



INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM
for Research in the Humanities

Schicksal, Freiheit und Prognose. Bewältigungsstrategien in Ostasien und Europa



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Editorial (Prof. Dr. Michael Lackner)

Studying the Variety of Chinese Divinatory Practices

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

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INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM
for Research in the Humanities



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

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Dear Readers,

This thirteenth issue of our newsletter covers the activities of the IKGF during the winter term 2016/17. During this period, the Consortium has opened itself up to new topics, among them the practice of spirit-writing discussed by IKGF Director Michael Lackner in the editorial. It was also during this period that we happily anticipated the now newly-established Elite MA programme “Standards of Decision-Making across Cultures”, funded by the Bavarian Elite Network, which we describe in detail in our Focus.

This issue, of course, also contains summaries of the talks held in Erlangen by invited guests, visiting fellows, and staff, within the framework of our Lecture Series. Toward the end of the issue, you will also find a report on a conference that discussed notions of fate, freedom and prognostication in the context of Chinese Literature, Film and Folktale. A further short report introduces an interdisciplinary panel organized by members of the IKGF at the Symposium of the German Medievalists’ Society in Bonn that examined knowledge of the future as elite secrets.

Once again, wishing you a pleasurable reading experience, we invite you to explore our current activities through the lens of this issue of our newsletter and look forward to receiving your feedback.

Dr. Rolf Scheuermann
(Research Coordinator)

Title page: the famous immortal Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Daoist_Immortal_L%C3%BC_Dongbin.jpg

Studying the Variety of Chinese Divinatory Practices



When we discuss traditional East Asian, especially Chinese, techniques of predicting the future, immediate emphasis is placed on practices that are based on calculation: the calculations of the horoscope, the numerical combinations of the *Book of Changes*, the geomantic compass, the astro-calendrical instrument *shi*, the selection of auspicious days in the almanac, the use of dominoes for prediction and many more. The other side of divination, however, tends to take a back seat, even though the Chinese mantic tradition knows inspired prophecies as well. Thus, the Maoshan revelations have been studied by Michel Strickmann, and Stephen Bokenkamp recently visited the IKGf to make us even better acquainted with the prophetic text, *Zhen'gao*, a 4th-century revelation written in poetic verse. A text less shaped by revelation, but also considered prophetic, is the *tuipei tu*, or “backstroke panels”, a kind of illustrated Chinese Nostradamus, which was introduced in 1973 by Wolfgang Bauer.

Even though we do not find figures in the Chinese tradition quite like the Old Testament prophets or Nostradamus, inspired prophecy repeatedly appears over the centuries: for example, in the children's songs that are collected explicitly in some dynastic histories and allegedly announce historical changes.

Needless to say, the interpretation of an oracle obtained through calculation also requires a great deal of intuition, wherefore the Ciceronian distinction between “artificial” and “natural” divination can only be a rough yardstick. Moreover, the oldest instruments of Chinese fortune telling, the oracle bones and the yarrow stalks, were repeatedly attributed with their own numinous efficacy; in other words, a kind of inspiration was ascribed to these objects.

The most common form of inspired prophecy in the Chinese-speaking world today is the practice of spirit-writing (planchette-writing). Here, two persons, or sometimes just one, use a forked stick (usually made of willow and peach wood), that is sometimes ornately decorated and is similar to a European dowsing rod. Into one of the two practitioners, a spirit descends and enables them to use the stick to write characters in a box full of sand. These mediums have been selected by the gods, often against their will, incidentally. The whole process is named after the bird *luan*, a kind of phoenix (*fuluan*, “to support the phoenix”). A person called a “reader” “translates” the characters, which are then written down by a “copyist”. The ceremony, usually initiated by religious rituals, and sometimes accompanied by music, may be dedicated to specific questions, but the deity also provides general instructions regarding the moral betterment of either a specific cultic community or the world at large. The instructions thus obtained are often recorded in so-called “good books” (*shanshu*, morality books), i.e., literature for moral edification. These prophecies, which often take the form of poems, can thus apply to an individual, but – increasingly over the last centuries – to the course of the world.



Photo: Michael Lackner, with kind permission of the Lanyang Museum.

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

In the 18th century, some of the most important scholars were involved in such séances; Ji Yun (1724-1805), one of the compilers of the most significant collection of books in Chinese history, the *Siku quanshu*, wrote copious notes on his experiences with the practice, which testify to his skepticism regarding certain mediums, but also to his deep-seated belief in the accuracy of true oracles. One of his colleagues even published an anthology of “morality books,” an admonitory type of literature that often contained apocalyptic warnings.

The IKGf intends to devote greater efforts to exploring this phenomenon, which has so far received scant research attention. For the first

time, anthropologists of religion and historians will soon come together to establish a comprehensive picture of the practice, its history, and the underlying worldview.

Moreover, on the recommendation of my colleague, Philip Clart, I recently visited an exhibition on the *fuluan* in the Lanyang Museum in Taiwan. The curator has established connections to numerous cult communities and thus succeeded in creating an aesthetically pleasing, informative presentation. Especially in the context of the exhibition on the material culture of divination in China and Europe, planned by the IKGf together with the Germanic National Museum in Nuremberg, such objects seem highly relevant. Two Chinese “dowsing rods” from the Lanyang Museum are shown above as examples:

Prof. Dr. Michael Lackner
(IKGf, Director)

FOCUS

MA-Elite Studies Program “Standards of Decision-Making across Cultures”

Elite MA program Standards of Decision-Making Initiated

The IKGf family is growing. Starting from the winter term 2017/18, the International Consortium for Research in the Humanities reaches a new dimension with the launch of the Elite-Master Program entitled “Standards of Decision-Making Across Cultures (SDAC)”. Graduates of this program will have learnt how to adopt a culturally sensitive, discerning stance when participating in real-world decision-making, both in an international and specifically in an Asian-European context, as the program is closely connected with the program of Chinese Studies at FAU.

Zulfiya Ukbava and Valentina Chernaya, both from Russia, recently joined the Master’s program and are expecting “to get an understanding of Western mentality compared to Eastern cultures.” These two students are not the only ones who came from abroad to study in the SDAC, as the group of students and

lecturers associated with the master’s program is outstandingly international. It is “a great way to establish contacts between countries,” not only within the academic context of the program but also amongst the scholars, as Valentina Chernaya puts it.

However, initiating the Master’s program has been an intensive process. In late summer 2015, Michael Lackner, Esther-Maria Guggenmos, Philipp Balsiger, and Rolf Scheuermann of the Consortium outlined the first draft application for SDAC. The Elite-Master Programs of the Elite Network Bavaria are aiming to support exceptionally talented, highly motivated students by offering an academic setting which is demanding and excellent by international standards, based on new interdisciplinary concepts, with an intensive student tutoring program. The Elite Network of Bavaria covers all fields of study: humanities and so-

cial sciences, natural sciences, engineering, computer sciences and life sciences. After successfully presenting the program together with FAU president, Prof. Dr.-Ing. Joachim Hornegger, at the Bavarian Ministry of Science, Research, and Arts in Munich, in January 2017, the ministry accepted the proposed program without restrictions. Consequently, two new professorships in Anthropology, a visiting professorship, as well as positions for three research assistants and a coordinator were established.

Why such a Program?

A natural reason for initiating such a program was so that the unique expertise developed at the IKGF in the field of cultural studies could be made available to students. On an institutional level, SDAC operates independently of the IKGF, which allows both institutions to support and enrich each other. When the applicants began their undertaking, they quickly noticed that several academic trainee programs related to the topic of decision-making already existed in Germany, focusing on rationality as the major ground for decisions. Hence, the consideration of culturally diverse, traditional aspects of decision-making processes as important factors was seen to be a lacuna, so SDAC will profit immensely from the competences of the IKGF in this field. By offering the Elite-Master Program SDAC in the field of cultural studies to an expected number of ten to twenty selected international students per year, the Consortium will pursue its integration into the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. SDAC will serve as a link between the acclaimed research program of the IKGF and further training programs of the Faculty in particular and the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg in general. Also, the SDAC Elite-Master Program will build up new competencies and also reinforce the existing capabilities of the Faculty of Humanities in the field of cultural studies. Even though SDAC runs as an independent program, its courses are, at the same time, open to highly qualified students following other master's programs at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.

Following the example of the IKGF, the SDAC leadership took care to form an international, interdisciplinary group of staff and students. The staff positions were filled by scholars from China, France, Italy, and Egypt. From among approximately 50 applications from students from all over the world, the selection committee chose the most promising candidates for the initial intake, that started in October 2017. It includes students

from South America, East Asia, Russia, and Germany, with training in different disciplines, such as economic, law, politics, anthropology, philosophy, and others.

Studying abroad at Beijing University

Students Zulfiya Ukbava and Valentina Chernaya are convinced that the master's program will help them to develop a network with people from different continents. They compare the Elite Network Bavaria to an intercultural, interdisciplinary social platform since the new students participate in several get-togethers, where they meet members of the Elite Network from various cultural backgrounds and other disciplines, such as natural sciences. The graduate students are also enthusiastic about having an opportunity to apply their theoretical education to both academic and everyday situations in Chinese culture by spending their third semester at the European Center for Chinese Studies (ECCS) in Beijing. They encounter a program that attaches great importance to developing a sensibility for cultural variances and the different cultural impacts on the decision-making process, up to metaphysical questions related to this process. Concretely, the trainees shall be enabled to recognize, among other things, the historical background of specific behavioral patterns, or the specific cultural motivation of a symbolic act. Hence, the program is less aligned with the particular knowledge of mainstream issues and fashionable ways of acting than with the knowledge and awareness of underlying traditional values.

The specific expertise opens up job perspectives for the graduates in professions concerned with culture, politics, and business, as well as in intercultural work environments, where the aforementioned fields of study intersect. Graduates will be capable of adopting a culturally sensitive and discerning stance when participating in real-world decision-making, both in an international and specifically Asian-European context. Sumaira Abbas, a SDAC student from Pakistan, thinks that the Master's program has a promising outlook: "It is my second day and I'm already learning a lot. People are very polite and welcoming as well." She is looking forward to doing a Ph.D. within the field of decision-making at some point in the near future.

Stéphanie Homola and Juliane Krüger

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

LECTURE SERIES WS 2016

“So werden uil grosser nuyüng inder welt”: German Vernacular Translations of John of Rupescissa’s *Vade mecum in tribulatione* (1356)

Robert E. Lerner (Northwestern University)

During the late medieval period, the southwestern area of Germany was particularly receptive to prophecies. One noteworthy example is the reception of John of Rupescissa’s *Vade mecum in tribulatione*, written in the papal prison of Avignon in 1356. In this treatise, John, a Franciscan friar, prophesizes about imminent disasters, such as storms, wars, and plagues, which would hit all of Christianity over the next decade. The treatise further predicts that the lower classes of society will rise up against the political elites and the clergy and topple them three and a half years before the commencement of the reign of Antichrist. However, all of these trials and tribulations would serve a larger good. Most importantly, the clergy would be stripped of their riches and be returned to a state of purity and poverty reminiscent of the model of Jesus Christ. This critique of the social elites points to some of the characteristics of the text. Even though the treatise is but one among many prophecies of the medieval period, it is noteworthy for its detailed predictions and the sympathetic depiction of the lower social classes and their role in exerting “popular justice” (*justitia popularis*) in the name of God.



Prof. Robert E. Lerner at the IKGf; Photo: IKGf

Despite the detailed depiction of future events, the 1360s, for which the above disasters had been predicted, passed without any of the prophecies coming true. This, however, was not the end of the history of John’s treatise, which was only at its beginning. In a fascinating turn of events, it was copied, translated, and revised in seven vernacular languages all over Europe. The Southwestern area of Germany was central in these efforts: three independent versions came into existence in an area stretching over no more than one hundred kilometers. Of particular importance is the fact that all of these texts were written in the second half of the 15th century, so almost exactly one hundred years after the initial prophecies. To adjust the obviously incorrect timeframe of the original treatise, the German authors predicted the impending disasters for the 1460s instead of the initial date one hundred years earlier. Moreover, the German authors, some of whom were members of the local elites, significantly changed the prophecies of the treatise. In particular, they erased all reference to “popular justice” and the redeeming role of the lower social classes, sometimes even speaking of the unbelieving “rabble.” One of the translations instead introduced the figure of a true Roman emperor (*Kaiser*), who would restore order and propagate the “original truth.” The German translations were part of a larger set of European vernacular translations which all appeared in the late 15th century without any one particular historical situation explaining their production. Yet, the German texts were distinct in their condemnation of the lower classes. French and Spanish translations do not share the contempt for the “common man,” but display sympathy. The translations thus clearly show the imprint of their authors and the social context in which they were produced, providing a fascinating insight into the reception of prophetic thought in the late medieval period.

Robert E. Lerner’s work forms part of an international research project which he is pursuing together with Pavlína Rychterová

from the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The project seeks to explore the conditions under which the different translations of John's treatise were produced. It has already brought to light many of the connections between the texts produced in different regions. The project also aims to explain why these texts were produced almost simultaneously during this period as

well as the differing reception of key concepts such as "popular justice."

Matthias Schumann
(IKGF Research Fellow)

LECTURE SERIES WS 2016/2017

Overview of the lectures in the winter semester 2016 / 2017

18.10.2016: "So werden uil grosser nußung inder welt": German Vernacular Translations of John of Rupescissa's *Vade mecum in tribulatione* (1356) **Robert E. Lerner** (*Department of History, Northwestern University*)

25.10.2016: Aspects of the Computistic Argument in Song Dynasty Cosmological Visualizations **Holger Schneider** (*Chinese Studies, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg*)

15.11.2016: Political Theory in the Middle Ages and the Art of Mastering the Human World's Uncertainty **Bee Yun** (*Political Science and Diplomacy, Sungkyunkwan University Seoul; IKGF Visiting Fellow*)

22.11.2016: Resources of Prognosis in the Byzantine Empire **Michael Grünbart** (*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, University of Münster*)

13.12.2016: Disasters and Celestial Phenomena in Eleventh-Century Political Discourse in China **Martin Kroher** (*Chinese Studies, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg; IKGF Research Fellow*)

10.01.2017: Aesthetic Dimensions of Rituals: Social Functions and the Performativity of Prognostic Rituals **Aida Bosch** (*Sociology, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg*)

17.01.2017: Towards a New Philosophy of History? The Morphology of Cultures and the Limits of Individual Freedom **David Engels** (*Roman History, Université Libre de Bruxelles*)

24.01.2017: Letting the Right Ones In: Court-Sanctioned Memories of Diviners, Healers, and Artisans in Five Mid-Sixth- to Mid-Seventh-Century Dynastic Histories **Stephan Kory** (*Chinese Studies; IKGF Visiting Fellow*)

31.01.2017: Interpreting the Mandate (ming 命) in Premodern China: Zhu Xi's (1130-1200) Philosophical and Mantic Discourse **Maud M'Bondjo** (*Chinese Studies, Centre de Recherche sur les Civilisations de l'Asie Orientale; IKGF Visiting Fellow*)

07.02.2017: Theorizing Prediction **Philipp Balsiger** (*Philosophy, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg; IKGF Visiting Fellow*)

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 2016/17 summarize their contributions. The lectures of the summer semester 2017 will be part of the next issue of *fate*.

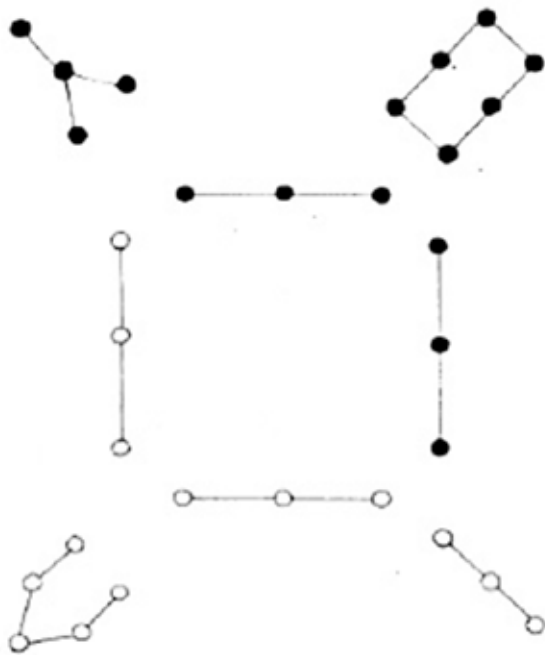
Aspects of the Computistic Argument in Song Dynasty Cosmological Visualizations

Holger Schneider (*Chinese Studies, FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg*)

In certain cultures, early cosmological knowledge has commonly been encoded, archived, and transmitted in the form of charts, tables, and diagrams. In the Chinese tradition, the spatial and quantitative dimension of these methods for connecting concepts and their correlations are commonly associated with the Image and Number School (*xiangshu* 象數), which originated in the Han-Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.). It was followed by its more text- and language-oriented acquaintance and counterpart, Meaning and Principle (*yili* 義理). One of the most influential sources of early knowledge about the workings of the cosmos is the Book of Changes (*Yijing* 易經), which is simultaneously a manual for divination that has been sanctioned for centuries as well as a preeminent Confucian classic. Enriched over centuries by growing layers of commentaries, different types of strategies were employed to argue for the efficacy of the practice of *Yijing*-divination by relating its technical tweaks to an ever more unified theory of nature.

Among the more abstract of these strategies is the introduction of a visual language of algebraic graphs, a language that is both accessible as well as strictly regimented. Among the earliest in the long, rich history of diagrams dealing with the *Yijing* since the invention of book-printing is a collection of 66 depictions, alongside linear verbal expositions, ascribed to the scholar-official Liu Mu 劉牧 (?1011–?1064) of the Northern Song (960–1126). It has been transmitted under the title “Diagrams fathoming the hidden in the numbers of the Changes” (*Yishu gouyin tu* 易數鉤隱圖). This fascinating body of material is utterly inaccessible due to its technical sophistication and formal abstraction, but also due to the uncertain authorship of several of its sub-chapters, and has therefore been unjustly neglected by modern scholarship. A closer look reveals that it is a work of meticulous historical rediscovery in some aspects and immensely creative invention in other regards. This talk introduced several graphic depictions, appearing in Liu Mu’s work for the first time in the transmitted literature, some of which would become a topic of intense debate in subsequent times. Among these are the so-called “Magic Square of the Order of Three” (*Luoshu* 洛書) and the configuration of linear trigrams, later known as the *Houtian bagua tu* 後天八卦圖.

Analysing Liu Mu’s selective use of classical as well as apocryphal commentaries on the *Yijing* in contrast with his use of numerical diagrams, we tried to understand the role played by the *quantitative* and *qualitative* aspects of numbers in his thought. The *Yijing*, being a complex structure of text, image, number, and diagram, lends itself, to some degree, to formal recoding, which proves to be a prime motif underlying the work of Liu Mu. By contrasting the formal properties of a range of concepts dating back to the Image and Number school with Liu Mu’s more innovative charts and diagrams, we aim to establish to which degree these diagrams themselves were employed as the tools for discovering new formal solutions by way of experiments on the one hand and as a formal language to corroborate existing knowledge with apparently incontrovertible formal proof on the other.



四象生八卦第十 The Four Images generate the Eight Trigrams, Nr.10
Photo: 摘藻堂四庫全書薈要,經部,易類,三卷.

Political Reason and the Human World's Uncertainty: On the Secularization of Political Thought in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Period

Bee Yun (*Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul / IKGf Visiting Fellow*)

Politics is basically a business of uncertainty. Numerous risks that require urgent control, like draughts, earthquakes, storms, volcanos eruptions, epidemics, floods, global warming, wars, civil strife, or economic recession, can be highly unpredictable and extremely rich in variation with regard to both their outbreak and development. Introducing new analytical tools, such as new conceptual frameworks or technological improvements like supercomputers, may help us to reduce this uncertainty. However, such developments can eventually introduce a new kind of uncertainty, as apocalyptic science fiction loves to thematize. The human ability for analysis and prognosis is limited and such limitation is the source of uncertainty for policy makers even in the absence of visible threats.

The problem of uncertainty becomes especially radical when it proves to be permanent; that is, when we recognize that it can never be fundamentally removed from the current human condition. This recognition often triggers a significant philosophical deliberation. From where does this uncertainty originate? How should we live with such uncertainty? All of these issues go hand in hand with questions about human existence and the capabilities of our knowledge and action. In philosophizing over politics, this kind of uncertainty raises, first of all, the question of defining the possibility of rational intervention through collective action to change reality.

An especially acute awareness of the uncertainty involved in political decisions and practices characterized the pathos and ethos of the early modern tradition of political thought. Such an awareness made it increasingly difficult to identify the justification for political decisions and actions in religious prescriptions, metaphysical principles and other transcendental norms in the deliberation on political affairs. Hence, the idea of expediency came to the fore.

This lecture endeavored to reconstruct the historical development of such an awareness and analyze its causes and effects. It pursued the transformation of the conception of political order in the political literature of the Middle Ages, focusing on the radical paradigm change which occurred since the early fourteenth century. It highlighted a significant change with regard to the view on politics and the world, which the power struggles of various political actors since the fourteenth century brought about. It showed how this change anticipated the secularization of the political discourse of the later ages, which one can observe in Machiavelli and Luther.



Bee Yun at the IKGf; Photo IKGf

In the first part, the presentation discussed the optimistic rationalist conception of the human world that characterized the political discourse of the early and high Middle Ages. In the second part, it pursued the decline of this view and the emergence of a new conception which was based on an acute awareness of radical uncertainty which fills the human world, while discussing four representative thinkers: John of Paris, Ptolemy of Lucca, Marsilius of Padua and Bartolus of Sassoferrato. This presentation showed how the dissolution of the optimistic rationalist view, that motivated and was precipitated by these thinkers, opened up the way to the secularization of political discourse and culture of the West. It especially emphasized an endemic power struggle among all powerful political actors in the later Middle Ages, along with the specific socio-economic changes or influences of a certain philosophico-theological notion, as the cause of this transformation.

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

Resources of Prognosis in the Byzantine Empire

Michael Grünbart (*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, University of Münster*)

Prognostication formed an integral component of the planning of imperial actions and decision-making in Byzantium. Written sources reflect its presence and importance within the ruler's sphere: on the one hand, signs (*symbola* or *semeia*) were recorded in all kinds of narrative texts while, on the other, natural or extraordinary phenomena were explained and classified in subject-specific literature. Portents and omens tend to be connected to a specific (contemporary) context. Discussions concerning the accuracy, contingency and binding nature of such signs can be found from Late Antiquity to the end of the Byzantine empire. The late Byzantine historian Nikephoros Gregoras still connected political developments with phenomena that became visible in the firmament. He accepted astrology as a tool for prognosis, because it is based on mathematical/astronomical calculations and matches human logical thinking. Since many occurrences concerning the observation and interpretation of natural phenomena are recorded in the Bible (earthquakes, locusts, comets, etc.), they formed typological patterns, and a tolerated framework in Byzantine thought. For example, a solar eclipse was perceived as indicating the death of Emperor Andronikos II in 1341.

The Byzantine emperor relied on two kinds of human resources to make appropriate decisions: recorded knowledge (written in manuscripts and stored in the imperial archives) and experts in various disciplines who provided solutions. From the Byzantine millennium, works on astrology, books on natural phenomena (earthquakes, weather, thunder, etc.), dream books and collections of oracles (e.g., the so-called *Oracula Leonis*) are preserved. Experts, including fortune tellers, were present at the imperial court. While they did not hold an official position, their advice and prognostication could mislead and influence imperial decisions and behavior.

During Late Antiquity, experts on the occult sciences were persecuted and their knowledge was monopolized by the emperors in order to control information and suppress *Kaiserkritik*. Still, in the following centuries, they continued to be present and were sometimes supported by rulers, such as Manuel I in the 12th century. They could evaluate strategies for decision-making and offered ways of accessing alternative solutions or ending desperate situations by consulting God's will. The main areas of the application



An ostensible example of lekanomanteia (dish-divination) at the court of Theophilos (829-842);
Photo: Wikipedia copyright: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_VII_of_Constantinople_Skylitzes.jpg?uselang=de

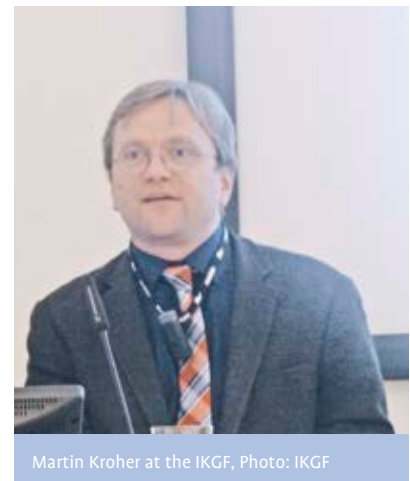
of such expertise were the military sphere (e.g., calculating the start of a campaign) and the imperial court (setting a specific date, horoscopes or information concerning an emperor's tenure of office).

Disasters and Celestial Phenomena in Eleventh-Century Political Discourse in China

Martin Kroher (*Chinese Studies, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg; IKGf Research Fellow*)

The starting point of this talk was the 'Memorials by Various Officials of the Song Dynasty' collection which, under the heading 'Disasters and Anomalies', in chronological order contains numerous memorials to the throne on this topic. While the specific arguments and theoretical reasoning could vary considerably between the authors, by and large, the memorialists seemed to share the idea that disasters, heavenly phenomena, and anomalies of any kind constituted a warning from heaven for the emperor. They would either indicate an actual danger that he and the empire were facing or were intended to improve his moral conduct. When encountering these memorials, we are confronted with the age-old question of how to interpret speech acts that, from our perspective, betray superstitious and irrational ideas. Did the authors of these memorials actually believe what they were saying? Or were these simply acts of expediency, mere rhetorical necessities in a political and cosmological system, that took these things for granted? Both options represent a kind of judgment: either the poor pre-modern mindset was superstitious, or hypocritical and, in a sense, it needed to be both, because someone surely must have believed in these things? In this particular case, because it concerns the cosmological core of Chinese kingship, there is no possibility of differentiating between a worldview and a life-world (*Lebenswelt*), and thereby explaining the divinatory practices in the daily lives of otherwise rational actors, as has been undertaken in other instances. To avoid this dilemma, it was suggested that this phenomenon should be approached as a form of institution, much like the institutions of modern states, which are respected and adhered to but are not necessarily dependent on belief in order to function. Rooted in the idea of the heavenly mandate, any catastrophe and especially heavenly phenomena represented a threat to the imperial legitimacy, because it pointed to the potential withdrawal of the heavenly mandate, and its transfer to another ruling house. It was therefore customary in these instances for the emperor to issue edicts containing self-deprecating language and a humble request for advice and criticism. The memorials in question, in many cases, were a response to these edicts and, in fact, such a *pas-des-deux* between a self-humbling emperor and his supportive official could present a powerful tool for

propping up the legitimacy of the dynasty by showing that it adhered to the ideals of ancient kingship. It could also serve the interests of the emperor in other ways, by steering his government in a particular direction. It was argued, however, that, in the course of the 11th century, literati-officials increasingly used this institution for their own purposes: rather than limiting the circle of officials who were asked for advice, an increasing number of officials were able to offer their opinions in an uncontrolled fashion, and disasters turned into an opportunity to debate and negotiate policy issues, criticize opponents, and even call the emperor's own conduct and morality into question. In other words, they became a conduit for the creation of a public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*) for the elite, which allowed officials to act both as loyal subjects and critical literati at the same time. While adhering to formal language and certain fundamental principles, such as the injunction against possessing and discussing astronomical knowledge, they also harshly criticized the emperor and limited the policy options available to him. To underline this point, the presentation closed by discussing a memorial (1068) that takes a different approach: here, the emperor is re-established as the arbiter of decision-making, pitted against a public opinion that may be helpful, but is simply too diverse to indicate the most appropriate course of action. By calling on the emperor to rely on himself in the face of a disaster, thus reclaiming for him the institution of the humble edict and the public sphere that had been created through it, the author clearly attempts to pave the way for the subsequent reform period, which saw Emperor Shenzong and his chief minister re-define the nature and economic reach of the Song government.



Martin Kroher at the IKGf, Photo: IKGf

Aesthetic Dimensions of Rituals: Social Functions and the Performativity of Prognostic Rituals

Aida Bosch (Sociology, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Rituals of prognosis and divination would not have survived for such a long time nor have been so persistent unless they had fulfilled essential functions for individuals, communities, and societies. What are these functions of prognostic rituals? My project at the Consortium deals with ritual aesthetics and social structure. It pursues the general thesis that rituals of prognosis are fundamentally linked to the problem of stability and change in society as well as in individuals' lives.

To validate the hypothesis developed through theoretical reflection and a literature review, I conducted a case study on a contemporary example, a group led by a young female artist, which practices tarot as an oracle as well as an art project. She has been developing several experimental performances and sub-projects based on Tarot entitled "The Fool's Journey." Her aim is to create a kind of collective oracle during the performance, where everything is well planned before, but to leave the process open to audience participation so that it remains "always a surprise." According to her, the oracle "is playful in methods, but serious in task." In a situation of "chaos", the oracle employs aesthetic and symbolic means to initiate a shift in perception and create a specific symbolic outcome which can then be placed into a new framework and provide new insights. Therefore, the participating audience is able to abandon routinized ways of perception and action: "The oracle is mirroring the situation in a new way, from a new perspective."

So what are the social functions of prognostic rituals for individuals or societies? First of all: prognostics and divination are creating the necessary capacity for decision-making in confusing situations. They constitute attempts to obtain knowledge about things we cannot know, and reduce contingency with regard to important common or private issues. If successful, the ritual process promotes feelings of trust in the social, historical, and natural order. In this process, the symbolic order is performed using meaningful patterns, such as words, sounds, forms and colors, and this performance generates evidence through experience, suggesting a method of interpretation. Also, the ritual process is considered to be part of daily life (see

Victor Turner). Hence, to start a ritual, a shift in perception is required. The perception of daily life is governed by routines, and this applies to both the social process in general and individuals. Acting in the ritual process, on the other hand, is similar to an artistic performance, as both require the transcendence of the routines of perception. Accordingly, a different mode of perception is needed, which is described in the art using the phrase "seeing as seeing" (Max Imdahl).

In traditional societies, prognostic rituals connect the diviner and the audience with the cosmological order to enable them to make reasonable and legitimate decisions. Within a divination process, conditions and possibilities for action are compared with, enriched or transformed by cosmological messages in often multi-stage processes. In modern prognostication processes, the conditions and possibilities of a given situation are analyzed or simulated to calculate the probabilities and so make reasonable, legitimate and collectively acceptable decisions on that basis. The goal is thus relatively similar in traditional and modern societies, but the methods and the knowledge systems underlying these processes differ.


During the prognostic ritual, a non-everyday situation is created in accordance and resonance with the cosmological order or—in modern societies—with the dominant knowledge system: a withdrawal of ego, personal interests, power, and politics is expected and possible, giving way to higher forces of different kinds. If the process works well, a major share of the responsibility for dealing with the future would be removed from the ruler and instead attributed to or legitimized by higher powers. In the divination process, there is always a danger of misuse by the diviner himself, who may hold huge symbolic power. However, presuming that the diviner does not usurp the ritual process for his own interests, oracles can be a helpful instrument for coping with necessary changes. The process stabilizes the community, mitigates conflicts of interest and provides new and possibly "higher" perspectives regarding challenging and unclear situations. In some cases, an oracle might even help to correct a wrong or selfish policy of the sov-



Magic Raum on the water, an inner journey. Tarot reading performance on a raft, Landwehrkanal-Berlin, 2014.
Screenshot from the documentary film "The Fool's Journey - Magic Raum" by Thomas Kelling & Miss Sophie's Procedures

ereign. Generally speaking, divination deals with the social, or even human, problem of contingency in an ambiguous, contradictory or confusing situation. This does not necessarily work through a reliable prediction, often desired but rarely achieved, but through the social functioning of the divination process itself. Analysing the social functions of the ritual process may

open up avenues for a comparative approach and allow for an inductive development of theory on prognosis, which is worthy of further study.

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Towards a New Philosophy of History? The Morphology of Cultures and the Limits of Individual Freedom

David Engels (ULB)

The paper in question attempted to discuss the framework and methodological preconditions for a new philosophy of history based on a thorough comparison of human civilizations. It originated from the observation that, if ever in history all conditions for the development of a new, state of the art comparatist synthesis of human societies from the earliest times to date had been fulfilled, it would be today, at the beginning of the 21st century. However, despite many promising approaches (especially in the domain of empire-theories), it seems evident that comparatist studies have hitherto been unable to conquer the scholarly position they deserve, as many historians seem to be afflicted by a certain mental reservation when it

comes to asking questions about universal history. It was the postulate of the paper that, for modern classical studies, it is not only an opportunity but even a duty to develop, beyond the mere scope of single studies, a differentiated, self-reflective theory of historical comparison in order to prepare the ground for a future comprehensive historical synopsis and thus make possible a new intellectual leap from disparate historical disciplines to a new, truly humanist historiography based on Giambattista Vico's classical definition: *Facultas philosophorum propria est, ut in rebus longe dissitis ac diversis similes videant rationes.*

Such a comparatist historical theory would initially have to answer two fundamental questions: Firstly, what is the object of its study? Secondly, what is the basic dynamic behind the evolution of this object?

Concerning the dynamics of world history, we already find some convincing answers in the dialectic models of Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Plato and Xenocrates; a method which has also been adopted and developed further by Plotinus, Cu-


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sanus, Hegel, Schelling, Brentano, Weber and Horkheimer/Adorno, and which has been recently systematised in a most stimulating manner by Höhle. The fundamental logical postulate is quite simple: Each elementary assumption is followed by a complementary (not contradictory) assertion; a tension which is then transcended, in a third phase, by the synthetic sublation of the initial moments through the adoption of a new, superordinate point of view. This ternary evolution seems valid not only for intellectual but also for social phenomena, and obviously lies at the roots of such different universal historical patterns as the evolution from dogmatism through scepticism to idealism or from early charismatic rule through complex territorial states up to authoritarian universal empires, each step being potentially divisible, following Hegel's metaphor of the 'Kreis von Kreisen', into analogous movements and tendencies within the respective framework, thus allowing for an extremely differentiated analysis of general historical evolutions.

The potential objects of historical comparatism span from the purely biographical approach across the most diverse social groups up to human history in general. However, we should at least recall the assumption, explicitly or implicitly present from Seneca through Bacon, Vico, Herder, Goethe, Danilewski, Spengler, Toynbee, Sorokin up to Lévi-Strauss, that a social body, from the smallest up to the largest, is always more than the simple sum of its constituents and that such a superordinate entity follows autonomous rules and is comparable with other entities responding to the same definition. Of course, it would be naïve to deny that these social entities are subject to manifold influences, and recent studies on cultural contacts have shown that social bodies are separated from each other not by clear boundaries, but rather by fluid transitional zones. Nonetheless, beyond the sterile conflict between essentialists and constructivists, it seems obvious from the respective religious, intellectual, political or cultural basic definition of social bodies that they are subject to a certain form of inner stability, at least as long as the definition that constitutes them as phenomena continues to apply, and thus also to an autonomous and non-heteronomous behavior.

The combination of both quasi aprioric fundamental assumptions about historical dynamics and social phenomenology makes it possible to draw the outlines of a unified theory of comparatist research to the extent that it enables a meaningful description of dynamic connections within the social entities constituting world history as well as a clear comparison between different entities in the context of an analogous dynamic context, making it furthermore possible to distinguish between accidental and relevant facts and characteristics and thus solve the old question regarding the quantity and quality of historical processes.



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Letting the Right Ones In: Court-Sanctioned Memories of Diviners, Healers, and Artisans in Five Mid-Sixth- to Mid-Seventh-Century Dynastic Histories


Stephan Kory (*Chinese Studies; IKGf Visiting Fellow*)

My IKGf project features translations of five collections of biographical accounts of late fourth to early seventh century doctors, diviners, and artisans from five Chinese dynastic histories completed between the mid-sixth and mid-seventh centuries, including collections of biographical traditions from the *Book of Wei*, the *Book of Northern Qi*, the *Book of Zhou*, the *Book of Sui*, and the *History of the Northern Dynasties*. All five collections contain valuable information about mantic, medical, and artisanal lineages and communities; the geographical distribution, transmission, and transformation of mantic, medical, and artisanal practices; and the manner and contexts in which divination, healing, and crafts were probably practised in late fourth to early seventh century northern China. A pronounced tension between state ritual concerns and the intractable popularity of divination, healing, and crafts is clearly apparent in these works. This tension not only forces the compilers to be explicit about the insider-orthodox perspectives they promote but also forces them to include much about the outsider-heterodox perspectives with which they were competing. As such, I treat each of these collections as imperfectly biased state Confucian filtration devices for mid-medieval Chinese mantic and medical culture. I contend that there is no better collection of texts for illustrating the significant contributions of doctors, diviners, and artisans to fifth and sixth century Chinese politics, science, and religion, or highlighting the liminal spaces occupied by contemporary doctors, diviners, and artisans between common and elite, official and non-official, and religion and science, as well as few better sources for examining the places of fate, freedom, and prognostication in mid-medieval Chinese mantic, medical, and artisanal culture.

My talk focused on the following related questions: How should the biographical traditions comprising each of the five collections be approached? Where, when, and by whom were these collections compiled? To what degree are the trinity of basic types of adepts (i.e., doctors, diviners, and artisans) I am using based on medieval Chinese terms and taxonomies? What do the traditions tell us about the social roles of doctors, diviners, and artisans in late fourth to early seventh century northern China? And, what do these traditions reveal about fate, freedom, and prognostication?



Stephan Kory at the IKGf; Photo: IKGf

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Interpreting the Mandate (*ming* 命) in Premodern China: Zhu Xi's (1130-1200) Philosophical and Mantic Discourse

Maud M'Bondjo (*Chinese Studies, Centre de Recherche sur les Civilisations de l'Asie Orientale; IKGf Visiting Fellow*)

The intensive use of the *Book of Changes* as a major Confucian reference in premodern China prompts us to study the links between its philosophical conceptions and its interpretation or use in divination. Through his exegesis of the ancient Confucian masters' writings, Zhu Xi considers two dimensions of the notion of mandate: a personal one, one's given quality of vital energy (*qi*), which leads to a cosmological one, namely the sum of the external and objective factors under which one is born. This predetermined canvas that lies beyond one's control must be accepted, since Heaven decided it. Human beings possess the intelligence to discern

their own mandate and potentially enjoy a certain degree of control over their life or destiny within the framework of their actions. The two dimensions of the mandate are, in turn, both conditions for apprehending and understanding the principle (*li*), the bond that unites the mandate and principle reflects Heaven's full effective capacity. As Zhu Xi explains in his *Classified conversations* (*Zhuzi yulei*), the mandate can be interpreted as the operational mode of the principle. In the moral and political process of investigating principles, divination may also be understood as a normative instrument. For Zhu Xi, the purpose of the *Book of Changes* is essentially practical in nature, and may as well be used as a strategic, efficient tool for challenging Buddhist ideas. Hence, this divinatory book forms an integral part of the Confucian orthodoxy (*daotong*), and its representatives are presented as embodiments of Heaven's mandate, of the proper mandate (*zheng ming*), as Mengzi (380-289 BCE) defined it.



Maud M'Bondjo at the IKGf; Photo: IKGf

Across his writings on the *Book of Changes*, Zhu Xi elaborates on the philosophical and religious contents of the hexagrams, but also offers precise instructions on the milfoil method of divination. Indeed, understanding and using the *Book of Changes* is not only an intellectual exercise; it is a life experience. Divination should nevertheless only be used under certain stipulated circumstances; for instance, when a man has reached the limits of his capacity and seeks prudent advice, as Zhu Xi did at the end of his life. Moreover, the *Book of Changes* provides us with the discernment to detect incipient changes (*ji*); it enables people who interpret it correctly to adapt their own behavior to the course of the Way and thereby maximize the flourishing of morality in people's lives and efforts. In keeping with the idea of self-cultivation, the use of divination may help a person to purify his/her vital energy in order to attain spiritual clarity (*shenming*), which then leads to the realization of one's innate good nature (*xing*).

Theorizing Prediction

Philip Balsiger (*IKGF, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg*)

For all times and all over the world, there are a few uncertainties that concern human beings deeply. The future is one such challenging topic. Humans are unnerved by the fact that there

is nothing to be known about this thing called 'the future'. How should we map out our lives successfully (as the French Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre indicates: "Man makes himself; he is not

found ready-made; [...]”; see Sartre: *Existentialism is a Humanism*) if we have absolutely no idea about what we are going to encounter next? This situation of contingency is not at all conducive to trusting in the future. Hence, it is unsurprising to observe the huge efforts that humans exert when trying to obtain information about the future in advance. The numerous studies which have been published in the last few years by scholars in the frame of the IKGF’s key project support this observation.

Determined as being the key topics of the IKGF-project, the historical foundations of prognostication, impacts of prognosis on our immediate present, and manners of coping with the future are brought together and presented in their uniqueness. This approach promises to provide fresh answers to the question of whether the different views on fate and the strategies for coping with destiny in Chinese modernity or the medieval European era constitute characteristic differences from Western modernity.

Going beyond these case studies, and adopting a scientific perspective, it is essential to consider a theoretic approach to prediction in a comprehensive way. For this purpose, any kind of mantic performance as well as the time periods of approximation, implementation, and evaluation are of fundamental interest. Also, concerning the systematic dimension of such a theory, key principles and generalizations, such as “Prognostics and Contingency”, “Prognostics and Faith”, “Normativity in Prognostics”, “Prognostics and Rituals”, or “Ethical Dimensions of Divination”, are of particular concern. Hence, based on such elements, a theoretic framework is a scientific instrument that is used to predict future occurrences: it is an instrument for humans to survive. Alternatively, as the American Philosopher Donald Davidson states: *One reasonable demand on a scientific theory is that it should be possible to define a structure in such a way that instances of that structure can be identified empirically.* (Davidson 2004, 145)

From the methodological point of view, the question is: How could these two disparate fields of mantic practices performed in Europe during the medieval period and the various, broad-ranging mantic practices being used throughout the whole historic period in China be brought together? From its origin, the whole IKGF-project has provided a perfect example of an interdisciplinary approach. We are challenged to solve a

problem that arises within a purely scientific context. As its solution requires contributions from more than one single scientific discipline and raises common questions on the interface of the involved disciplines, we find a relatively well-determined situation of interdisciplinary problem-solving.



Philipp Balsiger at the IKGF; Photo: IKGF

Summarizing the above remarks, we note that, in contrast to Toulmin’s essay on *Foresight and Understanding: an Enquiry into the Aims of Science* (1961), the topic treated here is not a prognosis that is based on scientific prerequisites. However, it is a kind of non- or proto-scientific prediction. Therefore, the task of establishing a theoretic basis for all forms of divinatory practices is less well characterized by developing a consistent, self-contained theory than by formulating a system for the orientation of action. Usually, a system of this nature entails a canon of rules which guide specific actions and lay down the requirements regarding prediction. By doing so, they ensure at least the outcome of the whole procedure for various forms of prediction. In addition to that, in the case of mantic practices, we must consider that such a system is unable to fulfill the requirements of completeness and finalization.

The question of how the two fields of medieval prognostics and Chinese mantic arts can form a joint theoretic base differs from the disciplinary question of how the various mantic practices are performed. For the latter, e.g. it remains a purely astrological problem whether three or five factors are considered to be decisive for the prediction.

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CONFERENCES | WORKSHOPS

Fate, Prognostication and Freedom in Chinese Literature, Film and Folktales

IKGF, Erlangen, September 27–28, 2016

Michael Lackner (IKGF), Kwok-kan Tam (Open University of Hong Kong), Monika Gaenssbauer (IKGF, FAU), Terry Siu-han Yip (Hong Kong Baptist University), Martin Kroher (IKGF, FAU)

Different cultures have different concepts of “fate,” and hence there are different methods of prognostication. The conference sought to address the philosophical, cultural, political, religious, or moral issues underlying the human desire to master fate through prognostication. Viewed from these diverse angles, fate features centrally in human life due to the role of human agency in prognostication. Both Oedipus and Macbeth are classic examples of how humans act as agents in realizing a prediction while believing to be the master of their fate. Human agency thus has a double sense of being a master and also being an agent of someone or something else. Oedipus, to take just one case, becomes the agent of fate because he himself makes it come true. In classical as well as modern Chinese literature (fiction and drama), many such stories exist. Due to this double meaning, fate often features in paradoxical ways in human life.

The modern Chinese concept of fate may differ from these classical conceptions because it incorporates social and psychological elements. Lao She, for example, perceives the human subject as doomed because life is socially determined. Lao She does not deal with prophecy, or does not believe in it, but reveals that

the human subject cannot transcend his or her socially-determined fate, no matter how hard he or she struggles against it. This sentiment is echoed by other modern Chinese writers, such as Eileen Chang (Zhang Ailing) and Xi Xi, who see life as predicated on fate and all struggles against fate as doomed. Instead, they depict the psychological state of fictional characters who live under the threat of a looming fate.



Exploring Chinese literature from various periods, including folktales, films, and TV series, the presenters repeatedly return to the themes discussed above: the paradox and ambiguity of divined fate, which, more often than not, lead the protagonist to bring about the fate that he/she wished to avoid; the ambiguity within the Chinese language, which often makes it impossible to describe the future adequately; and the ambiguous role of women in these stories, who tempt themselves and others to fulfil their fated destiny despite knowing better, going so far as to link fate to gender itself. It is in these instances, where fate and prognostication come into play, that the tensions

underlying the human condition become most apparent. Why would heaven or the gods punish us with floods? Or do these things simply happen for no reason? In modern narratives,

the divine powers are replaced by social pressure and gender norms, by identity and the sense of self, and modern narratives oscillate between fatalism and the author's protest against the prevailing conditions, and yet, other stories also highlight that the future can somehow be calculated and predicted; that it is not purely chance what will happen. Literary genres such as novels are particularly suitable for conveying this notion: while

the protagonists themselves may doubt their particular future, the reader is presented with clear signs regarding what lies ahead. Above all, however, the examples discussed at the conference highlighted the enormous diversity in Chinese civilization when it comes to notions of fate, prognostication, and freedom.

PROGRAM

September 27, 2016

Welcome Addresses – Introduction

Michael Lackner (IKGF, FAU), Kwok-kan Tam (Open University of Hong Kong)

Psycho-Fatalism in Xi Xi's Story 'A Girl Like Me'

Kwok-kan Tam (Open University of Hong Kong)

Discussion

Discussant: Monika Gaenssbauer (IKGF, FAU)

Dream-Scenes, Symbols and Prognostication in Wong Kar-wai's *Ashes of Time*

Monika Gaenssbauer (IKGF, FAU)

Discussion

Discussant: Nicoletta Pesaro (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

The Clash Between Personal Fate, Future, and Society in Ge Fei's Latest Fiction

Nicoletta Pesaro (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

The Chinese Concept of Fate in Lilian Lee's *Dumplings*, *The Last Piece of Chrysanthemum Jelly*, and *With No Reservation*

Jessica Tsui-Yan Li (York University, Toronto)

Discussion

Discussant: Anna Tso (Open University of Hong Kong)

Prophecy, Power and the Lost Self in the TV Drama *Legend of Miyue*

Serena Qun Xie (Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, Wuhan)

Discussion

Discussant: Roland Altenburger (University of Würzburg)

September 28, 2016

The Recurring Fate in *Life After Life*, *The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus*, and: *Legend of Miyue*.

Kaby Wing-Sze Kung (Open University of Hong Kong)

Fate or Destiny in *The Matrimony Inn* and *Eileen Chang's Love in a Fallen City*

Terry Siu-han Yip (Hong Kong Baptist University)

Discussion

Discussant: Christopher Lupke (Washington State University, Pullman)

Determinacy and Free Will in Contemporary Chinese Cinema

Christopher Lupke (Washington State University, Pullman)

Discussion

Discussant: Carsten Storm (FAU)

Popular Response to Natural Disaster in 18th Century Shandong: Views from Below as Represented in Prosimetric Vernacular Narrative

Roland Altenburger (University of Würzburg)

Divination or Death Traps? The Semiotic Language in Chinese Folklore and Fortune Telling

Anna Tso (Open University of Hong Kong)

Discussion

Discussant: Martin Kroher (IKGF, FAU)

Oppression versus Obsession: Dream, Fate and Prognostication in *Hongloumeng*

Kelly Kar Yue Chan (Open University of Hong Kong)

Fate, Myth and the Gesture of Restoring 'Ambiguity' (歸隱) – Superhuman Force and Landscape Imagery in Late Tang and Song Poetic Works

Frank Kraushaar (University of Latvia, Riga)

Discussion and further planning

Discussant: Kwok-kan Tam (Open University of Hong Kong)

Panel on “Knowledge of the Future as an Elite Secret” at the Symposium of the German Medievalists’ Society in Bonn

University of Bonn, March 19–22, 2017

Under the title “Knowledge of the Future as Elite Secrets: Intercultural Phenomena of Prognostication at Medieval Courts in China, Yemen, and Sicily between the 11th and the 13th century,” the IKGf organized a panel at the 17th symposium of the German Medievalists’ Society in Bonn, which took place on March 19–22. The conference organizers selected the topic “The Secret and the Hidden in the Middle Ages”. Klaus Herbers provided a brief introduction to the panel and chaired it. Former fellow Petra Schmidl spoke on an astrological manual written by a ruler in Medieval Yemen, while Matthias Heiduk discussed the figure of Michael Scotus at the court of Frederick II. Finally, Martin Kroher’s paper dealt with the interpretation of catastrophes and celestial phenomena by the elite in 11th century China.

All three studies discussed cases in which individuals or groups from among the elite adopt an ambiguous role concerning the secret knowledge of the future. In the Yemeni case, it was a ruler who, in his own astrological work, also adopted the stance of a scholar discussing astrological methods and

practice. In the case of Michael Scotus, posterity, and in particular historians of science, interpreted his work at the court of Frederick II as a move away from the dark middle ages towards science and accordingly highlighted his role in the transfer and the emergence of new knowledge. However, these views ignore the fact that he was also an astrologer and so connected to forbidden forms of knowledge. Thus, the development of scientific thinking was far more closely related to the mantic arts and hence far more ambiguous than we wish to believe nowadays. In 11th century China, officials discussing natural phenomena adopted the stance of both loyal subjects of the emperor, which heeded the imperial injunctions against possessing and distributing astronomical knowledge, as well as that of critical officials, who used the knowledge they legitimately possessed, namely history and the classics, to criticize government policy. All of this indicates that ambiguity is an important aspect of the universal practice of prediction across different times and cultures.



IN BRIEF

- Research Fellow Dr. Martin Kroher has left the Consortium in order to move to England and we wish him all the best for his future career. He is succeeded by Matthias Schumann, who has assumed all of his responsibilities and has already actively contributed to this issue of our newsletter.
- Under a new cooperation, the IKGf and the School of Humanities at Ningxia University in China have agreed to exchange researchers between the two institutions, in order to advance their learning and expertise. Both parties will encourage their researchers to make joint applications for national and international research funding, and will share the research materials and results of such joint research projects.
- **News from our former fellows:** Prof. Michael Puett, Walter C. Klein-Professor for Chinese History at Harvard University, was appointed as international FAU ambassador in 2017; Tibetologist Dr. Jan-Ulrich Sobisch received the prestigious German Humboldt research award. Prof. Terry Kleeman was honored with the Médaille Stanislas Julien for his study on “Celestial Masters: History and Ritual in Early Daoist Communities”, which he prepared during his stay at the consortium. Dr. Stéphanie Homola has been appointed as Junior-Professor for Ethnology at the Elite-Master Program “Standards of Decision-Making”, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg.
- **News from our former fellows and staff:** The general assembly of the Union Académique Internationale (UAI) at Tokyo elected IKGf deputy director Prof. Dr. Klaus Herbers as vice-president for four years. The UAI is a worldwide federation of all academies of sciences and humanities. IKGf Research Fellow Dr. Zhao Lu has accepted a fellowship at the Max-Planck-Institut für the History of Science in Berlin, which will help to deepen our cooperation with the institute. IKGf Research Coordinator Dr. Rolf Scheuermann is currently on partial leave for three semesters to substitute for the vacant Junior-Professorship for Central Asian Studies at the University of Leipzig.

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VISITING FELLOWS



Dr. Tao Yingna, research stay: October 2016-September 2017; research topic: The transmission and transition of Yi-learning in Song literati's notes and their influences on divination (11th and 12th century).



Prof. Dr. Klaus Hock, University of Rostock; research stay: October 2016-September 2017; research topic: The Globalization of African Divination Systems - Theoretical Perspectives from the Study of Religion.



Dr. Maria Jennifer Falcone, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore; research stay: October 2016-September 2017; research topic: Fate, Destiny, Prognostication and Dream Divination across pagan and Christian cultures: the case of Dracontius.



Dr. Zhu Haohao, Wuhan University; research stay: October 2016-September 2017; research topic: Development and Indigenization: Islamic and European Horoscopic Astrology in Ming and Qing China.



Prof. Dr. Stefano Rapisarda, Università di Catania; research stay: October-December 2016; research topic: Divination at Court. A Contribution to a forthcoming Handbook of Medieval and Early Modern Prognostication.



Dr. Piotr Gibas, College of Charleston; research stay: January-June 2017; research topic: Reading the Future in the Past: Time, Prediction, and History in Early Chinese Historiography.



Dr. Maud M'Bondjo, East Asian Civilizations Research Centre CRCAO, Paris; research stay: January-June 2017; research topic: What goes beyond natural order? The articulation of fate (ming) and principle (li) in Zhu Xi's (1130-1200) philosophical and Mantic discourse.



Dr. Daniel Canaris, Department of Italian Studies, University of Sydney; research stay: January-May 2017, and September 2017-April 2018; research topic: Typology, prophecy and Cabbala as a Strategy for Cultural Accommodation in Jesuit Figurism.



Prof. Dr. Bee Yun, Department of Political Science and Diplomacy, Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul; research stay: January 2016-February 2017 ; research topic: Prophet, Astrologer, Philosopher in the Political Literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance



Prof. Dr. Aida Bosch, Institute of Sociology, Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen Nürnberg; research stay: October 2016-March 2017; research topic: Ritual Aesthetics and Social Theory.



Dr. Thomas Meyer, LMU München; research stay: October 2016-March 2017; research topic: Leo Strauss and the doctrine of providence in medieval Arabic and Jewish philosophy.

OUTLOOK

Compared to the past year, this spring appears relatively calm, with fewer conferences and workshops, but the Consortium continues to work actively on several core projects. The preparation of the medieval handbook and the first volume of the sinological handbook enter their final phase, and the peer-reviewed book series entitled “Prognostication in History” with Brill is currently taking shape, as the initial volumes are under preparation. While the new elite MA graduate program “Standards of Decision-Making” welcomes its first students, life at the Consortium is also transformed by it—in a positive way—as SDAC’s students and staff begin actively to participate in our program. IKGf gradually broadens its scope by working on new projects and conferences related to modern forms of prognostication, spirit-writing, and eschatology.

THE NEXT *fate*

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

- the follow-up workshop “Accounting for Uncertainty” in cooperation with the Max-Planck-Institute for the History of Science, Berlin
- an IKGf Panel at the 6th international conference on “Western Esotericism and Deviance” of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism in Erfurt
- the follow-up workshop “Mantic Arts in China II”, that focussed on the introductory volume of the Handbook of Prognostication and Prediction in China

