan University, Shanghai (ikgf.fau.de > Events > Academic Visits and Conferences Abroad). In his welcome speech, the organizer, Prof. Xiong Yuezhi, a former visiting scholar at the IKGF, mentioned the research carried out at Erlangen as an important factor for assembling specialists in social history, cultural geography, the history of science, as well as the history of ideas, to discuss a variety of

aspects of this traditional practice. *Mingli xue* is a Chinese form of chromantic horoscopy that attributes specific qualities to the moment of a person's birth; since it is still one of the most widespread practices for forecasting the future of individuals based on their inborn character, it is by and large subject to an official ban in China, not least due to the fact that charlatans benefit from performing their "profession".

However, as most of the participants emphasized in their presentations, the basic assumptions of *mingli xue* should not be rejected because of their seemingly erroneous parameters. We should instead study them with regard to their impact on the Chinese world-view and daily life experience. "National studies" (*guoxue*) are inconceivable without taking into account the long-lasting influence of the mantic arts (*shushu*) on individual and collective decision-making in China.

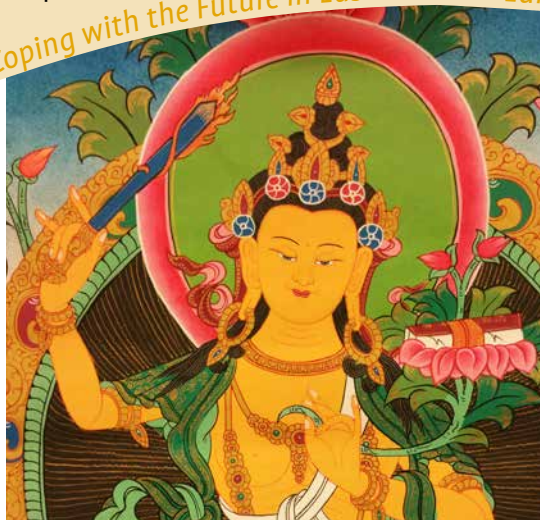
I think that the Shanghai workshop can serve as evidence of the success of the IKGF research agenda, even in areas that are still considered "sensitive" in present-day China. Just as our Europeanist colleagues are

legitimizing astrology as a crucial part of the history of science in Europe, sinologists are entitled to follow Marc Kalinowski's categorization of the traditional mantic arts as "les

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Dear Readers,

The present, eleventh issue of IKGF's newsletter, *fate*, covers the winter term 2015/2016, the first academic term of our second funding phase as a Käte Hamburger Kolleg. During this productive period, ideas for several projects and collaborations have evolved that will certainly have an impact in the coming years. In his editorial, IKGF director Professor Michael Lackner highlights some of our recent undertakings, which will help us to develop our research project further.

An important element of the consortium's activities is our regular reading sessions, which are usually concerned with perplexing issues or difficult-to-read text passages. This issue's *Focus* contains a report on one of the highlights of this series, a session on the famous Antikythera mechanism, led by Alexander Jones from our cooperation partner, the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (New York University). As usual, our newsletter also contains an overview of our lecture series and brief summaries of each talk, which this term included presentations by both of our directors. During our second funding phase, the IKGF will place increased emphasis on hosting comparative conferences, two of which feature in this issue: in October 2015, former IKGF visiting fellow Sophia Katz (Tel-Hai College) organized a workshop which approached notions of strangeness in relation to divination from a comparative perspective.

In February 2016, a large-scale international conference, in collaboration with the International Union of Academies (UIA), explored and developed a comparative approach to traditions and practices concerning fate, longevity, and immortality across a range of civilizations, regions, and periods. It was jointly organized by Danielle Jacquart (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris), Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (Université de Lausanne / SISMEF, Florence), Fabrizio Pregadio (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg), and Klaus Herbers (IKGF Deputy Director).

We hope that you will enjoy our newsletter and are looking forward to receiving your feedback!

Dr. Rolf Scheuermann
(Research Coordination)

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

sciences de la Chine traditionnelle”. It is telling that the Chinese Wikipedia entry for Johannes Kepler describes him as a “consultant of Wallenstein”, whereas the German one marks him as a “consultant in matters of astrology” – in other words, for Chinese authors, practicing astrology, as Kepler did, is at odds with being a paragon of “modern” science.

There can be no doubt that Chinese and Western decision-making regarding both individual and collective issues did not rely solely on methods of fortune-telling and apotropaic practices, but these constituted an important factor when coping with the future. Building a temple for the river god (or organizing a religious procession) and making concrete plans for river control were not considered mutually exclusive in pre-modern times.

It is precisely the contribution of traditional methods of prediction to decision-making that motivated the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science and the IKGF to embark on a common project on “Prediction and Planning in Asian History” (ikgf.fau.de > Research > Cooperation with the Max Planck Institute), in which both experts on modern and pre-modern social and political history work together in order to explore the tension between different rationalities that characterized the various approaches to reducing contingency. One focus of this project is on the material side of the measures to be taken in view of the unfathomable possibilities of the future.

The material culture of prognostication will also be the focus of an exhibition that the National Museum in Nuremberg (*Germanisches Nationalmuseum*) agreed to organize with the IKGF. In this exhibition,

we plan to “stage” a dialog between Chinese and European instruments of traditional prediction: the classification and interpretation of celestial “signs”, the selection of auspicious days for certain undertakings, the casting of lots, astrology (astrolabes), Chinese forms of horoscopy dream books and utensils for a suitable environment to obtain revelatory dreams (such as “dream beds”), the selection of auspicious places for the dead and the living (the Chinese *fengshui*) by special compasses (*luopan*), and numerous other methods of prognostication will be presented in the form of books, objects, and interactive tools for a larger audience, who will be initiated into the universe of Chinese and European traditional ways of predicting the future.

These activities provide evidence of the fact that the IKGF research has gained momentum, both in Chinese academia and in European studies. In July 2016, at a conference designed to prepare a handbook on Chinese mantic arts, the “International Society for the Critical Study of the Mantic Arts” was established, with 33 founding members. Among other activities related to its topic, the society will launch a journal and organize regular conferences.

“Science and Technology in China”, the vast research project initiated by the great historian Joseph Needham, without doubt has had a long-lasting impact on our view of Chinese technology. However, the goal of the new society lies in complementing this Enlightenment-inspired approach by adding the elements that are neglected and, with all due respect, even rejected, in Needham’s outline: a wealth of technologies for calculating the future and instrumental tools for planning, which he – and many others before and after him – simply and prematurely discarded as “superstitious” and thus not worth studying. Given the ubiquitous presence of the mantic arts both in the world-view and the daily experience of traditional, modern, as well as present-day China, however, it seems legitimate to take a closer look at them.

Thus, the motivation for our work does not lie in making people believe in the “truth” of pre-modern forms of prediction (although everyone should be free to judge this for themselves), but rather to do justice to an enormous corpus of writings and practices that have been and continue to be influential in large parts of this world.

Prof. Dr. Michael Lackner
(IKGF, Director)

The Material Culture of Prediction – a reading session on the Antikythera mechanism

Facilitated by Alexander Jones (Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University); April 6, 2016



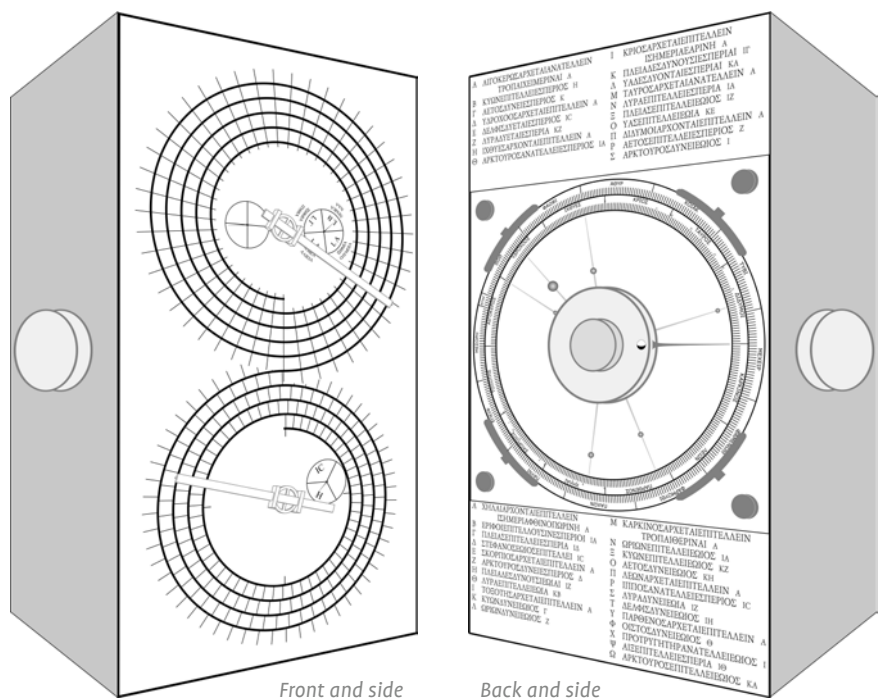
Left and middle image: Fragment of the Antikythera Mechanism, image and x-ray
 © Andrew Barclay; Source: www.flickr.com/photos/electropod/5411607602/ (creative common license)
 Right image: Fragment of the Antikythera Mechanism, backside
 © Aleksandr Zykov; Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/infanticida/4975918047/> (creative common license)

others, the back displayed whether a solar or lunar eclipse was likely, and marked the time point within the four-year Olympiad. In other words, turning the crank would, through complex mechanical transmissions, show simultaneously the progress of the sun, the moon, and the planets, as well as the progress in several other astronomical and non-astronomical cycles

Many aspects of the so-called Antikythera mechanism remain shrouded in mystery, a fact that has led to a host of speculations and claims about its function, some going so far as to describe it as the ‘first ancient computer’. Even setting aside the exaggerations of science journalism, however, what we can say about the device with some degree of certainty still remains impressive.

known in antiquity. The mechanism even displayed variations in the observed velocity of luminaries, such as that caused by the non-circular orbit of the moon. Not quite in a nutshell, the device thus represented—and in fact embodied—a large proportion of ancient astronomic theory and calendrical knowledge.

Recovered from an ancient shipwreck in 1900-1, the 80-odd bronze fragments that survived were later recognized as part of a complex mechanism. Probably encased in a wooden frame the size of a shoe box, it contained an intricate series of gearwheels and spindles, some coaxial, that were driven by a single crank. The gears in turn drove a series of pointers on three dials – the main dial at the front, and two smaller ones at the back, which contained several sub-dials. Each of the pointers represented one astronomical or calendrical attribute of a point in time, from showing the date, the ecliptic position of the sun, the moon, and the five planets on the main front dial, to pointing out the current date in several multi-year cycles at the back. Among



Front and side

Back and side

© Prof. Dr. Alexander Jones

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Astrolabe from the collection of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nuremberg (Detail). It was designed by the mathematician Johannes Praetorius for Melchior Ayrer, a physician in Nuremberg, who collected scientific instruments in the 1560s. Photos: IKGf

Although the dating of the Antikythera mechanism remains inconclusive, with dates suggested as early as 220, and 60 BC at the latest, the device certainly exemplified the height of mechanical engineering during that period. When transforming astronomical theory into mechanical representation, it exhibits a fascinating sense of complexity and detail. Yet, due to both mechanical and theoretical limitations, the mechanism apparently could not be used to predict astronomical phenomena accurately, since inaccuracies from different sources over time would build up to render the representation useless as prediction. What, then, was the function of this mechanism, given that its production would have required a large amount of mechanical and astrological expertise, not to speak of financial resources? Two very tentative answers could be given that might in fact be facets of the same thing: a use in conspicuous consumption by elites is suggested by some of the texts we read



A DOCUMENTARY ON ASTROLABES

The videos in the IKGf documentary series have generated considerable interest, and have proved an important tool in the consortium's efforts to reach out to a general audience. In the latest installment, Dr. Thomas Eser, Head of the collection of scientific instruments and history of medicine, weapons and hunting culture (Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg), introduces the impressive collection of astrolabes held at the museum. The earliest examples in the collection date to the high middle ages and were created in the Arab world, while the latest date from the Renaissance period. Dr. Josefina Rodriguez Arribas (IKGf Visiting Fellow 2014-15) then goes on to explain the features of one particular astrolabe to the audience. With astrolabes, the scientific function of the object once again is closely connected with its aesthetic form as a decorated product of highly skilled craftsmanship, as well as with an element of conspicuous consumption - the possession and display of the astrolabe shows that the owner is well versed in the latest scientific theories about the cosmos, and could claim to literally 'hold the world in his hand', as Dr. Rodriguez Arribas put it.

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> Videos > Documentaries

about similar devices, but also by the context of the discovery, which was a cargo of luxury goods bound for Rome. The other, and by no means mutually exclusive, application could have been that of teaching astrology, as a way to model and represent to students the mechanistic nature of the universe. The Antikythera mechanism in Alexander Jones' interpretation thus would have mainly served to make an argument about cosmology, not a prediction. Yet, as such, it would have an important part to play in a culture of prediction that needed to show that the cosmos was at one's fingertips.

We wish to thank Professor Jones for the fascinating glimpse at this device.

For further reading and references, see:

- M.G. Edmunds. The Antikythera mechanism and the mechanical Universe. *Contemporary Physics*, 55:4 (2014), 263-285.
- Tony Freeth and Alexander Jones. The Cosmos in the Antikythera Mechanism. *ISAW Papers* 4 (February, 2012).

Martin Kroher
(IKGf research fellow)

LECTURE SERIES WS 2015/16

Did the Most Common Practice in Chinese Popular Religion Originate in China? – Tracing the (Buddhist?) Temple Oracle across Asia

Prof. Dr. Esther-Maria Guggenmos (Professor of Chinese Studies, FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg)

The practice of receiving answers to inquiries from a set of oracle stanzas by drawing lots is ubiquitous in Chinese popular religious temple life. The so-called 'temple oracle' (see the groundbreaking study of Banck 1976/1985 and Strickmann 2005) is looking back upon a long tradition: as early as the 4th to 6th century, we find collected sets of oracle answers along the silk road; for example, the Bower manuscript. In the Indian context, throwing dice (Skt. *pāśaka*) has been the common technique associated with the process of selecting the answer. In China, numbered bamboo slips are usually drawn from a cylindrical vessel. The lecture showed that this is in accordance with the long-established usage of bamboo slips and sticks in the Chinese context, be it for writing, drawing lots, or gambling (see figure below). It is the Buddhist context that preserved the Indian technique of throwing dice, but it embedded it into a repentance ritual that is outlined in the *Sūtra on the Divination of the Retribution of Good and Evil Actions* (*Zhancha Shan'e Yebao Jing* 占察善惡業報經, T. 839). In the framework of the author's broader project on the sūtra's translation and the analysis of its cultural history, the inclusion of the wider horizon of omen literature led to deeper insights into the modes of transcultural exchange in the Indo-Sinitic context: instances of transmitted omen literature in Chinese Buddhist sources revealed three different modes of adaptation, ranging from a) simple nominal

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 winter semester 2015/16 summarize their contributions. The lectures of the summer semester 2016 will be part of the next issue of *fate*.

adaptation by the alteration of the oracle's title to b) missionarising transformation, including Buddhist vocabulary and explanatory modes, as far as c) the aforementioned transformative incorporation into a repentance ritual. The latter stands out, as it implies the performative consequence of making the temple oracle obsolete through the practice itself: by performing the ritual, the practitioner is transformed into a Buddhist. The results presented in this lecture constitute part of the author's habilitation project, while the different modes of adaptation are discussed in an article to be published in Kim, Daeyeol, ed. Forthcoming 2017. *Religious and Cultural Plurality in East Asia*, Paris: Collège de France.



Scholars engaging in *tōuhū* 投壺, an ancient game using bamboo arrows already described in the *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經). Stone rubbing from the Han dynasty, tomb near Nanyang, Henan province, source: Needham, Joseph: *Science and Civilization in China* (1962), Vol. 4, Part 1 (Physics), Plate CXIII, Fig 350. Printed with the kind permission of the Needham Research Institute.

*Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom.
The deity is often invoked in the context of divinatory
techniques. Photo and ©: Rolf Scheuermann*

Karma Tuning – Tibetan Buddhist Strategies for Coping with the Future

Dr. Rolf Scheuermann (Tibetan Studies,
IKGF Research Coordinator, FAU Erlan-
gen-Nuremberg)

The goal of religious practice in Tibetan Buddhism is generally defined as becoming a Buddha oneself, which can be understood as a long-term approach to coping with one's individual future. While Tibetan Buddhist soteriology also teaches shortcuts, general accounts explain that the process usually spans long periods of time, involving countless rebirths. In particular, the early stages of the path to Buddhahood are usually made up of, or supplemented by, a great repertoire of practices designed to serve immediate or temporary goals in this lifetime or one's next rebirth. This includes different "worldly" practices for improving one's karma, such as making offerings, engaging in animal release, wearing charm bags or relic containers, partaking in Lama medicine, participating in or sponsoring specific rituals, offering prayers, reciting sacred scriptures and so on.

It is common for religious practitioners or communities to be advised to engage in such practices after consulting a diviner, after specific *omina* have been interpreted, or due to the advice of a holy master with a visionary or prophetic capacity. In Tibet, divinatory practices based on techniques such as divination with coins, dice, rosaries, mirrors, ropes, and drawing lots with dough balls, as well as the examination of signs in dreams, are almost always inspired practices that involve more or less elaborate invocations of Buddhist deities. Being a highly syncretistic religion, Tibetan Buddhism also incorporates spirit-mediumship and oracles, a phenomenon that is widespread in the Himalayas, which can be associated with local spirits as well as Buddhist deities or protectors, as in the case of the famous Nechung state oracle. While all of the former practices involve



different types of inferential or second hand knowledge that can be tainted by ordinary worldly perception—in the case of oracles and spirit-mediumship, worldly deities or the medium may for example err—the best form of prediction is commonly considered to be that of receiving a prophecy by a religious adept, who possesses a direct perception of reality just like the Buddha, and thus the capacity to foresee the future directly. In the case of divinatory techniques that are based on methods, the Buddhist principle of dependent origination (Skt. *pratītyasamūtpāda*, Tib. *rtan 'brel*), which states that things happen due to causes and conditions, plays an important role. It is often used to justify that the divination methods work, in that they merely allow an insight into the current state of the causal interactions and conditions that are at play. What all of the practices have in common is that the predictions received thereby do not point to an irreversible future, but rather indicate a possible future. By applying different religious practices, such as those listed above, unwanted causes and conditions can be removed or new ones created, which may influence or even entirely change the predicted circumstances. Hence, in the Tibetan Buddhist context, predictions are often accompanied by a set of prescribed religious practices, which can be seen as an attempt to fine-tune one's karma and thus improve one's fate.

Popular Belief in Contemporary China – Findings from an Academic Chinese-Language Discourse

Prof. Dr. Monika Gänßbauer (Chinese Studies, FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

As the framework for my analysis, I have chosen the technique of “discourse analysis”. My goal is to outline the discourse that Chinese participants actually engaged in in contemporary discussions. What, then, are the results of such an analysis?

The enunciations of which this discursive field consists show a significant intertwining of the political and academic levels of discourse in China. The hegemonic discourse, which is prescribed by the agents and institutions of the national party-state, adheres firmly to certain premises, such as to the Marxist view of religion, which for Communist Party members is the mandatory interpretative framework, as well as to the definition of the People’s Republic of China as a secular state. The activities of popular belief are—in contrast to those of the five recognized religions of China—not protected under the constitution but, even on the discursive level of the agents and institutions belonging to the party-state, certain tendencies to explore the topic of popular belief and seek an alternative interpretation can be observed.

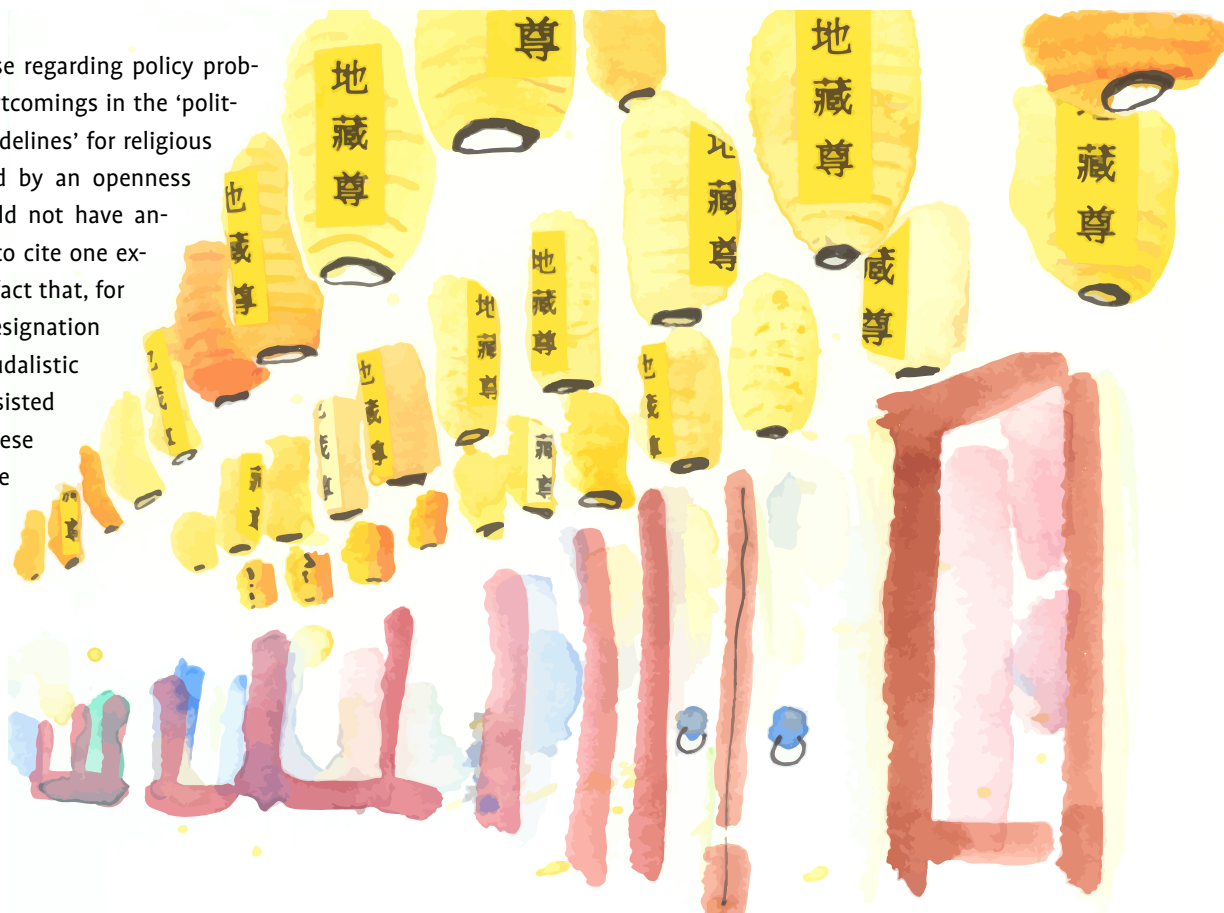
The scholarly discourse regarding policy problems and perceived shortcomings in the ‘political implementation guidelines’ for religious matters is characterized by an openness of a degree that I would not have anticipated. Chen Jinguo, to cite one example, is critical of the fact that, for around 100 years, a designation of popular belief as “feudalistic superstition” has persisted in the discourse of Chinese modernity. Many Chinese scholars explicitly call for a change to this terminology. They make use of certain central concepts within the hegemonic discourse that bear

a positive connotation, such as ‘rational’ and ‘scientific’, and attempt to use these to argue for the recognition of popular belief and in order to bring about a change in the prevailing hierarchy of enunciations.


In his definition of belief, Li Xiangping even argues that China will be unable to make progress until a re-establishment of belief has been accomplished. Such an argument amounts to perceiving the Chinese people in their entirety as a community of ‘believers’.

This appears to be a strategy that aims to elevate the concept of belief from the marginal position it presently occupies in the hegemonic discourse of the PRC.

*View into a temple. Photo and copyright:
Prof. Dr. Monika Gänßbauer*



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From Cybernetics to Big Data – Science-Fictional and Socio-Philosophical Imaginations of a Predictable Future in Japan

Prof. Dr. Fabian Schäfer (Professor of Japanese Studies, FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg; IKGF Visiting Fellow)



Abe Kōbō (Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C5%8Db%C5%8D_Abe#/media/File:Abe_Kobo_cooks_jiaozi. JPG: public domain)

In contrast to the sinking importance or, as some would argue, even total absence of future-related counter-realities (反現実) in the field of politics or social and philosophical thought in recent times (Mita Munetsuke), the relatively rich and productive science-fictional field of Japanese literature and popular culture continuously produced utopian or dystopian imaginations that are worth revisiting. Abe Kōbō, one of the most prolific literary figures of postwar Japan, in the postscript to his SF-novel, *Inter-Ice Age 4* (第四間氷期), describes his motive for devoting himself to Science Fiction as follows: his intention was “to grasp the image of a future that intrudes (闖入) on the present, a future that sits in judgment”, since SF as a genre has the power to interrupt our “usual sense of continuity” prevalent “in the very com-

monplace order of things (平凡な秩序) we call everyday life.” In the same vein, the Marxist literary critic Frederic Jameson argues that the speculative, but scientifically realistic, narrations of possible futures represented in SF are able to cause what he calls “disruption(s) (Beunruhigung) of the present”—it “defamiliarize[s] and restructure[s] our experience of our own present.” Hence, SF is interesting as a literary form because it is capable of criticizing a speculative but scientifically possible future, that is extrapolated from the current (political, social, cultural, and scientific) conditions.

Abe’s novel, written under the influence of an intensifying cold war conflict at the end of the 1950s, and thus at a time of a great popularity of cybernetics and the early stages in the development of computer technology, tells the story of a scientist who is involved in the development of a “forecasting machine”, which can predict events in the immediate future. The novel could be read as a severe criticism of the heightening belief in the predictability of the future in the age of cybernetics and computer calculations, at a time in the 1950s and 60s when Japanese-American foreign policy was based solely on *realpolitik*. Abe alerts his reader to the fact that prognoses entail the danger of their monopolization, irrespective of the political system, because any prediction (be it a statistical forecast or a political or economic simulation game) “influence[s] the future”, as one of the protagonist states at one point. Authoritative prognoses (in planned economies as well as—theoretically—free-market economies) are in danger of eventually turning into supposedly inherent constraints; that is to say, a political necessity, to which an alternative, a “different future” is then hardly imaginable. As one of the characters puts it in Abe’s novel, already the thought that “political prediction is possible is itself political in nature”. Abe makes it perfectly clear that political or economic prognoses are nothing but “fictional expectations” or “imagined futures”, and that actors acting upon a prognosis necessarily act “as if” the future would unfold as predicted.



Prof. Dr. Fabian Schäfer. Photo: IKGF

Chance and Fortune in Old Tibetan Dice Divination and the Hunt

Prof. Dr. Brandon Dotson (Associate Professor of Buddhist Studies, Georgetown University; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

We know of Old Tibetan dice divination through over a dozen 9th-10th-century manuscripts from Dunhuang and Turfan. Like the Turkic tradition recorded in the *Irk Bitig*, and certain Indian traditions found in the *Pāśakakevalī*, Tibetans used three rectangular four-sided dice. Combining the three “dice falls” produces 64 possible combinations, each of which corresponds to an entry or paragraph in a dice divination text. Each entry typically consists of three parts. The first part is the omen, often in verse, typically imagistic, and sometimes issuing from the mouth of a deity. The second part is the explanation. It reports the omen’s utility with respect to various types of “fortune” (Tib. *phyva*), e.g., trade-, family-, conflict-, and illness- fortune. The third and final part is the summary of the prognosis, which simply states, “good,” “bad,” or “middling,” such that the overall meaning, whatever the obscurity of the omen’s words, is abundantly clear at the end.

In omen after omen, antelopes, deer, female yaks, and other wild animals populate highlands ringed by cliffs and protected



Prof. Dr. Brandon Dotson. Photo: IKGF

by goddesses. This evocation of wild animals and wilderness participates in a larger Tibetan economy of fortune, in which certain rituals call in good fortune from the outside; that is, from the wilderness and from wild animals into the domestic space, humans, and livestock. Such appropriation of the wild

LECTURE SERIES WS 2015/16

Overview of the lectures of winter semester 2015/16:

13.10.2015: Did the Most Common Practice in Chinese Popular Religion Originate in China? – Tracing the (Buddhist?) Temple Oracle Across Asia **Esther-Maria Guggenmos** (Professor of Chinese Studies, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

20.10.2015: Karma Tuning – Tibetan Buddhist Strategies for Coping with the Future **Rolf Scheuermann** (Tibetan Studies, IKGF Research Coordinator, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

03.11.2015: Popular Belief in Contemporary China – Findings from an Academic Chinese-Language Discourse **Monika Gänßbauer** (Chinese Studies, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

10.11.2015: From Cybernetics to Big Data – Science-Fictional and Socio-Philosophical Imaginations of a Predictable Future in Japan **Fabian Schäfer** (Professor of Japanese Studies, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

17.11.2015: Chance and Fortune in Old Tibetan Dice Divination and the Hunt **Brandon Dotson** (Tibetan Studies, Research Group “Kingship and Religion in Tibet”, Ludwig-Maximilians-University München; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

24.11.2015: Between Fate, *Providentia Dei*, and the Free Will – Investiga-

tions in Medieval Canon Law on the Basis of Selected Examples: The *Collectio Hibernensis* (8th c.) **Andreas Holndorner** (Medieval History, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

08.12.2015: Extant Greco-Latin Horoscopes – Their Contexts and Uses **Stephan Heilen** (Professor of Classical Philology, Osnabrück University; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

15.12.2015: “Momentarily I Am Studying Medieval Theories of Providence.” – Leo Strauss on Fate, Freedom, and Prognosis **PThomas Meyer** (Philosophy, Theory of Science, and the Study of Religions, Ludwig-Maximilians-University München; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

19.01.2016: Rationale Zukunftsgestaltung in der römischen Antike **Ulrike Ehmig** (Archaeology and Ancient History, SFB 933 “Material Text Cultures”, Heidelberg University)

26.01.2016: A Handbook of Prognostication in the Middle Ages – Concepts and Approaches **Klaus Herbers** (Professor of Medieval History and Auxiliary Historical Sciences, IKGF Deputy Director, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

02.02.2016: Scholar Meets Expert – The Traditional Chinese Elite’s Assessment of Mantic Practices **Michael Lackner** (Professor of Chinese Studies, IKGF Director, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

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by the tame is enacted ludically in dice divination where, unlike the “work” of a fortune-summoning ritual, dice interject chance and the danger that one can lose fortune and face ill health or death.

This dynamic of the contest with the wild, and with wild animals and their goddess protectors, along with the several references to hunting in the omens, suggests that dice divination

has a complex relationship with hunting. Through the former, humans appropriate the fortunate essence of the wild, and through the latter, they incorporate the wild into their human bodies. Exploring the place of animals in Tibetan dice divination thus offers insights into the nature of this technology, and also raises interesting questions about Tibetan personhood and the place of animals in early Tibetan cosmologies.

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Between Fate, Providentia Dei, and Free Will – Investigations into Medieval Canon Law on the Basis of Selected Examples: The *Collectio Hibernensis* (700–1140)

Dr. Andreas Holndonner (Medieval History, FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

In contrast to the modern world with its civil liberties, personal freedom is said to have been absent in the Middle Ages. Its hierarchical society, in which everyone’s position was determined by their birth, by and large remained stable over time. This remarkable stability of the medieval feudal society in the face of frequent crises cannot be satisfactorily explained merely by pointing to the power of the factual. One has to bear in mind that it was also based on fundamental religious convictions that were prevalent during this period. According to contemporary beliefs, the hierarchy on earth was merely a reflection of the hierarchy in heaven: every single creature—heavenly angels and archangels on one hand and this-worldly peasants, clerics, and noblemen on the other—occupied the position it had been assigned by the Lord. Given these circumstances it is curious



Dr. Andreas Holndonner. Photo: IKGF

Wheel of Fortune
(Source: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortuna#/media/File:Fortune_Wheel.jpg; public domain)



how persistently especially Christianity emphasized the free will of men and their personal responsibility for their actions. The main question guiding my investigation is the extent to which people in the Middle Ages felt that their deeds and decisions were directed and controlled by a higher power (the Christian Lord or ancient, respectively pagan, imaginations of fate) or believed that they possessed agency over their own lives. Moreover, if every single life journey was fixed, was there a way to forecast this through the help of mantic practices? First, I investigated the reception and adoption of ancient Roman, Greek, or even Germanic and Celtic imaginations of fate (*fortuna*, *heimarmene*, *Lytir*) as a possible intellectual background for the subsequent analysis of selected canonical collections of the Early and High Middle Ages on that issue (the early Irish *Collectio hibernensis*, Burchard of Worms, *Decretum in libri XX* and the *Decretum Gratiani*).

Extant Greco-Latin Horoscopes – Their Contexts and Uses

Prof. Dr. Stephan Heilen (Professor of Classical Philology, Osnabrück University; IKGf Visiting Fellow)

Until recently, little attention was paid to the contexts and uses of extant Greco-Latin horoscopes. There is, however, a new research trend that aims to investigate the cultural, social, and institutional contexts in which ancient astronomy and astrology played a role, and many formerly unknown horoscopes have been discovered in recent decades (for an updated catalogue, see S. Heilen, *Hadriani genitura* [...], Berlin 2015, pp. 213-330). The extant record comprises 353 datable horoscopes (345 Greek, 8 Latin), of which 169 are original documents (168 Greek, 1 Latin), which are mostly preserved on papyrus (rarely on wood, ostraca, parchment, gems, etc.) and usually report the astronomical data without a prediction of the future (this was delivered orally), while 184 (177 Greek, 7 Latin) come from literary sources and tend to consist of anonymized and retrospective sample nativities contained in astrological manuals.

At least some of the authors of original horoscopes, although writing in Greek, were Hellenized Egyptians who practiced in or near Egyptian temples. One text (P. Lond. I 98 for a birth in 95 CE) actually switches from Greek to Old Coptic (i.e., to Egyptian) after some 80 lines. We have evidence of horoscope databases created by ancient astrologers based on hundreds of consultations with clients, and of clients who consulted more than one expert. The clients belonged to all levels of ancient society. Only late and rarely do we find horoscopes in magical or Christian contexts. Horoscopes could be used to assert one's identi-

ty on a seal ring or as a poetical sphragis. Among the biographical details that called for explanations in sample analyses of horoscopes in astrological manuals, the most frequently discussed ones are premature death (infant mortality as well as violent deaths of adults), bodily disability and illness, sexuality and erotic desires (but never romantic love), lawsuits, trials, and exile.

It seems that astrologers were expected to make both the past, especially major misfortunes, and the future intelligible, and thus bearable, as manifestations of an orderly cosmos, as opposed to the unbearable notion that our lives could be subject to meaningless, blind chance. An expanded version of this lecture will be published in Alan C. Bowen & Francesca Rochberg (eds.), *Ancient Astronomy in Its Mediterranean Context (300 BC-AD 300): A Brill Companion* (ca. 2017).



Ancient horoscope gem featuring the planetary alignment of 11 September 195 CE. Top: Kassel Ge 80 (obverse); bottom: Kassel Ge 80 (reverse). Printed with the kind permission of the Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Antikensammlung

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

“Momentarily I Am Studying Medieval Theories of Providence.” - Leo Strauss on Fate, Freedom, and Prognosis

PD Dr. Thomas Meyer (Philosophy, Theory of Science, and the Study of Religions, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich; IKGf Visiting Fellow)

With the help of some hitherto unknown documents, I outlined a new perspective in my lecture on the connection between Leo Strauss's singular life and his work—a perspective that offers not only new information, but also provides us with the opportunity either to reconsider our own experience as readers of Leo Strauss or to think about Strauss for the first time.

In the first part of my lecture, I analyzed the original Walgreen lectures, held in October 1949, which represent a first draft of what is probably Strauss' best known book, “Natural Right and History”, published in 1953 (German translation 1956).

The second part offered a new reading of Strauss' interpretation of Jewish and Islamic Medieval Philosophy. Here, his unpublished paper on “How to study Islamic Philosophy?” formed the starting point. The rejection of modern premises—most prominently, that we can understand an author better as he understood himself—was for Strauss the basis of his new evaluation of medieval sources. The conflict between “Athens” and “Jerusalem”, “Reason” and “Revelation”, and “Philosophy” and “Law” was of great importance in Strauss' autobiography: born into an observant and quasi-orthodox Jewish family, these elements constituted an essential part of his sense of self and the struggles he had to endure: am I a philosopher or am I a Jew, in the full sense of the word?



PD Dr. Thomas Meyer. Photo: IKGf

The last part of my lecture addressed Strauss' religious rhetoric: for him, this rhetoric was neither a way to make up for an inadequate argument, nor a superficial adornment. On the contrary, he deployed religious rhetoric in the same way as he saw it function in the work of thinkers as diverse as Plato and Aristotle, Maimonides and Abravanel, Spinoza and Hobbes, as well as Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, and Julius Guttmann: as an expression of the complex contest between philosophy and religion.

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Rationale Zukunftsgestaltung in der römischen Antike

PD Dr. Ulrike Ehmig (Archaeology and Ancient History, SFB 933 “Material Text Cultures”, Heidelberg University)

Fragt man nach Strategien der Bewältigung künftiger Ereignisse in der Antike, impliziert das die Überlegung, was Menschen vor 2000 Jahren als Risiken wahrnahmen und wie sie mit entsprechenden Situationen umgingen. Auch wenn Untersuchungen aus unterschiedlichsten Bereichen der Altertumswissenschaften

bereits Material und Ergebnisse geliefert haben, ist das Feld einer Risikoforschung zur Antike noch unbestellt: Es fehlen ein konsequent durchdachter Zugang, eine Auseinandersetzung mit dem Risikobegriff und seinen Wurzeln sowie systematische Studien zu verschiedensten Lebensbereichen. In den vergange-



PD Dr. Ulrike Ehmig. Photo: IKGf

nen Jahren habe ich mittels Fallstudien begonnen, das Potenzial eines solchen Forschungsfeldes für die Antike aufzuzeigen.

Die zentrale Frage der modernen Risikoforschung, nämlich wie wahrscheinlich es ist, dass ein Sachverhalt einen negativen Ausgang nimmt, wurde zuerst und grundlegend anhand des Würfelspiels erörtert. Die ersten Belege dafür bieten schriftliche Quellen aus der Mitte des 13. Jahrhun-

derts. Wahrscheinlich aber reichen sie viel weiter zurück: Auch im Lateinischen nämlich ist das mit Risiko zu verbindende Bedeutungsfeld von Redewendungen geprägt, in denen *alea*, der Würfel, eine zentrale Rolle spielt (1). Das antike epistemische, bisweilen aber auch bereits aleatorische Verständnis von Wahrscheinlichkeiten lässt sich an antiken Beobachtungen zur Wurfhäufigkeit bestimmter Orakelsprüche ebenso erkennen wie an Erhebungen für Steuer- und Bedarfsermittlungen (2).

Anhand lateinischer Votivinschriften habe ich mich mit jenen Ereignissen und Sachverhalten beschäftigt, die breite Bevölkerungsgruppen speziell auch in den Provinzen des Reiches nur mit göttlicher Hilfe zu überstehen glaubten (3). Hieran schloss ein Vergleich mit Grabinschriften an, die eine Todesursache benennen. Ziel war, zu bestimmen, inwieweit die in Votivinschriften fassbare subjektive Wahrnehmung möglicher Gefahren und Nachteile ein Pendant in tatsächlichen Risikosituationen hatte (4).

Die Überlegung, was den Petenten der göttliche Beistand wert war, lässt sich besonders anhand epigraphisch bezeugter Baumaßnahmen verfolgen (5). Viel häufiger als mit Inschriften aber dokumentierte man mit Votivobjekten die Bewältigung von Zukunftsängsten und schwierigen Situationen. Exemplarisch wurde dies für den Bereich von Schwangerschaft und Geburt anhand von Votiven in Form von Wickelkindern, dem weiblichen Uterus sowie magischen Gemmen erläutert (6).

Für die antike Wirtschaft war, nicht anders als heute, Risikominimierung von zentraler Bedeutung. Das neue Forschungsfeld ist gerade in diesem Bereich besonders geeignet, archäologische Beobachtungen und juristische Quellen zusammenzuführen: Die Aufschriften auf Amphoren, deren Hauptbestimmung der Seetransport bestimmter Waren war, konnten überzeugend als dokumentarischer Niederschlag von Seedarlehen erklärt werden (7).

Auf der Grundlage der Pilotstudien lässt sich ein sehr interdisziplinäres Forschungsfeld mit weitge-



Dice cup and loaded dice from a Roman outpost on the road to the Red Sea; printed with the kind permission of H el ene Cuvigny (Photo: Adam B ulow-Jacobsen).



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streuten Ideen für weitere Studien umreißen. Dabei zieht es aus sämtlichen Quellengruppen, seien es literarische Zeugnisse, Papyri, Inschriften und Münzen oder archäologischen Befunden und Funden, Gewinn. Ihre Analyse erfährt durch den an der modernen Risikoforschung orientierten Zugang eine Aktualität, die für die Altertumswissenschaften keineswegs selbstverständlich ist.

INSIGHT

Rational Ways of Shaping the Future in Roman Antiquity
The lecture posed the provocative question whether the Romans already had a sense for probabilities when dealing with the future, several centuries before the problem of probabilities was explicitly discussed for dice games in the 13th century. Drawing on examples from different contexts, Ulrike Ehmig showed conclusively that it is wrong to assume that the absence of such explicit discussions allows us to conclude that considering probabilities did not play a role in diverse areas of everyday life, from maritime trade to warding off probable causes of illness and death by religious rituals.

A Handbook of Prognostication in the Middle Ages – Concepts and Approaches

Prof. Dr. Klaus Herbers (Professor of Medieval History and Auxiliary Sciences of History, IKG Deputy Director, FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg)

When bringing together saints, angels, and constellations of stars, the iconographic program of the star mantle of Henry II (picture, tentatively dated 1018-1023) claimed to represent the whole world, the cosmos, which evidently included the future within its scope, given the presence on it of astrological information and dicta. Later attempts at restoration seem to have taken considerable 'editorial' liberty with the imagery and inscriptions of the mantle, making it hard to say much about its original arrangement and content; nevertheless, it is still apparent that this world is more an imagined space, where saints, angels, and constellations constitute the companions of the ruler navigating it; coping with and predicting a contingent future goes hand in hand with a claim to power, a combination that appears typical for medieval conceptions of prognostication and the future.


Likewise, eschatological knowledge plays an important role in knowing the future in the medieval period, which becomes obvious in the second concrete example that Professor Herbers presented to introduce the subject. The second Pamplona Bible was commissioned by King Sancho VII the Strong towards the end of the 12th century. Its illustrations combine prophetic elements of the Bible and stories about the life and death of saints and martyrs with the tradition of the so-called Tiburtine Sibyl, which here was incorporated into the Christian History of Salvation. Following the devastating defeat at the battle of

Alarcos in 1195, Sancho was accused of being in cahoots with the Muslim Almohads; he probably felt the need to display his piety with this illustrated Bible, in order to show to the world how he intended to counter the Antichrist. In other words, once again, the preservation of power was an important motive for invoking a vision of the—in this case eschatological—future. The Pamplona Bible thus is an important representative of the prophetic tradition, known since the Old Testament, which had originally, however, been more about bringing hidden knowledge to light, rather than knowledge about the future.

Prognostication hitherto has not been a dominant field of research regarding the Middle Ages, which is why this cooperation with Chinese studies will have a considerable impact on this discipline. The two aforementioned examples represent important areas that need to be incorporated into a handbook of prognostication in this field. These areas would also have to be differentiated from, or placed in relation to, ideas on prognostication in East Asian societies. Léon Vandermeersch argued that the Chinese script was invented to record divination, instead of actualities, and that accordingly it was a 'divinatory', man-tic rationality instead of a theological one that was prevalent since the early days of this civilization. In the West, both the ancient and Christian traditions esteemed the prophet, but less so calculations that purported to divine the future. In this way, prophecy and prediction were more centered on a person than a

Star Mantel of Henry II;
Domschatzkammer in Bamberg.
Photo: Prof. Dr. Klaus Herbers



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technique, which inspired Max Weber to coin the term ‘prophetic charisma’, as opposed to the charisma of a mage or a priest.

But what distinguished these visions of the future? It has been claimed that the projection of utopian ideas was absent in the Middle Ages, and that only with Thomas Morus and Humanism did ideal places and ideal times become apparent. Yet, this claim is based on a definition that is largely confined to political utopias, which can be contrasted with other ideal concepts, such as Biblical ideas of paradise, their this-worldly counterpart of a shapeable world in a monastery or in architecture, as well as notions of the ideal human being as they appeared in the perfect creatures of Adam and Eve before the Fall. Aside from the narrative of history that was dominant in medieval times, namely a succession of empires that would be elevated to a higher state at the end of time, various other traditions had their basis in hermetic knowledge and prognostic practices: astrology and horoscopy, haruspicy, numerology, and many other medical and meteorological prediction techniques, which in many cases had their roots in ancient knowledge that had found its way to the West via the Arab world. The discussion

of these techniques was often dominated by the question of whether they departed from accepted beliefs or not.

The focus of this presentation was on the Latin-Christian world, but a handbook that would exclude the Eastern Mediterranean, that is, the Greek-Byzantine, Jewish, and Muslim-Arab traditions, would run the risk of essentialising what was only part of the European sphere, while ignoring the cultural exchange that was fundamental to many developments. The preliminary outline therefore includes sections dedicated to prediction in these areas and traditions, as well as to their ancient pagan precursors, although all of these of course should be integrated as much as possible both with each other and with the Latin-Christian part. Prof. Herbers closed the lecture with an overview of the research publications on European and Medieval topics that were published by IKGf during its first six years, which are too numerous to list here (include link to featured publications website)—suffice it to say that the consortium’s research has prepared the ground well for the tasks ahead.

Martin Kroher (IKGF, Research Fellow)

Scholar Meets Expert – The Traditional Chinese Elite’s Assessment of Mantic Practices

Prof. Dr. Michael Lackner (IKGF Director / Professor of Chinese Studies, FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg)

The study of China has long oscillated between two master narratives: beginning with the Jesuit Missionaries, China, and particularly its intellectual and political tradition, has been celebrated by one narrative as the embodiment of rationality and

reason, that is, of enlightenment values. Over the course of the 18th century, this praise was turned on its head, and China came to be reviled equally fervently as a hotbed of superstition and backwardness. The sinologist de Groot (1854-1921) provides a

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later, academically better grounded example of this view, which holds that superstition pervades everything in China, from the daily life (*Lebenswelt*) of commoners to the worldview (*Weltanschauung*) of the elite—an argument that has greatly influenced Max Weber’s work on the Chinese ‘ideal type’. Heiner Rötz in turn criticized this view of China, which he calls universism, when he attested that Chinese philosophy in fact knew the separation of man and nature, subject and object, that, again, is considered a hallmark of Western thought. It is noteworthy that both scholars had based their argument on original sources.

After illustrating the history of these narratives, Michael Lackner drew on one of the rare assessments of mantic arts and divination in late imperial China in order to argue for the possibility of a third option, which refrains from constructing either a positive or negative Other in China. The scholar-official, Ji Yun (1724-1805), is renowned as one of the compilers of the monumental *Siku Quanshu* 四庫全書, which aspired to provide an exhaustive archive of the Chinese textual tradition, but also used this opportunity to exclude and effectively ban books that appeared detrimental to the Qing Dynasty and its interests. Contrary to de Groot’s findings, Lackner shows how Ji Yun offered assessments depending on the context: in his official function as compiler, Ji Yun expounds a worldview, *Weltanschauung*, that relegates the mantic arts to a secondary position as ‘minor ways’ within the canon of traditional knowledge, which, however, cannot be excluded due to their long tradition and the possibility that they offer some benefit. However, ‘minor ways require a minor genre’, and therefore it is in Ji Yun’s brushnotes (*Biji*), which purport to have been written from the perspective of a private intellectual, where we find a more thorough and nuanced assessment of the mantic arts. Here, we see that divination was indeed an important aspect of his daily life (*Lebenswelt*), and in the anecdotes about physiognomy and his father consulting a spirit-medium, the contours of a theoretical assessment of prediction and fate become visible.


Ji Yun’s anecdotes recount how an unintelligible verdict would often only become clear after the fact, while instances of fraud and trickery were abundant in this area. He nevertheless maintained that prediction and fortune telling did work in principle. It is the art of spirit writing, which incorporated written language and literary learning, that particularly interested the *literatus* Ji Yun, and that inspired one of his claims about the

INSIGHT

On January 28, 2016, a version of this lecture was given at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study (Uppsala) under the title: Traditional China: ‘Superstitious’ or ‘Rational’? Another View of Cross-cultural Master Narratives. A video can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/153885930>

nature of *ling* 靈 (≈numinosity)—rather than being a quality of the spirit that is contacted, or of the material objects that are used in other techniques, it is the ability and talent of the human being using and contacting them that is *ling* and leads to successful divination. Even non-Chinese divination techniques worked in this way, such as the Mongol ones that he witnessed. The code, the pattern of the world and the events taking place therein are indeed knowable and predictable, spirits and portents merely communicate something that already exists in the mind or in the workings of *qi*, respectively. In other words, Ji Yun does not deny the existence of ghosts and spirits, but shifts the locus where successful prediction and management of the future takes place from the spirits to the humans themselves, who, in important cases, can even modify the fixed code. His employment of the genre of brushnotes allows different voices to express an ambiguous assessment of fate and predetermination, which on the one hand claims that everything is indeed fated, but on the other does not absolve humans from taking responsibility for both their own destiny and that of the larger world. In this way, Ji Yun, in his attempt to assess the superstitious in a rational manner, falls midway between the two extreme categories that we tend to apply to the Chinese case.

Martin Kroher (IKGF Research Fellow)

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Divination and the Strange in Pre- and Early Modern East Asia and Europe

Convenor: Dr. Sophia Katz (Tel-Hai College, Israel);
Workshop, Erlangen, October 27-28, 2015

Fifteen scholars associated with the Consortium gathered for a two-day conference, in order to explore possible connections between appearances perceived as anomalies (the occurrence of monsters, strange births, bodily deformities, gender transformations, demonic possessions, communication with ghosts and spirits) and divinatory practices. The workshop attracted a sizeable audience of about seventy.

IKGF director Prof. Michael Lackner opened the conference with a welcome address, while workshop convenor Dr. Sophia Katz introduced the topic and the program. Both speakers emphasized the importance of having an academic discussion on these various strange phenomena and their connections to human attempts to understand the course of future events. Special emphasis was placed on the necessity of undertaking a theoretical evaluation of the concept of the strange, the understanding of which varies across different cultures and historical periods.

Tuesday, October 27, 2015

PANEL 1: MONSTERS, PORTENTS AND PRODIGIES IN PRE-MODERN EAST ASIA AND MEDIEVAL EUROPE

Mi'am Ci: Exploring the Strange, the Grotesque, and the Wondrous in the Land of Snows

Prof. Donatella Rossi (Sapienza University of Rome)

Discussant: Prof. Fabrizio Pregadio (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

The Man-Bird Mountain: Writing, Revelation, and Winged Beings in Early China

Prof. Fabrizio Pregadio (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Discussant: Dr. Burchard J. Mansvelt Beck (Leiden University)

Prodigies and Divination in Classical and Medieval Western Europe

Prof. Stefano Rapisarda (University of Catania)

Discussant: Dr. Hans-Christian Lehner (IKGF Erlangen)

Historiographical Handling of Monstrous Births in the European High Middle Ages

Dr. Hans-Christian Lehner (IKGF Erlangen)

Discussant: Prof. Stefano Rapisarda (University of Catania)

PANEL 2: DIVINATION, STRANGENESS AND LITERATI IN EAST ASIA

Demon Hunters and Performers of Miracles: Common Ground Between the So-called Confucians, Buddhists, and Daoists in Early Medieval China

Dr. Zhao Lu (IKGF Erlangen)

Discussant: Dr. Esther-Maria Guggenmos (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Divination and the Strange in the *Liaozhai zhiyi*

Dr. Sophia Katz (Tel-Hai College)

Discussant: Dr. Vladimír Glomb (Charles University in Prague)

Laughing Literati and Fortune-Telling Confucians: Stories about Prognostication in *Ōu yadam*

Dr. Vladimír Glomb (Charles University in Prague)

Discussant: Prof. Donatella Rossi (Sapienza University of Rome)

Taming the Demonic: Emergence of a Modern Discourse on the Uncanny in Japan

Prof. Faye Kleeman (University of Colorado)

Discussant: Prof. Tze-ki Hon (State University of New York at Geneseo)

Panel 1: Monsters, Portents and Prodigies in Pre-Modern East Asia and Medieval Europe

The first panel introduced the workshop theme in different cultural contexts. Prof. Donatella Rossi (Sapienza University of Rome) opened the panel with a talk that stimulated intercultural and interdisciplinary reflections about the notion of the strange, while focusing on specific features pertaining to Tibetan culture. Prof. Rossi presented a more comprehensive evaluation of the realms associated with the strange, using examples from Tibetan traditions that also include the semantics of the grotesque and the wondrous. The next speaker, Prof. Fabrizio Pregadio (FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg), concentrated on the picture of the Man-Bird Mountain (*Renniao shan* 人鳥山) in the Daoist Canon and on the related themes of “winged men” (*yuren* 羽人) and “bird-language,” which is not spoken and occurs in written form only.

Prof. Stefano Rapisarda (University of Catania) and Dr. Hans-Christian Lehner (IKGF Erlangen) then introduced the theme of “divination and the strange” in Medieval European settings. Prof. Rapisarda discussed the cases of multiple births (twins and triplets), which are explained differently in Greek and Roman cultures, yet constituted a challenge for the theory of astrology. Prof. Rapisarda also explored the Latin lexicon of prodigies in the writings of Isidore of Seville (7th century), referring to terms such as “*miracula*”, “*monstra*”, “*prodigium*”, “*portentum*”, and “*ostensum*”. In the talk that followed, Dr. Lehner drew attention to the significance of the so-called “monstrous beings” (people born with physical anomalies) for the purpose of predicting the future. He presented three examples of monstrous nativities from the 12th century A.D., emphasizing the

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difference between accounts about monstrous individuals (individuals born with physical anomalies among people with no anomalies), traditionally perceived as signs of future events, and “monstrous communities” (groups of people who were considered as monstrous collectively), who were considered miracles with no significance for the future.

The format of the conference was such that each presentation was followed by a short reply by a discussant; each panel culminated with a round table discussion, to give the participants and the audience the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the issues raised. During the concluding discussion, it was noted that, in monistic settings, it is in fact impossible to discern

the states of “the normal” and “the strange” from the metaphysical perspective. Moreover, the deviation from the norm (“the strange”) does not always have negative connotations. In Tibetan cultures and Mahayana Buddhism, the strange is perceived positively as one of the purest states of existence. Another issue raised is the necessity to distinguish between two different modes of interpretation of “the strange” beings and events. While, in some cases, people seek natural causes for the strange, searching for a reason without applying meaning, in others they explicitly attribute a meaning to the strange happening and interpret it as a sign.

Panel 2: Divination, Strangeness, and *Literati* in East Asia

The second session was dedicated to East Asian *literati*'s perceptions of the connections between divination and the strange in China, Korea and Japan. Against the background of the literary genre of “records of the strange” (*zhiguai* 志怪), Dr. Zhao Lu (IKGF Erlangen) explored the connections between the descriptions of the strange in the Six Dynasties (AD 220–589) *zhiguai* collections and the teachings of the Confucian classics. He suggested that, while scholars in the Six Dynasties often labeled themselves as Confucian and attributed pejorative features to the labels of their rivals, they shared the same culture, in which so-called Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism were all actively involved. Dr. Sophia Katz (Tel-Hai College) explored the descriptions of divination and diviners in the *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異 (Liaozhai's Records of the Strange), a collection of approximately 500 stories written by the 17th century scholar, Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640–1715). Her paper examined the issue of strangeness and normalcy in connection to these divinatory techniques, suggesting that the nature of Pu Songling's descriptions enables one to distinguish between techniques that were very common and “normal” in Chinese society and techniques that were relatively rare and therefore “strange”.

Dr. Vladimir Glomb (Charles University in Prague) assessed the theme of divination and the strange in pre-modern Korea by examining a collection of stories about the strange, *Ōu yadam* 於于野譚 (Wild Tales of Mr. Ōu) written by the high-ranking Confucian official, Yu Mongin 柳夢寅 (1559–1623). Dr. Glomb pointed out that, according to Yu Mongin, not all diviners, but only extraordinary and well-prepared individuals—such as renowned scholars or prominent fortune tellers—could properly interpret extraordinary (or strange) events. Prof. Faye Y. Kleeman (University of Colorado, Boulder) discussed the emergence of the modern discourse of the uncanny in Japan. Prof. Kleeman illustrated the process of synchronizing indigenous folk beliefs in the fantastic, the demonic, and the unknown through modern science and rationalization by means of analyzing the writings of the religious philosopher Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919) and the founding father of Japanese ethnology, Yanagita Kunio 柳田国男 (1875–1962).

Wednesday, October 28, 2015

PANEL 3: STRANGENESS, PORTENTOLGY, AND DIVINATION IN PRE-MODERN CHINA (I): EARLY TEXTUAL SOURCES AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Danger and Disorder: Reading Anomalies and Strange Events in the *Yijing*

Prof. Tze-ki Hon (State University of New York at Geneseo)
Discussant: Dr. Zhao Lu (IKGF Erlangen)

Strange Creatures and Prodigies in the *Shanhajing* and in Some Chu Bamboo Manuscripts

Dr. Marco Caboara (HKUST Hong Kong), *in absentia*
Discussant: Prof. Terry Kleeman (University of Colorado)

Divination and Demonology in Daoist Ritual Treatments of the Dead

Prof. Terry Kleeman (University of Colorado)
Discussant: Prof. Joachim Gentz (University of Edinburgh)

Divining by Diving into the Strange: Examples from the *Biographies of Thaumaturge Monks* (*Shenseng Zhuan*, T. 2064)

Dr. Esther-Maria Guggenmos (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)
Discussant: Prof. Faye Kleeman (University of Colorado)

PANEL 4: STRANGENESS, PORTENTOLGY, AND DIVINATION IN PRE-MODERN CHINA (II): HAN AND LIU SONG DYNASTIES

Uses We Can and Cannot Make of the Portent Treatises

Dr. Burchard J. Mansvelt Beck (Leiden University)
Discussant: Prof. Tiziana Lippiello (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

“Falling Stones: Five. Six: Fish-Hawks Flying Backwards.” Readings of a Strange Record

Prof. Joachim Gentz (University of Edinburgh)
Discussant: Dr. Grégoire Espeset (CRCAO Paris)

Portents in Han China and Some Weft (*wei*) Observational Patterns: An Experiment

Dr. Grégoire Espeset (CRCAO Paris)
Discussant: Prof. Joachim Gentz (University of Edinburgh)

Why Was Shen Yue So Fond of Auspicious Signs?

Prof. Tiziana Lippiello (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)
Discussant: Dr. Burchard J. Mansvelt Beck (Leiden University)

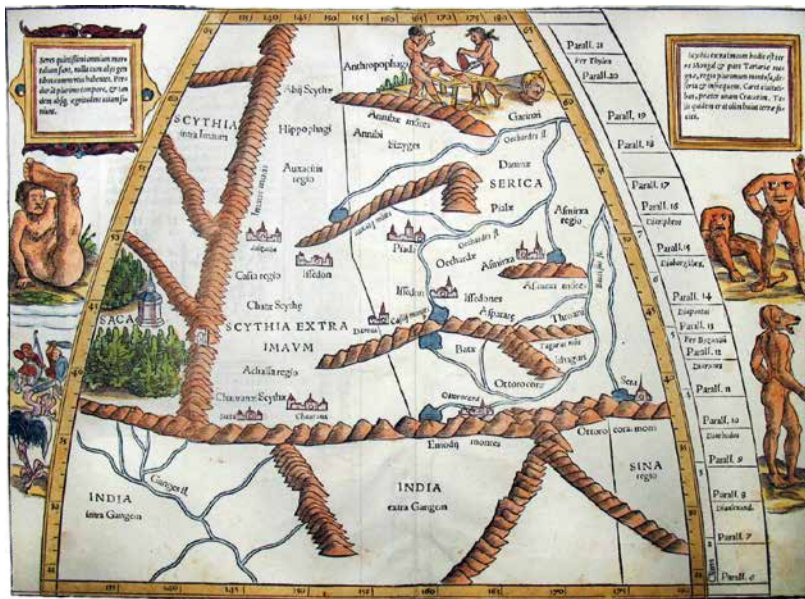
During the discussion following the panel, the participants emphasized once again the importance of clarifying the Chinese, Korean, Japanese and European terms used to denote the strange. Yet, they also noted that the use of different terms does not always imply a deeper significance: for example, three Chinese terms for the strange (*guai* 怪, *qi* 奇, and *yi* 異) are often used interchangeably. The participants also pointed out the necessity of considering gender issues, noting that, in Korea, for example, the majority of spirit-mediums are female. There was general agreement that what united the approaches of Chinese, Korean and Japanese *literati* in relation to divination and the strange was a critique of the blind belief in fate, on the one hand, and an emphasis on the importance of morality on the other.

Panel 3: Strangeness, Portentology, and Divination in Pre-Modern China (I): Early Textual Sources and Religious Traditions

Unlike the first day of the workshop, which explored the topic in a broader historical and cultural context, the second day was exclusively dedicated to the exploration of strangeness, portentology, and divination in pre-modern China. The morning panel focused on early textual sources in religious Daoism and Buddhism. The afternoon panel explored strangeness, portentology, and divination during the Han and Liu Song dynasties.

In his lecture, Prof. Tze-ki Hon (State University of New York at Geneseo) investigated passages from the *Yijing* 易經 (The Book of Changes) that deal with the contingency and unpredictability of human life, and thus pay direct attention to the “dark side” of human existence, including calamities. He presented com-

mentaries to the *Yijing* whose authors emphasized the need to accept the challenge of anomalies, such as demons, illness, and premature death. The paper by Dr. Marco Caboara (HKUST, Hong Kong), presented in ab-



sencia, proposed that the system of omen interpretation appearing in the first five books of the *Shanhaijing* 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas) can be further illuminated with the help of similar systems appearing in the newly-excavated Chu Bamboo manuscripts. After presenting the semantic field of the strange in the pre-Qin texts and an introduction to ome-

nology in the *Shanhaijing*, Dr. Caboara offered an analysis of the Shanghai Museum bamboo manuscript, *Jian dawang po han* 簡大王迫旱 (King Jian [of Chu] dispels the drought) and explained how it relates to the *Shanhaijing*.

Prof. Terry Kleeman (University of Colorado, Boulder) investigated the different responses by commoners and Daoist adepts to the so-called “killer-spirits” (*sha* 煞), which emanate from corpses and then, at some point preceding the funeral, return to the corpse. He claimed that, unlike common folk, who used divination to determine the time when the killer-spirit might emerge or return in order to vacate their home during that interval, Daoists believed that such killer-spirits are directed by Heaven, attacking only those whom Heaven deems to deserve punishment. Their response, therefore, consisted not of avoiding the danger, but rather of overcoming it through intercession: Daoist priests absolved threatened humans of their sins, thereby eliminating the danger. In her lecture, Prof. Esther-Maria Guggenmos (FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg) presented examples from the *Shenseng zhuan* 神僧傳 (Biographies of Thaumaturge Monks, T. 2064) to illustrate that coping with the strange through divination was common in Buddhist religious communities. Although the practice of divination has been regarded with caution throughout the history of Chinese Buddhism, not

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only lay Buddhists but also eminent monks like Dao'an 道安 and Vajrabodhi 金剛智 established themselves as diviners. Prof. Guggenmos analyzed the role played by strange phenomena in the Chinese Buddhist practice of divination.

Panel 4: Strangeness, Portentology, and Divination in Pre-Modern China (II): Han and Liu Song Dynasties

The afternoon panel of the second day was the most focused in terms of topic. All four papers dealt with portents and signs as described and interpreted by Chinese intellectuals working from the 2nd to 6th centuries. Dr. Burchard J. Mansvelt Beck (Leiden University) analyzed the lists of omens and signs appearing in the *Tianwen zhi* 天文志 (Treatise on the Celestial Phenomena) and *Wuxing zhi* 五行志 (Treatise on the Five Agents) from the *Hanshu* 漢書 (The Book of Han), as well as the theories used to interpret them (such as the Five Phases theory and classic astrology). Dr. Mansvelt Beck suggested that these treatises should be read not as lists of signs with their true meanings, but rather as lists of events that were deemed sufficiently important by the historian to have given rise to the signs accompanying them.

Prof. Joachim Gentz (University of Edinburgh) focused on the interpretations of the report appearing in the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals) about five falling stones and six fish-hawks flying backwards in the 16th year of Lord Xi of Lu 魯僖公 (644 BCE). Prof. Gentz distinguished two primary lines of interpretation starting in the *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳 and *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, respectively, claiming that early Chinese commentators were challenged by reports of these strange phenomena. Their different strategies for using and making meaning of this strange record reflect the basic scholarly approaches towards the strange in early China.

Dr. Grégoire Espeset (CRCAO Paris) reported on an anonymous and undated *Weft* book entitled *Chunqiu Qiantan ba* 春秋潛潭巴 (Spring and Autumn: Profoundly Immersed Herptile). Dr. Espeset analyzed approximately 200 observed phenomena regarded by the unknown author as signs to be interpreted, and compared them with the portent nomenclature used in the *Tianwen zhi* (Treatise on the Celestial Phenomena) and *Wuxing zhi* (Treatise on the Five Agents) from the *Hanshu* (The Book of

the Han) and *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (The Book of the Later Han). Dr. Espeset showed that most of the observed phenomena from the fragments under consideration match the typology of the latter official sources, suggesting that the authors of both genres shared the same paradigm. This and further evidence suggests, in turn, that official Han portentology was a rationally developed branch of knowledge, derived from both phenomenal observation and recorded precedents, and widely shared by *literati* as well as specialists in prognostication in the early imperial age.

Prof. Tiziana Lippiello (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) analyzed the *Furuizhi* 符瑞志 (Treatise on Auspicious Omens), written by the historian and poet, Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513).



Group picture of all workshop participants. Photo: IKGf.

Prof. Lippiello questioned why Shen Yue chose to dedicate three chapters in the *Songshu* 宋書 (History of the Liu Song Dynasty) to the topic of strange omens and concluded that political needs existed to justify the historical reality. As a historian, Shen Yue had the difficult task of justifying the government of rulers who had killed their predecessors, and he used signs and omens to claim that the political changes were destined.

During the concluding round table of the workshop, the participants discussed several issues of importance for the project's future development. It was noted, for example, that, instead of defining the strange in opposition to what is perceived as normal in a particular culture and time, it might be helpful to understand the strange in terms of irregularities that contradict commonplace events. Concentrating on the strange as irregular

would allow a closer consideration of the “semiotic thinking” that is common in the process of both prediction and divination, which assigns meaning to irregularities, distinguishing it from the mode of thinking that seeks natural explanations of irregular events. In addition, changing the emphasis from the dichotomy “normalcy – strangeness” to that of “regularity – ir-

regularity” would enable us to challenge the approach that associates the strange with the periphery and the normal with the center, suggesting instead the existence of clusters of irregular events, the significance of which changes in relation to the particular interests of those who interpret and assign meanings to irregularities.

Fate, Longevity, and Immortality: Europe – Islam – Asia

Organisation Committee: Prof. Dr. Danielle Jacquart, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris; Prof. Dr. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, Président honoraire de l’UAI, SISMEI; Prof. Dr. Fabrizio Pregadio, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg; Prof. Dr. Klaus Herbers, IKGF, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg

Conference, Erlangen, February 23-25, 2016

The international conference on “Fate, Longevity, and Immortality: Europe – Islam – Asia” was held at the IKGF on February 23-25, 2016, in collaboration with the Union Académique Internationale (UAI). The conference was organized by Professor Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (University of Lausanne and Società Internazionale per lo Studio del Medioevo Latino), Professor Klaus Herbers (IKGF and University of Erlangen-Nuremberg), Professor Danielle Jacquart (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris), and Professor Fabrizio Pregadio (IKGF and University of Erlangen-Nuremberg).

The purpose of the conference was to explore and develop a comparative perspective on traditions and practices concerning fate, longevity, and immortality across a range of civilizations, regions, and periods, spanning Asia (China and Tibet), the Islamic world, and Western Europe (the Middle Ages and Renaissance). This report contains brief summaries of the papers presented by all 19 participants.

The two sessions of the first day were chaired by Professor Michael Lackner (IKGF Director) and Professor Klaus Herbers (IKGF Deputy Director), respectively. The four sessions of the following two days were chaired by IKGF Research Fellows; namely, Hans-Christian Lehner, Song Xiaokun, Lisa Walleit, and Zhao Lu.

Following a welcome address by Klaus Herbers and a general introduction by the other three conference organizers, the morning session of the first day consisted of three lectures on the European Middle Ages. In “Est-il possible et légitime pour un médecin médiéval de prévoir la longévité d’un patient?” Danielle Jacquart (EPHE, Paris) discussed one of the main points in Avicenna’s *Canon of Medicine*, where a distinction is drawn between a natural lifespan and one shortened by accidents, illness, or other reasons. Both terms are fixed by a “divine order”. Italian and French commentators of the 14th and the 15th centuries interpreted this view in different ways: some replaced Avicenna’s concept of providence with an astral determinism, while others maintained, *vice versa*, that, since longevity is determined by a divine power rather than nature, it is possible to prolong life. In “Prolongevity and Elites of Power in Medieval Europe”, Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (University of Lausanne, SISMEI) described the spread of texts concerning the prolongation of life (especially in relation to alchemy) in Western Europe. The survey focused on several sources that attracted the attention of the European elites from the 13th to the 15th centuries, particularly that of the Catholic Popes, who were the main addressees of this literature since its creation in the decades between 1230 and 1250. Michel Pastoureau (EPHE, Paris), in his “Longévité et immortalités animales dans les bestiaires médiévaux”, surveyed the records of longevity found in different sources, concerning both different animal species (elephant, snake, deer,

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Tuesday, February 23, 2016

Chair: Michael Lackner (IKGF, Erlangen)

Introduction

Danielle Jacquart, Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, Fabrizio Pregadio

Est-il possible et légitime pour un médecin médiéval de prévoir la longévité d'un patient?

Danielle Jacquart (EPHE, Paris)

Prolongevity and Elites of Power in Medieval Europe

Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (University of Lausanne, SISMEI)

Longévité et immortalités animales dans les bestiaires médiévaux

Michel Pastoureau (EPHE, Paris)

Chair: Klaus Herbers (IKGF, Erlangen)

Time and Mortality in the Koran

Georges Tamer (University of Erlangen-Nuremberg)

The Demises of the Ardent Lovers

Basma Dajani (University of Jordan, Amman)

by the animals themselves, including the ingestion of supernatural herbs, bathing in springs or fountains, and the use of the regenerating rays of the sun, as well as man-made remedies, such as honey and wine.

The afternoon session was devoted to Islam. In the first contribution, "Time and Mortality in the Koran", Georges Tamer (University of Erlangen-Nuremberg) showed that the Koranic conception of time and mortality developed in response to views that predominated in the pre-Islamic Arabic context. In that context, time was seen as an agent that affected human life and caused death and negative changes. The Koran inverts that view, subordinating both endless time and the time periods to God. As mortality pertains to human nature, moral life becomes a prerequisite for immortal life. The second contribution, entitled "The Demises of the Ardent Lovers" by Basma A.S. Dajani (University of Jordan), dealt with the theme of love leading to death in the works of ten prominent Arab poets, narrators, thinkers, and jurists of the past, and explored the different forms of this theme in classical history and their impact on contemporary society.

Wednesday, February 24, 2016

Chair: Lisa Walleit (IKGF, Erlangen)

The Postponement of Death and the Alleviation of Old Age in the Middle Ages

Charles Burnett (Warburg Institute, London)

Calculating the Length of Life with Latin Astrologers (12th-17th Century)

David Juste (Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Munich)

Theorizing and Predicting Longevity around 1300

Joseph Ziegler (University of Haifa)

Chair: Zhao Lu (IKGF, Erlangen)

Faith or Fate? The Path towards Immortality according to the Tantric Traditions of Tibet

Donatella Rossi (Sapienza University of Rome)

"You Will Die Soon!" – Predictions of Death in Tibetan Divination Manuals

Rolf Scheuermann (IKGF, Erlangen)

Modes of Avoiding Death in the *Taiping jing*

Barbara Hendrišchke (University of Sydney)

Fate and Astrology: Longevity in (Medieval) Daoist and Buddhist Traditions

Christine Mollier (CNRS, Paris)

The morning session of the second day focused on two papers about various European traditions. In "The Postponement of Death and the Alleviation of Old Age in the Middle Ages", Charles Burnett (Warburg Institute, London) explored how death was regarded scientifically in the Middle Ages, irrespective of religious belief. The words attributed to Saint Bede, that "nothing is added to the world or departs from it, on account of its perfect composition, but a recombining (*recontextio*) of its parts constitutes a reintegration (*reintegratio*) of the whole", confirm the idea that nothing truly "dies" in the world. Yet death, in the sense of the separation of the soul from the body, is an inevitable experience of all animate beings, and its time can be determined from the stars. The discomforts associated with the decline into old age can be alleviated by adopting a healthy regime and taking specific medicines, and one can maintain one's quality of life until one must pass into another state of existence. Joseph Ziegler (University of Haifa) discussed the rich exegetical tradition concerning the enigma of the extreme longevity of the antediluvian generations and the dramatic decline in lifespan following the flood, which preoccupied many 13th- and 14th-century thinkers, Jewish and Christians alike. His paper, entitled "Theorizing and Predicting Longevity around 1300", drew attention to the naturalistic and materialistic explanations for the longevity of the patriarchs and the role of the Bible in stimulating and legitimizing thinking about longevity and the means to achieve it among physicians and natural philosophers.

The afternoon session consisted of four presentations on the Tibetan and Daoist traditions. With her contribution on "Faith or Fate? The Path towards Immortality according to the Tantric Traditions of Tibet", Donatella Rossi (Università La Sapienza, Rome) provided an overview of the Tibetan Tantric tradition—includ-

phoenix, etc.) and individual animals (e.g., the deer of Alexander the Great). These sources also describe several means of prolonging life used



ing meditation practices and liturgies—that clarify the purpose of immortality and the roles played by faith and fate. Rolf Scheuermann (IKGF, Erlangen), in his “You Will Die Soon! Predictions of Death in Tibetan Divination Manuals”, described several forms of Tibetan mantic arts, including the observation of *omina*, geomancy, astrology, oracles, and prophecies. This introduction formed the prelude to an analysis of the death predictions found in three divination manuals. With regard to Daoism, Barbara Hendrichske (University of Sydney), in her “Modes of Avoiding Death in the *Taiping jing*” (*Scripture of Great Peace*), showed that this work (originally dating from the 2nd century CE) envisions immortality in three ways: by moral conduct, by transforming one’s physical condition, and by performing practices that result in ascending to Heaven and becoming a “celestial official”. Christine Mollier (CNRS, Paris), in her “Fate and Astrology: Longevity in (Medieval) Daoist and Buddhist Traditions”, presented visual and textual materials to demonstrate the centrality of astral entities—such as the Northern Dipper (Ursa Major) and the planets—in rituals designed to promote the protection and longevity of individuals.

The morning session of the third day was again devoted to the European tradition. Didier Kahn (CNRS, Paris), with his talk on “Prolongation of Life and Quintessence in the Works of Paracelsus”, offered an analysis of four works concerned with the prolongation of life. As he showed, the notion of a universal medicine was largely alien to Paracelsus’ thought, which may explain why, later, Paracelsians repeatedly tried to integrate the Rupescissan quintessence into his literary corpus. In “La ‘mort de vieillesse’: Une cause de décès incontournable?”, Joël Coste (EPHE, Paris) examined the history of the concept of “death by old age” from the 17th to the 21st centuries. Archival documents attest that this was a widespread concept before it began to be contested and marginalized in the second half of the 20th century, particularly by the World Health Organization. In “The Centaur’s Death: The Myth of Chiron and the Transfer of Immortal-

ity”, Manuel Förg (Technical University of Munich) noted that, in the ancient world, immortality and eternal youth are the exclusive features of the gods. One of the few exceptions is associated with Chiron the centaur, of whom it is said that, although immortal, he relinquished his immortality after Heracles inflicted a wound on him that would not heal. The multi-faceted nature of the story of his death makes Chiron a figure in Greek myth who defies clear categorization: in the form of the hybrid creature, the demarcation between mortal and immortal becomes permeable, without compromising the plausibility of the myth. In “Longevity and the Emergence of Alchemy in the Latin West”, Matthias Heiduk (IKGF, Erlangen) dealt with the origins of the Western alchemical traditions during the 12th century, when scholars first discovered Arabic texts on the elixirs. His presentation shed light on the earliest Latin translations of Arabic texts, showing that the preparation of a panacea as one of the possible uses of alchemy was well known from the very beginning of the tradition.

The afternoon session was devoted to Daoism. Lennert Gesterkamp (University of Amsterdam), in his contribution on “Man and Mountain: Daoist Immortals in Chinese Art”, provided several examples that were to show that, while some Chinese paintings ostensibly depict mountains, they actually con-



Group picture of all workshop-participants. Photo: IKGF

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Thursday, February 25, 2016

Chair: Hans-Christian Lehner (IKGF, Erlangen)

La quintessence dans les œuvres authentiques et apocryphes de Paracelse
Didier Kahn (CNRS, Paris)

La “mort de vieillesse”: une cause de décès incontournable? (XVIIe siècle - XXIe siècle)

Joël Coste (EPHE, Paris)

The Centaur’s Death: The Myth of Chiron and the Transfer of Immortality

Manuel Förg (Technical University of Munich)

Longevity and the Emergence of Alchemy in the Latin West

Matthias Heiduk (IKGF, Erlangen)

Chair: Song Xiaokun (IKGF, Erlangen)

Man and Mountain:
Daoist Immortals in Chinese Art

Lennert Gesterkamp (University of Amsterdam)

Did Immortality Change?
Historicising Daoist Hagiography

Benjamin Penny (Australian National University, Canberra)

“The Secret of Divine Immortals”: On
Generating and Consuming Longevity
Mushrooms

Dominic Steavu (University of California, Santa Barbara)

Which is the Daoist Immortal Body?

Fabrizio Pregadio (IKGF and University of Erlangen-Nuremberg)

Final Round Table

Chairs: Moneef R. Zou’bi (Académie des Sciences Islamiques, Amman), Danielle Jacquart, Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, Fabrizio Pregadio

ceal images of Daoist transcendent beings. As shown by Gesterkamp, this pertains to the well-known theme of representing the Daoist immortal body as a natural landscape. Benjamin Penny (Australian National University, Canberra), in “Did Immortality Change? Historicizing Daoist Hagiography”, outlined the development of Daoist biographical literature before focusing on the figure of Zhang Daoling, the putative founder of the earliest known Daoist religious movement (*Tianshi dao*, or Way of the Celestial Masters). As Penny made clear, Zhang’s hagiographies show how immortality was conceived in different periods and contexts of Daoist history. In “The Secret of Divine Immortals: On Generat-

ing and Consuming Longevity Mushrooms”, Dominic Steavu (University of California, Santa Barbara) dealt with the *zhi*, an untranslatable term that refers to “immortality plants”, often depicted as mushrooms. His presentation focused on a 7th- or 8th-century text that not only describes why consuming *zhi* can lead to immortality, but also how to plant and grow them. Finally, Fabrizio Pregadio (IKGF and University of Erlangen-Nuremberg), in “Which is the Daoist Immortal Body?”, illustrated that Daoist adepts intend to “change fate” by generating a new person who is not subject to death. This is done in two main ways. The first is by undergoing a simulated ritual death, followed by a refining of the physical body which then supports the continuation of one’s practices and ultimately lead to the achievement of immortality. The second method consists of generating an inner embryo by means of meditation or alchemical practices, that is the seed of one’s rebirth as an immortal.

The conference was concluded by a round table, chaired by Professor Moneef R. Zou’bi (Director General of the Académie des Sciences du Monde Islamique, Amman), with contributions from the conference organizers, several presenters, and members of the audience. All of them praised the successful establishment of an interdisciplinary dialogue, which was the main purpose of the conference.

As a whole, the subject of the conference represented a fundamental theme in cultural, social, and anthropological studies. Even the short summaries given above should suffice to show that the main questions which the conference tried to answer were: how has longevity been theorized, calculated, and predicted within different civilizations and traditions of Europe, the Islamic world, and Asia? Are longevity and immortality fated, or do they involve a “change of fate”? In which ways have immortality or the avoidance of death been elaborated? What is the social diffusion of such theories and practices? Scholars specialized in various disciplines and research fields—from astrology to medicine, from hagiography to alchemy, to mention but a few—have entered a comparative dialogue on how theories and practices concerning the limited or unlimited prolongation of life have been promoted (or restricted) in different places and times by the beliefs of antiquity, by the mainstream Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, and Daoist traditions, and by the respective cultural traditions.

Papers from the conference are scheduled to appear in a forthcoming issue of the journal *Micrologus*.

Prof. Dr. Fabrizio Pregadio (FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg)

IN BRIEF

- On December 27, 2015, the local newspaper *Erlanger Nachrichten* published an **interview with Professor Klaus Herbers** in which he discusses a new film on the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, “*Ich bin dann mal weg*” (I’m off). The film is based on a book in which a well-known German TV-star described his experience while walking the Way of St. James. Both then and now, pilgrimages were often undertaken at important points in life, be it a crisis or simply the beginning of a new phase, such as when someone is about to marry. From this perspective, they constituted an important way of coping with the future, both in this world and, for the believer, in the next. While the concrete information contained in the guidebooks was more important for the success, and indeed survival, of the pilgrim in the Middle Ages than it is nowadays, it remains interesting and entertaining for actual and would-be pilgrims to learn about someone else’s experience when ‘praying with his feet’. The success of the film and the continued renaissance of the pilgrimage of St. James show that even inhabitants of the ‘enlightened’ modern world are not immune to its spiritual allure.
- On December 30, 2015, Bayern Plus broadcast a **radio interview with Professor Michael Lackner** on the significance of divination practices around New Year’s Eve. Professor Lackner used this opportunity to introduce our research agenda to the audience of this state-wide radio channel. He pointed to the obvious connections between ancient divination practices in Mesopotamia and China and the more or less esoteric attempts to predict the future that we see today, which show that forms of prognostication are a constant of human existence. As modern people, we have to face the fact that some events and developments are unpredictable even for the most modern prognostic techniques, and that successful prognoses continue to depend on seemingly irrational factors, such as an individual’s intuition.
- Immediately after the conference on longevity, on February 26, 2016, Prof. Fabrizio Pregadio organized a **study session on the topic of ‘Destiny and Divination in Early 4th-Century China’**. The focus was on materials related to destiny and divination that are contained in Ge Hong’s *Baopu zi neipian* (Inner Chapters of the Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature), a major source of early 4th-century Daoist and popular

religion in China. The event was organized in connection with a project that aims to produce complete and annotated translations of the *Baopu zi neipian* into English (edited by Fabrizio Pregadio) and French (edited by Catherine Despeux). Several members of the translation team participated in the event. In addition, PhD students and IKGf Visiting Fellows contributed short presentations on related subjects. The purpose was to stimulate conversation on the research topics of the consortium, and generate suggestions for the translation project.

VIDEO




Video Team: Roman de Giuli, Daniel Augustin, Sofia Ramisch

Editorial Department: Dr. Hans-Christian Lehner

Shooting day: February 29th 2016, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Length of the final video: 13min 26sec

 ikgf.fau.de
> Videos > Interviews

- In a **video entitled ‘Reflections and Future Opportunities’**, Prof. Dr. Michael Lackner and Prof. Dr. Klaus Herbers, the directors of the IKGf, speak about their collaboration over the past seven years (since 2009), and the achievements of the first funding period. They reflect on the various events, publications, and other formats established at the Consortium, and discuss the adjustments to the IKGf research agenda that the results of the first phase made necessary. One such readjustment is a new preference for the term ‘prognostication’ to sum up the various practices we discuss, rather than ‘divination’, which was the pivotal term during the first funding phase. Also discussed were the research and projects planned for the second funding period, especially the handbook projects and the turn towards a “new materiality”. The two directors stress in unison the importance of continuing the spontaneity and freedom of the first funding phase, de-

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spite the clearly defined research agenda that will necessarily determine the next few years. The video may be viewed here.

- **New Book:** Klaus Herbers, Hans-Christian Lehner (eds.): *On the Road in the Name of Religion II: Ways and Destinations in Comparative Perspective – Medieval Europe and Asia* (Published by Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden 2016)

Embarking on a pilgrimage is one of the oldest kinds of mobility and, at the same time, a very contemporary phenomenon. Millions of people from different cultural areas set out every year. The departure to spiritual or sacred destinations is what unites the pilgrims of different epochs across religious borders—although their motivations and practices may differ. A pilgrim does not embark on a pilgrimage for religious motives alone, since a pilgrimage is more than a religious practice. Political implications, anthropological dispositions, literary fiction and much more play a role. In the first volume, pilgrimages were regarded as a ritual and their motives were discussed. The authors of the second volume focus on the routes and destinations of pilgrimages: in addition to the question of the origin of the traditions, they also concentrate on the material, cultural, and metaphysical significance of those traditions. Accordingly, even sources that do not appear to be thematically relevant at first sight may offer new perspectives. Methods of cultural and literary studies as well as philological methods supplement the genuine historical approach.



- **Astrological Papyri from Oxyrhynchus.** In April 2016, IKGf fellow, Stephan Heilen, together with Prof. Alexander Jones

from the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (New York University), worked on a group of hitherto unpublished Greek astrological papyri from the ancient Egyptian city of Oxyrhynchus, currently preserved at Oxford. Despite the relatively small amount of text that is preserved on these papyri, they are valuable because they deepen our knowledge of ancient astrological doctrine in various respects. Prof. Jones, who is officially in charge of publishing these papyri, came to Erlangen as a guest scholar of the IKGf. Heilen and Jones made complete transcriptions based on high resolution photographs of the papyri, which are lacunose and difficult to read. In many cases, the right or left parts of columns of text are missing and so demand conjectures regarding the missing words and letters. Moreover, they analyzed the contents of the papyri, gathered material for the commentary, and discussed difficult passages with respect to similar tenets in other Greco-Roman astrological texts. It will be Prof. Heilen's task over the coming year to revise and expand the commentary notes, while Prof. Jones will finalize the editorial section. In the context of this project, Heilen and Jones also examined an astrological papyrus that belongs to the University of Erlangen (P. Erlangen 129, ed. by W. Schubart in 1942). It forms part of an ancient papyrus codex, of which another leaf is extant in London (P. Lit. Lond.172). Heilen and Jones were able to correct Schubart's edition regarding various of his readings and comments.

- **News from our former fellows and staff:**

Brandon Dotson (visiting fellow 2015-16) has accepted a position as tenured associate professor of Buddhist Studies at Georgetown University (Washington DC). Our research coordinator, Rolf Scheuermann, received his PhD from the University of Vienna. Long-serving staff member Florian Wagner has finished his dissertation.

VISITING FELLOWS



Prof. Dr. Philipp Balsiger, Center for Applied Ethics and Science Communication, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg; research stay: April 2016 – March 2017; research topic: Theorizing Prognostication



Dr. Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, UMR 8173 Chine-Corée-Japon, CNRS – EHESS, Paris; research stay: December 2015 – November 2016, January – March 2017; research topic: Portents as Part of the Spiritual Landscape of the Shanhai jing 山海經 (Itineraries of Mountains and Seas, compiled about the 1st century BCE).



Dr. Eduard Iricinski, Center for Religious Studies (CERES), Ruhr University Bochum; research stay: February – July 2016; research topic: “Habent sua fata libelli: Negotiating Fate in Late Antique Magic, Sethian, and Manichaean Books.”



Dr. Stefano Manganaro, Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici (IIS), Naples; research stay: January – December 2016; research topic: Coping with the Future in the Ottonian Period (10th – early 11th centuries). Transcendence, Contingency and Lack of *Herrschaftsrationalität*.



Nicolae Christian Statu, Institute for Near Eastern and East Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg; research stay: February – July 2016; research topic: Sima Guang’s commentary on Yang Xiong’s *Fayan*



Dr. Bee Yun, Department of Political Science and Diplomacy, Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul; research stay: January – December 2016; research topic: Prophet, Astrologer, Philosopher in the Political Literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.



Wang Jinfeng, History Department, East China Normal University; research stay: March 2016 – June 2016; research project: The social Origin of Wu (Shamans) in the Shang and Zhou dynasties.

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IKGF-directors Prof. Lackner and Prof. Herbers introduced the members of the new international advisory board to Prof. Dr.-Ing. Joachim Hornegger, President of Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU). Photo: FAU.

OUTLOOK

While this winter will be relatively quiet in terms of conferences and workshops, behind the scenes, the preparations for the two handbooks on prediction, as well as for numerous other projects, are entering a decisive phase. The editorial team for the medieval handbook team is convening a second workshop to discuss the form of its survey articles and the way in which Jewish and Arabic traditions will be represented and defined in the handbook. New visiting fellows will help us to explore new areas, both geographically and in terms of academic fields: the FAU's own Prof. Dr. Aida Bosch will add sociology to the canon of disciplines represented at IKGF, while Prof. Dr. Klaus Hock (University of Rostock) will work on the globalization of African divination systems, thus adding the perspective of an important cultural area that has hitherto been lacking.

THE NEXT fate

The next issue of *fate* will contain reports on:

- the inaugural workshop and conference, respectively, for the handbooks on Medieval and Chinese prediction.
- the first summer of the 'planning and prediction' fellowship program with the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, and the first results of the program.
- the conference on 'Human Nature, Morality, and Fate in the Tsinghua University Bamboo Manuscripts'.
- a workshop on 'Horoscopy across Civilizations: Comparative Approaches to Western, Indian, and Chinese Astrology and Chronomancy'.



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

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