CATSarena

COVID-19 AND EPIDEMICS IN ASIA

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

The second issue of CATSarena finds the world still dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic – for this reason we chose to focus our essays on this subject. However, things are changing. In its first months, it seemed that the pandemic would drive Europe and Asia apart, with bursts of xenophobia of Europeans against Chinese or Indians against Europeans. However, with the spread of the virus everywhere, this initial sentiment appears to be on the wane. It now is being replaced by a longing for the other, a desire for travel. Usually, this takes the well-known shape of tourism, with all its asymmetries. Nevertheless, it does document an overwhelming need to engage with others, with those both distinguished and linked to each other by what we perceive as cultural difference.

Our present issue shows how the dimensions of the pandemic in Asia vary widely. Diseases draw attention to human-animal entanglements, but they are also occasions for humour – not even, as one may assume, of the gallows kind. Our contributors document the range of local responses to COVID-19, from the subversion of health measures to the critique of governments. In addition, we also feature some more personal accounts about travel and research in unpredictable circumstances.

Despite the pandemic, CATS has been going strong in its development of new research and teaching. This includes the new CATS Kolleg Epochal Lifeworlds that investigates historical turning points and the way they establish new narratives, with a specific focus on China. CATS joined the international platform Worlding Public Cultures that examines transcultural art and social transformation. Workshops and spring school dealt with diverse subjects such as Chineseness in the face of China's rise to a major global power or the position of the 'vernacular' in colonial and post-colonial literature from South Asia. New research projects on various Asian countries, including lesser known ones such as Bangladesh and Laos, demonstrate the comprehensiveness of the CATS approach.

Teaching saw serious difficulties, as in all parts of the university, but both staff and students made significant efforts to come up with creative solutions. Teachers and students gathered around "virtual fireplaces" or organized guided tours through institutes – directed at students who have, a year into their studies, never seen their institute from the inside.

Once again, I hope this issue of CATSarena shows how exciting and diverse our centre is. We are looking for your feedback. Please direct any suggestions or criticism at arena@cats.uni-heidelberg.de.

Guido Sprenger
CATS Speaker

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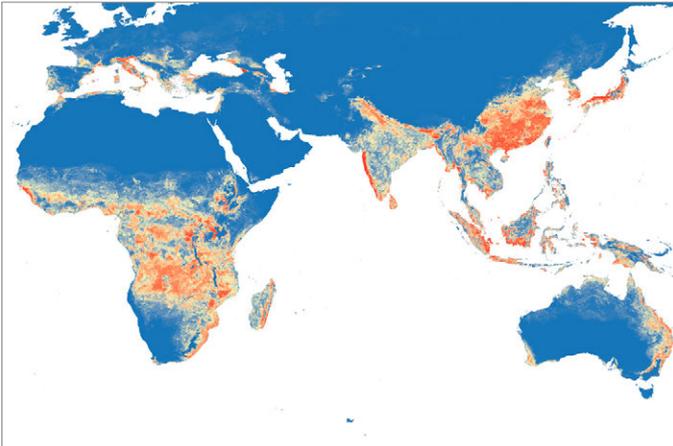
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COVID-19 AND EPIDEMICS IN ASIA

RESEARCH NEWS

COVID-19 and Epidemics in Asia

Multispecies Entanglements of Global Health

Mobile Mosquitoes in Transdisciplinary Perspective

by **Carsten Wergin**
Associate Professor of Anthropology
and **Uli Beisel**
Professor of Human Geography

In light of environmental degradation and biodiversity loss due to climate change, it is crucial we widen our discussions about social-cultural change in the Anthropocene from narrow, human-centered considerations toward more speculative fields of more-than-human suffering. One of the most persuasive methods to account for entangled lifeworlds is found in "multispecies storytelling" (Haraway 2016). Multispecies stories challenge anthropocentric narratives that tend to depict the bodies of other species as rhetorically passive resources for human appropriation. With a focus on what is considered #4 of the "100 world's worst invasive alien species," the Aedes albopictus (GISD 2019), we propose a rather "radical"

form of multispiecies storytelling.[1]

Ae. albopictus, also known as the "Asian tiger mosquito" due to its striped legs and body, is considered native to the tropical and subtropical areas of Southeast Asia but is today found in many parts of the globe, including Australia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe. It is an epidemiologically important vector for the transmission of many viral pathogens, including those of yellow fever, dengue, and chikungunya. Ae.albopictus have reached different countries mainly through human activities and transportation. After emerging in the United States via imported second-hand automobile tires from Asia, the mosquito has been found in the Mexican Yucatan peninsula, where dengue is a concern not only for medical entomologists but also the local industry, which largely depends on international tourism to its world heritage sites.

As the 2020 SARS-CoV2 pandemic painfully showed, a better understanding of the mobility patterns of disease agents and their vectors is crucial for early detection of outbreaks and their successful containment. From a social science perspective, the increased mobility of the invasive Ae.albopictus highlights linkages between humans and nonhumans that in the context of entomology, global medicine and health research remain understudied. The multispecies story we tell is based on case studies from Mexico, Tanzania, India, and Germany. It describes the spread of Ae.albopictus as a cross-border phenomenon that equally transcends national narratives of diseases and their impact on politics, societies, and cultures around the globe.

In our project, experts for mosquitoes – entomologists and ecologists – and experts for human mobility – anthropologists and human geographers – work together to understand how the mobility of mosquitoes and humans is linked.[2] We identify mobility patterns of humans, travelling for work or leisure, and how those are entangled with how and where Aedes mosquitoes move. This is to enable the design of public health interventions that control the spread of invasive mosquitoes and the diseases they carry.

The Mediterranean Basin offers a case in point. Since the late Bronze age, this region continues to be a global hotspot for trade, transport, and migration. As a result, countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea share not only goods but also common health threats posed by vector-borne diseases transmitted by mosquitoes. Since at least the 1960s, the Asian tiger mosquito's geographical distribution has continuously expanded. As a result, diseases like dengue or chikungunya are no longer considered restricted to tropical and subtropical regions, and are developing a strong urban component (Jourdain et al. 2019, 10).

Aedes albopictus (Source: WikiCommons)
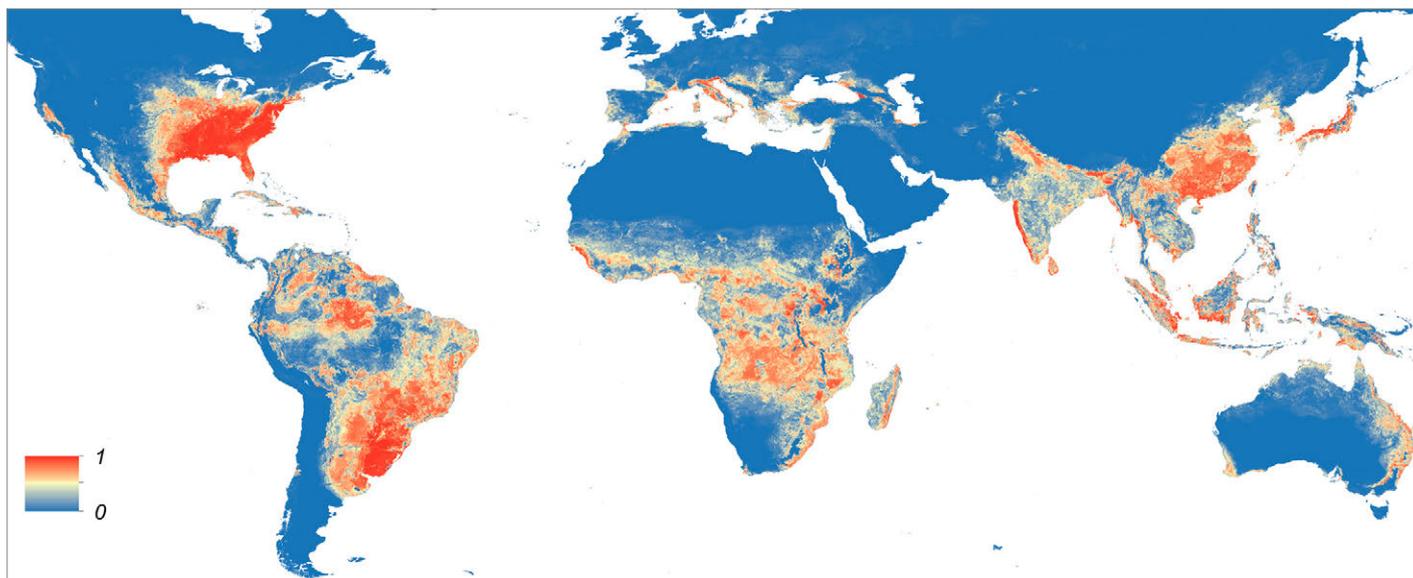
Global Aedes albopictus distribution in 2015.

Recent surveys showed that Ae.albopictus have spread across the entire peninsula of Italy, parts of Sicily and Sardinia, and into Switzerland. In late 2007, the first Ae.albopictus eggs were discovered in southwestern Germany (Pluskota et al. 2008), where they continue to arrive via freight transport from Italy and Switzerland. The mosquitoes migrate along the German A5 motorway and have by now settled in the Rhine-Neckar metropolitan region, which counts approximately 2.4 million inhabitants. Unwittingly aiding vector mobility, travellers, truck drivers, and gardeners become "companion species" of Aedes (Haraway 2008).

The mosquito's disregard for political and economic borders creates a significant challenge for possible control mechanisms, and places these insects alongside other "hyper-objects" such as CO2 or micro-plastic (Morton 2013). In addition, Ae. albopictus is considered by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)'s Ae. albopictus Factsheet as "one of the top 100 invasive species" (ECDC, 2020). It is thus subjected to a rhetoric of "illegality" and "border control" that is enmeshed with global trade as much as climate change concerns, race, and power politics. Through this framing, invasive mosquitoes are linked to migrating humans in a problematic way that is not only dehumanizing and delegitimizing refugees and migrants, but also establishing a wrong, racially charged idea of how invasive mosquitoes travel and extend their habitats.

Meanwhile, Ae. albopictus continue to show tremendous resilience in adapting to different geographical and climatic conditions by taking advantage of human-made environments and infrastructures, which has led to their successful global spread in recent decades. In order to address the complex socio-ecological dynamics at play, there is certainly a need to consider the Asian tiger mosquito as a learning species – a migratory species that makes use of and stimulates social-cultural change, and in doing so reveals problems typical of those of the Anthropocene, such as the prioritization of the economy over planetary health.

The movement of the mosquito further calls into question the quest for local eradication strategies while demanding transdisciplinary research partnerships. Increased sightings of the Asian tiger mosquito in Germany has growing potential to generate anxiety in the wider public, since the animals can theoretically transmit a suite of serious infectious diseases (see also Ernwein & Fall, 2015). At the same time, this mosquito, as a sentinel device older than humans, also offers a form of "radical hope" in times of crises through its capacity to adapt to climate change and counteract violent human efforts to propel it to extinction (Lear 2006). But how can one track entangled human-non-human mobility in such a way as to limit our impulses stemming from such loaded terms as "invasiveness" and "eradication" and instead search for ways to live together on a mobile and warming planet?

We suggest that a focus on the entanglements of human and mosquito mobility is urgently needed to detect disease outbreaks early and to develop successful, locally supported control strategies. How are human and mosquito mobilities linked? What methods are most suitable to understand their entanglements and develop more successful control measures? Ae. albopictus has shown tremendous resilience in adapting to different geographical and climatic conditions by taking advantage of human-made environments and infrastructures, which has led to its successful global spread. These

anthropogenic environments warrant surveillance at points of entry to understand introduction pathways, causes, and routes of invasions and connect these to different aspects of its biology and ecology.

Related transdisciplinary research points to the fact that humanity is itself an enterprise that needs rethinking. Since the fast-paced spread of Ae. albopictus is intertwined with international trade and human mobility, we believe that intervention to slow or halt its spread is possible. Its control, however, needs in-depth analyses of multispecies coexistence rather than a continued focus on the eradication of unwanted companion species.

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The Last of the Foreigners (in Varanasi)

by **Anna Scarabel**
PhD Student

My research-stay in Varanasi was supposed to come to an end sometime in March 2020. However, at that time, my homeland Italy registered the first wave of COVID-19. I thought I'd play it smart and postponed my travel back for a few days, as I believed everything was going to be fixed in a week or two. I was thus rushing from one corner of the city to the other to collect the documents for my visa extension.

This was a very exhausting time, but I was resolutely determined to make it work. At that time, COVID-19 was entering the Indian imaginary as the Italian disease and - in extension - the disease of tourists and foreigners in general. This idea mainly originated from the news that, at the beginning of March, 13 Italian tourists were all found positive to COVID-19 during a trip in North India. Everywhere in Varanasi, a palpable sense of suspicion began to arise towards foreigners. In my head, the situation was not very tragic and I thus continued moving in the city. Yet I decided to take a few precautions: for instance, I stopped riding in shared riksha and started booking the private ones. It took me a few days before I could find a decent mask, and for that I paid an enormous amount of money, as I could only enter a few shops - often shop keepers would grumble something incomprehensible to keep me away from them.

I believe that the way I was treated was not dictated by hatred or repulsion, but rather by a fear of the disease. A great shift in the imaginary of the "white for-

A view of deserted ghats in Varanasi. Photo courtesy of the author.

eign woman" took place in those days. During my previous stays in the city, my white skin had often granted me some sort of undeserved VIP status. This "special status" has always brought to me a sense of difference and lack of inclusivity, but at the end of the day, not having to stand in lines and attracting people's curiosity seemed like a pleasant way to be "different". Even though in orthodox Hindu religious contexts foreigners are often looked down upon for their lack of education in matters of ritual purity, this impurity "status" is sometimes counter-weighted by a sense of purity and elevated status deriving from a fair complexion.

In the last days before the lock-down, this link rapidly dissolved. The fact that many media reports blamed foreigners for spreading the virus had immediate repercussions. The whiteness of my skin - associated in Indian mythology with the complexion of many gods - had overnight become something to avoid, to stay away from: something not to be touched. Everywhere I went, this transformation gained momentum: people stayed well away from me, and when passers-by crossed my path on the street, they covered their nose with a scarf to protect themselves from what they perceived as a potential virus-spreader. At that point, I started to feel uncomfortable. I tried to be quick in my works and avoided unnec-

essary excursions. I never felt in real danger, but rather unwanted. On the last days of freedom, before a national lockdown was imposed on the 24th of March 2020, I could cut the tension in the air with a knife: all the familiar faces around my residence were hiding from me, so that I would not be tempted to chat with them. I started receiving messages from local friends asking how my family was doing at home, how the situation really was. Some of them sent me photos circulating on WhatsApp showing the tragic situation of Italy: there was one picture of a town square covered with dead bodies with the caption "The pandemic in Italy." Another picture showed the Brasilian president Bolsonaro with the caption "President Conte cries the Italian victims: only God can save our country now!"

All these images and (sometimes fake) news shocked the imaginary of many. On Sunday the 22nd of March 2020, a one-day curfew was proclaimed by Prime Minister Modi. At the end of the day, Indians were asked to switch off the lights in their houses, go on their balconies and rooftops with lit candles, and thus celebrate the national unity in the fight against COVID-19. I was at home when Varanasi switched off the lights completely: even the street lights went off. For a few seconds, the city was completely dark. Then millions of candles were lit, amarus (two headed drums) played hard, conch shells were blown accompanied by thundering invocations of the god Shiva from all sides: "Hara hara Mahadev! Hara hara Mahadev!" I could also distinctly hear the sound of frying pans beaten with ladles and firecrackers. The rest were unknown sounds. This national ritual was designed to create a national, cohesive spirit against COVID-19. To me, the scene had a surrealistic touch. Yet something else was go-

ing to happen after that: a 21-day lockdown was applied to the entire country.

Two very hot months later, I went out again for the first time. I was a little bit scared to be back in the streets and see people (something I was not used to anymore). I slightly feared retaliations generated by the difficulties of the last two months, but it was nothing like that. The stigma of the foreigner as "the one with the virus" was gone. The attitude of the days preceding the lockdown was replaced by the sad resignation that we were all in the same situation. That was now evidently a worldwide pandemic, a problem of the world in its entirety. The geography of the town had changed: in my area, it applied the rule that the shops opened every other day according to their side of the main street. While I was walking down the main road, my presence was somehow noticed as I was the only foreigner around, but I did not feel uncomfortable. Everything was calm: there were less people on the street, but those shopping in the market seemed relaxed. Most people had come up with creative ways to protect themselves from the virus. The panorama was quite variegated; I could see balaclavas worn under the burning sun as well as transparent masks "effectively" worn to cover the chin. I was in an area of the city that is relatively wealthy and that probably spared me from the sight of destitute situations. I established a routine of going grocery shopping twice a week. The shopkeepers were now kind and talkative: the initial fear was replaced by a desolate resignation. They thought that Italy and Europe were the first ones after China to be hit by the pandemic and thus kept on asking me: "Is back home fine now? When is this all going to end?"

"I hope very soon," I repeatedly said, "very soon indeed."

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The Use of Humor During the Pandemic in Taiwan

by **Chunping Lin**
Research Associate

The word "幽默 yōumò," which means "humor" in Chinese, is originally from Jiǔzhāng 九章 of the Chu Lyrics 楚辭 Chǔcí (475 B.C. – 221 B.C.) and was used to describe the tranquility of nature.[1] Lin Yutang 林語堂 (linguist, philosopher, and translator, 1895 – 1976) translated the English word "humor" with the word "幽默 yōumò". This Phono-semantic matching contains the sound of "yōumò" for humor and the profound meaning of humor after smiling.[2] Lin Yutang further defined the nature of humor, saying that "humor is generous, transcendent, and at the same time incorporates the idea of compassion 幽默是敦厚的，超脫同時加入悲天憫人之念。"[3] He promoted the use of humor, so that the word "幽默 yōumò" has occupied a place in the Sinophone world and has become more deeply rooted in the lives of intellectuals.

Humor may not cure the illnesses and symptoms caused by the Coronavirus, nor can it help to stop to spread the virus, but humor has been invaluable in relieving people from the stress and tension during the current pandemic across cultures.[4] In 2020, many great humorous sketches related to the pandemic appeared on Sinophone social media. On April 4th, in the German-Taiwanese students' Facebook group "德國臺灣同學會" two jokes were posted, one in Chinese, the other in English, both of which convey the same message:

"隔離，人權沒了。不隔離，人全沒了。" (Gélí, rénquán méi le. Bù gélí, rén quán méi le. Isolation, human rights are gone. Not isolated, all the people are gone.)

"Quarantine, No Human Right(s). No Quarantine, No Human Left."[5]

In addition to this type of exclusively word-based humor, it can also appear as a combination with images or videos. For example, Taiwan's National Palace Shop 故宮精品 posted a series of advertisements with artifacts as a choice of different greeting methods in the pandemic, such as the picture of a late Ming Dynasty statue, seen in Fig. 1 with the words: "75% 消毒酒精" (75% disinfectant alcohol) and "敬酒式問候" (toasting greetings). These posts were used to promote Taiwan's National Palace Museum 臺灣國立故宮博物院 at the same time.

The use of humor was not just limited to private life or advertising, even governments employed humor to promote behavioral measures during the pandemic.

For instance, the Ministry of Education, Republic of China (Taiwan), published a series of posts on Facebook, in which Taiwan's most famous astrology expert Jesse Tang 唐綺陽 was imitated, in order to promulgate the prevention priorities. Take the case of Fig. 2 Aquarius: "因為會背洗手七字訣而被同學覺得怪。你知道你是最棒的。" (Your classmates think you're weird because you can recite the seven abbreviations for hand washing. But you know you are the best.) The series was very well received by the public. Jesse Tang also praised the creativity from the Ministry of Education after receiving the positive feedback through the news. In addition, Taiwan's "Digital Minister," Audrey Tang, mentioned in the article "The Key to Taiwan's Pandemic Success: Fast, Fair, and Fun"[6] that Taiwan employs the "humor over rumor" strategy to fight disinformation.

At the beginning of the pandemic, there was a rumor of a shortage of raw materials for toilet paper in Taiwan due to the increased production line for medical masks. In the government advertising seen in Fig. 3, Su Tseng-chang 蘇貞昌,
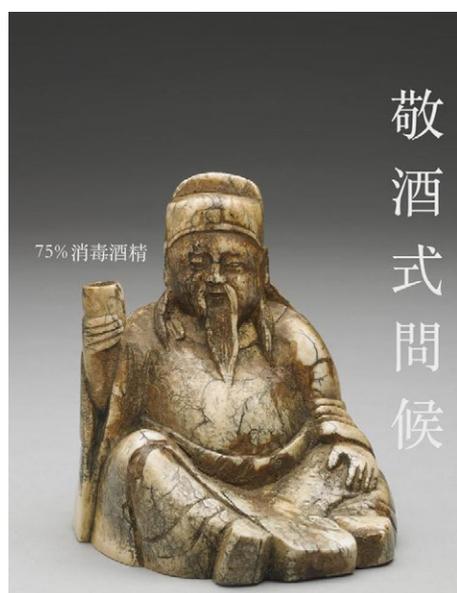
Fig. 1 *Advertisement of the National Palace Museum in Taiwan, showing a figure of Li Taibai (701–762); he was a famous poet and genius in the Sinophone world and also an oenophile.*
Source: https://www.facebook.com/npmshops/photos/a.349905788354455/3343309739014030/?type=3

Fig. 2 *Hilarious posts by Taiwan's Ministry of Education on Facebook have been reposted about 12,000 times.*
Source: https://www.facebook.com/www.edu.tw/posts/1482813591893257/

Fig. 3 *This humorous clarification post of the Taiwan's premier got over 100,000 positive reactions on Facebook and received attention from international media.*
Source: https://www.facebook.com/gogogoeball/posts/10157118591571270/

the premier of Taiwan, is shown from his back with graphical elements which emphasize the region of his buttock, together with a well-known toilet paper brand. The caption reads in Taiwanese: "咱只有一粒卡臣。" (We have only one bottom), referring to the slogan "We have only one Earth" from the environmental movement. The table below the headline lists the facts about the raw materials, which are different for toilet paper and for masks. The rumor that toilet paper was almost out of stock in Taiwan was dispelled by this advertisement, which not only made people laugh but also relieved public tension. As a result of the large number of retweets, the panic buying of toilet paper was successfully ceased after one weekend.[7]

The humorous strategy was apparently not limited to the Eastern world, but was even applied by the federal government in Germany: On November 15, 2020, the German government released a video under the hashtag "#besondere-helden"[8] on Youtube, urging young people to stay at home. The video depicted an elderly man who recalls fighting the pandemic from a future perspective by simply staying home. Although this humorous

film was criticized, there were also many positive comments from the UK, Switzerland, and Germany. In the pandemic, we see humor and the diverse use of humor not only spreading across different cultures, but also used extensively across various communities (civil and governmental) to combat the inconvenience and negative effects brought on by the virus.

1 the word 幽默 yōumò in 九章 Jiǔzhāng: 滔滔孟夏兮, 草木莽莽。傷懷永哀兮, 汨徂南土。眴兮杳杳, 孔靜幽默…。https://ctext.org/pre-qin-and-han/zh?searchu=幽默

2 "愈幽愈默而愈妙, 故譯為幽默" by 林玉堂 Lin Yutang in 論幽默 on humor, 1947 上海時代書局 S.5

3 "幽默是敦厚的, 超脫同時加入悲天憫人之念" by 林語堂 Lin Yuting,
論幽默 on humor : https://www.linyutang.org.tw/big5/lin-writings2.asp?idno=20

4 Various Scientific Research Reports on Humor during the pandemic:
http://www.psychiatria-danubina.com/UserDocsImages/pdf/dnb_vol32_noSuppl%201/dnb_vol32_noSuppl%201_15.pdf
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2405844020325391

5 Source: 德國臺灣同學會: https://www.facebook.com/groups/178218261881/

6 Source: https://www.globalasia.org/v15no3/cover/the-key-to-taiwans-pandemic-success-fast-fair-and-fun_audrey-tang

7 Tang Feng's talk on https://youtu.be/FUWLCQEJeHc 7:30

8 See Helden https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krJfMyW87vU

Gods and Outcasts

Ambivalent Attitudes towards Health Workers in India during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Mag. phil. Gautam Liu
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by **Gautam Liu**
Lecturer in Hindi

The COVID-19 pandemic in India generated a strange phenomenon in how health workers were perceived. On the one hand officials were not tired in proclaiming doctors and nurses as gods, on the other hand health workers were ostracized by large parts of the general population. Paradoxically, it was the very life-saving works of the medical professionals which turned them into outcasts. Making sense of these grossly ambivalent attitudes requires a deeper understanding of the traditional mindset of Indian society.

In the epochal Hindi novel *Mailā āṁcal* (*The Soiled Border*, 1954), which entirely plays in a village in Bihar, the author Phanishwarnath Renu (1921-1977) projects the novel´s protagonist, a Western trained physician, in line with his progressive ideology as a modern secular saint in newly independent India. The apotheosis of the doctor is based upon his successful efforts to control a cholera outbreak. Though the villagers were in the beginning very sceptical about his actions, such as disinfecting the well by putting chemicals in it, and therefore accusing him of spreading the disease through this measure, the self-sacrificing manner in which he treats the patients ultimately changes their mind: "*ḍāktār ādmī nahīṁ, devtā hai devtā!... kai aur dast se bhare bichāvan par leṭe hue rogī kī sevā karnā, kapṛe dhonā, davā ḍālkar gandagī jalānā ādmī kā kām nahīṁ, devtā hī kar sakte haiṁ.*" "The doctor is not a man, but a god, a god! …Taking care of patients lying in their beds filled with vomit and feces, washing their clothes, burning the filth with disinfectants is not the deed of a man, only a god can do this work."

Now what happened in today´s time during the Coronavirus pandemic? Attacks on healthcare workers in the first phase of the outbreak became so frequent that the Resident Doctor´s Association of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences wrote a letter, dated 16th April 2020, to the Ministry of Home Affairs stating "We, as healthcare professionals, are not as scared of infections as we are of being assaulted and abused by the very community we treat."[1] The main reason given in the letter for the attacks is the perception that the doctors "are spreading COVID-19". It seems that apprehensions towards health workers in the wake of infectious disease outbreaks as we have seen in the Hindi novel of 1954 wherein the doctor was accused of spreading cholera by disinfecting the village well still persists in considerable parts of North India´s society. Healthcare professionals also had to face ostracization. *The Guardian* reports: "In cases reported across the country, healthcare professionals described the growing stigma they are facing from their neighbours and landlords, resulting in many being refused taxis, barricaded from their own homes, or made homeless."[2]

To understand this backlash against health workers, let´s recall the above-quoted passage of *Mailā āṁcal*. The medical protagonist in this rural novel is called a *devtā*, a god, because of his taking care of cholera patients. So, on the one

hand, the doctor ensures maximum hygiene by "burning the filth with disinfectants." The doctor in this case stands for scrupulous cleanliness and therefore for the preservation of health. On the other hand, he is in constant contact with patients "who lie in their beds filled with vomit and feces." In traditional Indian society, only the untouchables as a profession come into contact with such impurities. Now, in times of a highly contagious epidemic, it is the people working in the health profession who are more prone to getting infected and are therefore frequently regarded with suspicion.

To counteract this backlash, India´s prime minister Narendra Damodardas Modi appealed in a video conference on March 25th 2020: *„saṃkaṭ kī is ghaṛī meṁ aspatāloṃ meṁ safed kapṛoṁ meṁ dikh rahe doctor-nurse īśvar kā hī rūp hai. āj ye hī hameṁ mṛtyu se bacā rahe haiṁ apne jīvan ko khatroṃ meṁ ḍālkar."* "In this moment of crisis, the doctors and nurses you see in hospitals in white clothes are a form of God. Today they only save us from death by putting their own life in danger."[3] These words were translated in the English media with the following headline: "Those in white coats are like gods." In August 2020 judges of the Gujarat high court gave the following statement: "In the past we have seen instances of assaults on doctors and other healthcare workers. That is unacceptable. For those who believe in God to be the life giver and life saver, our doctors are the personification of God on earth."[4] Taking recourse to the apotheosis of health workers is evidently a common practice in India´s public discourse. Maybe reminding the people that healthcare workers are to be respected as gods will not suffice to eradicate general misgivings.

Thus, the divine status of medical professionals remains a very volatile one in today´s India, especially during the outbreak of a contagious disease such as COVID-19.

1 https://thelogicalindian.com/news/covid-19-healthcare-workers-attacked-20665

2 The Guardian, 30.3.2020 "Indian doctors being evicted from homes over coronavirus fears." https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/30/indian-doctors-being-evicted-from-homes-over-coronavirus-fears

3 https://www.narendramodi.in/text-of-prime-minister-narendra-modi-s-interaction-with-the-people-of-varanasi-on-the-menace-of-coronavirus-548961

4 https://www.latestlaws.com/latest-news/covid-19-doctors-are-personification-of-gods-on-earth-states-this-high-court/

Existential Crisis? Dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan

by **Philipp Zehmisch**
Research Assistant

When the pandemic was rapidly spreading across the globe about a year ago, Pakistan declared a country-wide complete lockdown, which lasted from mid-March until mid-May 2020. Due to everyday forms of popular resistance, however, the lockdown was never as "complete" as the term suggests. Shops stayed illegally open, often with only half-closed shutters, and many resisted the demand of social distancing.

Why? On the one hand, Pakistan faces a variety of other problems, which leads many to ignore the dangers implied in the spread of the pandemic. Poor people's lives are constantly subjected to existential struggle for survival and against a variety of odds, among which the pandemic appears a lesser evil. Hence, on a very general level, one may understand why some Pakistanis have so far taken the pandemic not as important as most people in other countries, especially in Europe, do. The agenda of social distancing, which the government has promoted in concordance with countries across the world, can only be realized by the upper classes of the country; only by those who can afford enough space to live in a separate room when falling sick and who can get food delivered by others, often by their servants. The demand of social distancing, however, is virtually impossible for families from poorer backgrounds, as extended families often share only one or two rooms.

Another major reason for the wide-spread resistance to the lockdown was that it inhibited major parts of the struggling Pakistani economy from functioning in the usual, uneven and unequal ways, driving millions of employees, workers and daily wagers in a struggle for survival, depression, domestic conflict and violence. The policy of lifting the lockdown hence presented itself as a basic ethical question: Will people starve to death or die of corona? Hence, other solutions to the crisis than a complete lockdown had to be found. The Government of Pakistan decided to replace the strict lockdown with "smart lockdowns," cordoning off single areas with high numbers of infections. A strategy that seemed to work out quite well, if one believed the official numbers of infections; these have been comparatively low during the last few months; among others, because fewer tests were conducted than before; further, some actors in the public realm even declared Corona to be "over", and many believed it, too.

Official numbers have, most probably, always been much lower than the actual number of cases, as the majority of cases are not detected; only persons belonging to the middle-class and elite can afford to get tested. Further, a government servant involved in pandemic related policies assured me that no number regarding infections, their cure or death rates would be accurate, as there is no systematic mechanism of thorough data generation and enumeration. Most infected persons, especially in rural areas and urban slums, are simply not counted statistically because they have no or limited access to health facilities. As a result of such insufficient health services and enumeration mechanisms, the real number of infections must presumably be much higher than the official number.

At the moment, the so-called "third-wave" is arriving, carrying mutants with it and causing another rise of infections: on 21 March 2021, 3,878 cases were confirmed and 42 had passed away in the last 24 hours, with 29,576 active cases (*The Dawn*, Islamabad, p. 3). Worrying about the deadly potential of this "wave," one is left wondering for other than socio-economic reasons in order to explain the common reluctance to abide by the government's enforcement of lockdowns, social distancing and sanitary measures such as the wearing of masks or washing of hands.

One answer may be found when looking at the realm of religion and piety that have taken particular influence on the ways in which Pakistanis are coping with the effects and challenges of the pandemic. In Pakistan, Islam is supposed to function as a most common denominator that links large parts of an ethnically, religiously, linguistically and culturally diverse population to the master narrative of an Islamic nation-state. While this narrative is constantly contested, fragmented, subverted, and undermined due to the sheer diversity of sects and orientations encompassed within the very general notion of Islam, it surely provides a context and a religiously loaded atmosphere that lends religious interpretations, often involving moralizing arguments, particular vigour and validity.

What were then some of the responses to pandemic related policies, considering that these do not only inhibit means of survival and everyday movement, but also obstruct people to fulfil social obligations and ritual as well as religious duties?

Characteristic of the broad distrust of the state and elites in general, religion and urban legends have entered into a lethal mix with various conspiracy theories, which are also circulating with regards to COVID-19 and treatments. Spread, among others, by religious hardliners, one can encounter a popular reluctance to get tested for epidemics due to apparently hidden imperialist agendas, instituted by the so-called "enemies of Islam" with the goal to harm the global Islamic community (Ummah). In this guise, not only polio workers are regularly killed because polio drops have been declared a Western conspiracy to cause infertility among Muslims; similarly, health personnel seeking to test diseased persons for COVID-19 have been attacked once and again.

According to a dominant conspiracy narrative, going to hospitals implies the danger of being disappeared and one's body parts and organs being harvested and sold "abroad". The discrete and isolated treatment of Corona patients gets easily associated with malevolent powers and enemies of the state. Last year, a mob attacked doctors and healthcare workers and vandalized a hospital in Karachi when doctors kept a deceased patient's corpse – against the will of his relatives – in order to wait for the result of a COVID-19 test.

Another urban legend that circulates is that people came to pray at the grave of a Corona victim, and they, apparently, saw an empty grave, implying the bodies had been disappeared. Hence, many patients do not report their illness because they fear that – once in government quarantine – they will not return. Some orthodox religious scholars even claimed that the virus was intended to target Islam and Muslims.

In turn, the contention that COVID-19 is a result of God's anger for the transgressions of morals is accepted by numerous individuals in Pakistan. There is a wide-spread conviction that individual sufferings result from God's fury. One analyst marked the pandemic as a "test" for people, guaranteeing that they return to Allah in order to seek absolution for their transgressions. A reporter, while considering Corona an *azaab* (torment or discipline) from Allah, contended that these were direct results of sins committed such as the enjoyment of sex and infidelity, which implies that the sinner has wandered away from God and turned selfish.

As a result, the majority of Pakistanis is disregarding orders by the government. They don't wear masks and continue to meet others, especially at significant life cycle rituals such as weddings and funerals as well as religious congregations, including Friday prayers. Most Pakistanis attach more value to everyday rituals and demands of etiquette, like handshakes and hugs, than an abstract danger of infection through shaking hands. Further, interlocutors in the mountains behind Islamabad, where I lived with my family during the first six months of the lockdown, were convinced that Corona would not affect those who live in the countryside, work with their bodies, and eat healthy food. Expressive of a common scepticism towards science, which is replaced with piety and fatalism, one interlocutor opined that God has already decided who will die when. As everything would happen according to God's will, one should calm down and peacefully await one's fate. I am tempted to ask: Do these people have many other options than waiting it out and continuing as before?

To conclude, Pakistanis face a variety of contested information in their everyday life, disseminated both by state and religious actors. While there is formally a private domain of citizens, which is tackled by the government demanding individual discipline and responsibility, these globally applied prescriptions prove inappropriate to contain the spread of the pandemic in Pakistan. Here, religion and public morality have come full circle at the expense of people's distrust in science, the body politic, the state, its health system, and its capability to deal with the pandemic. Especially those who do not belong to the elite encounter myriads of alternative, most often religiously charged, world-views and explanations that help them coping with the disastrous impacts of COVID-19 on their everyday lives. The void created by long-standing neglect of public welfare by the state, especially when it comes to recent neoliberal reforms of the health system through significant budget cuts, seems to be filled with meaning by forces who follow their own logic, arguments, and reasoning.

Philipp Zehmisch
joined the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg in October 2020. He teaches social and cultural anthropology. His PhD dissertation concentrated on migration and subaltern politics in the Andaman Islands, India. Philipp's current research focuses on statehood, borderlands, and ethics in postcolonial Pakistan.

Reporting Corona

by **Marina Rudyak**
Assistant Professor

The seminar "Reporting Corona: State Media, Critical Journalism and Citizen Witnessing during the COVID-19 Outbreak in Wuhan" at the Institute of Chinese Studies explores the news and information production in locked-down Wuhan. It analyses the different types of reporting and writing, their motivations and their ways of coping with censorship.

The lockdown of Wuhan, a city of 11 million people and one of China's largest industrial hubs, was announced overnight. On January 22, 2020, a Wednesday before the weekend of the Spring Festival, China's most important holiday, the Chinese government declared that starting at 10 a.m. the next day, all train stations and airport would shut down. No one would be allowed to leave the city.

At the same time, an online propaganda campaign was launched to promote positive, patriotic, and nationalistic messages. On the second day of lockdown, 24 January, a video showing five medical staff from Wuhan East-West Lake District People's Hospital, dressed in full hazmat gear, wishing everybody a Happy New Year: "We are here, you can spend the new year at ease!" (有我们在, 大家安心过年!) was promoted all over the Chinese internet to ease the Corona virus panic. The official narrative focused on the unity of China and the dedication and resilience of common Chinese people, particularly emphasising the contributions of medical and army personnel. Beijing declared a "People's War" against Corona. Meanwhile, hospitals in Wuhan and media outlets received orders not to talk about the outbreak;

Medical staff from Wuhan East-West Lake District People's Hospital, dressed in full hazmat gear, wishing everybody a Happy New Year: "We are here, you can spend the new year at ease!" (有我们在, 大家安心过年!)

infected medical personnel were ordered not to tell anybody about their infections.

The lockdown was expected to last for at least one month (it lasted for 76 days). After the announcement, everybody who was not Wuhan-based tried to leave the city, including journalists, both Chinese and international. Of the international media, only one person stayed: the veteran China correspondent Chris Buckley, who reported for the New York Times (he was expelled from China in May 2020). Of the Chinese media, only a few remained to provide critical coverage, largely unchallenged by the propaganda apparatus, with virtually no state media present on the ground. Only on 4 February did the Propaganda Department announce that it would send more than 300 journalists to Wuhan and the Hubei Province to "report" and "guide the public opinion."

Despite the government orders, critical journalists, citizen journalists, and bloggers produced accounts that significantly challenged the official narrative that the leadership had everything un-

der control. What all accounts had in common was the expressed wish and sense of responsibility to witness and record.

A journalist team of Caixin (财新), a privately held media platform known for its investigative journalism, decided to stay, despite concerns for their health and safety. The executive deputy editor of Caixin Media, Gao Yu (高昱), explained their motivations in the article "Reporter's Notebook: We Stayed in Wuhan as the Trains Pulled Out" on 23 January:

> "We've seen many issues that need to be clarified and covered by journalists... As journalists, I hope we can record what is truly happening, no matter whether fortunate or not. What we can do is to strive to record the truth for the future."

The Caixin team spend 76 days in Wuhan until the lockdown was lifted, focusing on in-depth coverage of the origins of the outbreak and uncovering, i.a. that the virus had been identified on 24 December 2019 and sequenced on 27

December; on 1 January 2020, the province had ordered scientists to destroy the samples. The report, like many other Caixin articles, was censored but remains stored in a web archive.

Ordinary citizens, too, challenged the official narrative. Recoding what was going on with smartphones and social media accounts, they shared their own stories and the stories of others in Wuhan. Some of them, like the lawyers Chen Qiushi (陈秋实) and Zhang Zhan (张展), identified themselves as "citizen journalists" (公民记者) – a term that first became prominent in the immediate aftermath of the South Asian tsunami of December 2004. In the absence of professional journalists, first-person accounts, filmed with camcorders, mobile phones, and digital camera snapshots, posted online through blogs or personal webpages filled the gap. Research on citizen journalism in China describes the aftermath of the Wenchuan earthquake of 12 May 2008 as the formative moment for Chinese citizen reporting. While the authorities banned most reporting on the scene, requiring journalists only to channel the official version of the events produced by the state media agency Xinhua or the central television outlet CCTV, reporting by ordinary citizens who began reporting what had happened, relayed first-hand news about the earthquake. With a ban on reporting and only a few critical journalists who tried to circumvent it on the ground, Wuhan presented a similar scene.

The Beijing lawyer Chen Qiushi arrived in Wuhan on the Lunar New Year's Eve, the 24 January, on the last train from Beijing. His first video log starts with the words:

"Why am I here? Because this is my responsibility as a citizen journalist. If there is a disaster and you don't rush to the frontlines, what kind of journalist are you?"

The last sentence being a side blow to all the state media journalists who left Wuhan. Chen was more explicitly critical of China's President Xi Jinping, whose noticeable absence in the early phase of the outbreak was widely discussed on the Chinese internet:

"I don't care where Xi Jinping went, but I, Chen Qiushi, came here."

Chen, a well-known citizen journalist in China with a huge online following, had covered the 2019-2020 Hong Kong protests. For that, he had been blocked from the Chinese social media:

"I will use my mobile phone camera for witnessing and reporting the real situation of the outbreak in Wuhan, and I want to feature the voices of Wuhan people. Although I am blocked on the Chinese internet for reporting on Hong Kong, I still have Twitter and Youtube."

However, by reverting to Twitter and Youtube, he was violating Chinese law: both are censored in China and can only be accessed with the help of a Virtual Private Network (VPN) client, which is outlawed for most in China. By 10 February, Chen had 433,000 subscribers on Youtube and 246,000 followers on Twitter despite the Great Firewall. His videos were translated into other languages on Youtube by online volunteers. He also became known to the international audience after being interviewed by several international media outlets. Chen recorded 14 episodes of "Citizen Journalist Chen Qiushi's reportage of the Wuhan epidemic"

Chen Qiushi at Wuhan Train Station

(公民记者陈秋实武汉疫区采访实录), the last one on 4 February – the same day the Propaganda Department announced to send more than 300 journalists to Wuhan. Thereafter, Chen Qiushi went missing and remains under arrest till now.

By now, more known internationally than the Caixin-Team or Chen Qiushi reporting is the series of blog posts by the acclaimed Chinese writer Wang Fang (汪芳) that have been translated into English and German as the "Wuhan Diary". Wang, who writes under the pen name Fang Fang (方方), was with her family in Wuhan when the city went into lockdown. She started writing on 25 January:

"I just received a message from [an] editor for the literary journal Harvest, suggesting that I start writing a series that we could call 'Wuhan Diary', or 'Notes from a Quarantined City'… I really should start writing about what is happening. It would be a way for people to understand what is really going on here on the ground in Wuhan."

After the first entry on 25 January, 59 more entries followed, with tens of millions of netizens following her account, even though many of her posts were quickly censored (they are archived on China Digital Times).

There is another "Wuhan Diary" (武汉日记), written by an anonymous citizen of Wuhan and published by the Australia-based political artist and dissident Badiucao (巴丢草). The first entry, written on January 23, starts with the line "23 January 2020. The first day of lockdown. Let's consider it a record for ourselves." The author wrote 56 posts, most of them are translated by Badiucao on his blog. Badiucao, who has over 70 thousand followers on Twitter, used his platform to raise awareness for the blog:

> "I am helping a #Wuhan resident to translate, illustrate & share diary to the world. An insight of real life under quarantine of #COVID2019 from China. Please read and share! #coronavirus #武汉肺炎"

Initially, there was a brief window of non-sanctioned storytelling, different in scale from any previous major outbreak or disaster in China. After the Lunar New Year, articles, blog posts, or any type of witnessing on Chinese social media that did not fit the official narrative were quickly censored, often within hours. To preserve them for posterity, anonymous activists created web archives and Telegram groups where alternative links or screenshots of posts censored on the Chinese web were stored. Some witnessing accounts circumvent the censorship by posting on platforms outside China, mainly on Youtube and Twitter. Together, they constitute a huge body of primary sources for future scholarship and material to teach how those in the epicentre of the Corona outbreak witnessed and reported it.

Marina Rudyak
is Assistant Professor of Chinese Cultural Studies. Her research focuses on China's international development cooperation and political ideology.

CATS Kolleg Epochal Lifeworlds

Worldmaking from a Global Perspective:
A Dialogue with China

CATS Kolleg "Epochal Lifeworlds":
Our Partners

„Eine translinguale Begriffsgeschichte chinesischer Welten"
Wie wird Zukunft bewusst und

„Soziale Welten: Chinas Städte als Orte von Welterzeugung"
Wie werden vor dem Hintergrund

„Vorstellungen von Weltordnung und ihre Trägergruppen"
Welchen Einfluss hatten globale

„Epochale Lebenswelten: Mensch, Natur und Technik in Krisen- und Umbruchsnarrativen"

4 Sections in the Center for Advanced Studies: Worldmaking in a Global Context.
A Dialogue with China (Section 4, Crisis is the CATS Kolleg)

by **Barbara Mittler**
Professor for Chinese Studies

Epidemics, earthquakes, industrial accidents are apocalyptic catalysts: they threaten planet Earth as life world. At the same time, they mark the beginning of radical metamorphoses, heralding new eras – entailing new narratives of world. As historical epochs are often described with reference to humans, nature, and technology (Ice Age, Stone Age, Age of Printing, Digital Age, Anthropocene), the new CATS Kolleg "Epochal Life Worlds—Man, Nature and Technology in Narratives of Crisis and Change" will focus on the interplay of these three factors in moments of crisis and collapse. It cooperates with the Käte Hamburger Kolleg for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies (CAPAS) as part of the University's Thematic Research Network Umwelten—Umbrüche—Umdenken https://trnumwelten.hypotheses.org.

The CATS Kolleg is one section in a Joint Center for Advanced Studies "Worldmaking from a Global Perspective." Funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), this Joint Center brings together scholars from Freie Universität Berlin, Georg-August Universität Göttingen, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (Carson Center), and Julius-Maximilians Universität Würzburg. Inviting German and Chinese fellows from various disciplines, the project partners will investigate existing notions of "world" and practices of "worldmaking" from different angles to address some of the following questions: How are worlds created and changed? Why do some worlds have a stronger impact locally, regionally, and globally than others? How and why do they disappear? How do different actors conceptualize and experience them? How do they influence lived realities? And how do different worldmaking practices contribute to changing worlds? How do concepts and practices of different worlds interrelate?

The Heidelberg team, examining manifold interrelations between world and environment, as well as their reflection in epochal narratives, consists of four permanent members: Matthias Schumann, Sara Landa, Emily Tsui, and Barbara Mittler (Coordination). Every semester, they are joined by a handful of short-term Tandem-Fellows. This term, the project will organize a series of Digital Dialogues and, in cooperation with the Thematic Research Network Umwelten—Umdenken—Umbrüche, a number of "Pandemic Readings" and a Musical Installation "Vanitas21," which brings together music by Claudio Monteverdi and contemporary improvisation on Epochal Pandemic Experiences.

Project Member's Research Topics

Sara Landa
Environmental, Political and Aesthetic Crises and Transformations: Challenges of Literary Representation between Socialism and Postsocialism (ca. 1965–1995)—a Transcultural Perspective

Matthias Schumann
The Changing Life Worlds of Humans and Animals in Early Twentieth Century Shanghai

Emily Tsui
What Nature Promises: Order, Change and Materialism in Late-Imperial China

Virtual Spring School

Rethinking the Sinophone—A Transcultural Perspective

by **Barbara Mittler**
Professor for Chinese Studies

Early in April (7th-10th, 2021), the Institute of Chinese Studies, supported by the Taiwan Ministry of Education and as part of the "Taiwan Lecture Series" conducted a Virtual Spring School, with renowned speakers such as 王德威 David Wang (Harvard University), 沈冬 Shen Tung, 洪淑苓 Horng Shu-ling, 劉正忠 Liu Cheng-chung, 高嘉謙 Ko Chia Cian, and 梅家玲 Mei Chia-ling (National Taiwan University). Moderated by a group of students from MATS and Sinology, and attended by participants from all over Europe and Asia, the Spring School debated how and why the Sinophone as a research tool is worth rethinking from a transcultural perspective.

As the People's Republic of China (PRC) rises as a superpower, the question of how to live and define Chineseness beyond its borders becomes ever more prevalent. "Sinophone literature" (*huayu wenxue* 華語文學), as opposed to "Chinese literature" (*Zhongguo wenxue* 中國文學, i.e. written inside the People's Republic of China)" may be used to refer to, according to David Wang, a heterogeneous body of texts related, if not necessarily subjected, to the dominant discourse of the People's Republic of China in the name of nation, territory, politics, and ethnicity. Sinophone studies is thus conceived by Shih Shu-mei as "the study of Sinitic-language cultures on the margins of geopolitical nation-states and their hegemonic productions."[1] In her words, thinking the Sinophone can serve to "to disrupt the chain of equivalence established, since the rise of nation-states, among language, culture, ethnicity and nationality." As such, the Sinophone is an interesting case to test transcultural approaches.

The CATS Spring School offered a chance to discuss with some of the most prominent protagonists in the field of Sinophone Studies (considering not just literature, but also music, film and poetry) how, when and where Chineseness can be thought with and alternatively to the superpower politics of the People's Republic of China. In introducing sinophone literature, poetry, and music through the lens of Taiwan's heterogeneous cultural production—including works by aborigine authors and artists, as well as Chinese immigrants from Malaya and from the Chinese mainland, before and after 1945, i.e. *waishengren* 外省人 and *benshengren* 本省人—students were able to immerse themselves deeply into the intricacies of the Sinophone.

1 Shih Shu-mei 2011. "The Concept of the Sinophone." PMLA 126, no. 3: 709–718, 710

Sinophone Taiwan

CATS Virtual Lecture Series 2021

Living the Socialist Modern

The Chinese Communist Party at 100:
Global and Interdisciplinary Perspectives

2021 marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. What did it mean to "live with the Specter," to experience what one might call the making of the "Socialist Modern" that found a first point of culmination with the foundation of the CCP in 1921?

by **Barbara Mittler**
Professor for Chinese Studies

In a digital lecture series organized by the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies in Heidelberg (CATS), in cooperation with the ERC sponsored project "READ-CHINA: The Politics of Reading in the People's Republic of China," in Freiburg and the European Institute for Chinese Studies (EURICS) in Paris, this virtual lecture series suggests unpacking the impact of this event on lives on the ground in a long century of Chinese and global history. Deliberately designed to offer alternative "histories" of the Chinese Communist Party, we will provide interdisciplinary views and experiences of the "Socialist Modern" and its many variants in a century now past, but also in the present and in the future, probing into different positions from not only from Political Science and Party History, but also from from Everyday History, Anthropology and Cultural Studies, Literary Studies and Sociology, Art History, etc.

   Each lecture will focus on a specific time slot, marked by ten-year steps in the century of history that we are looking back to: 1921, 1931, 1941, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011, 2021. Lectures will begin on a particular date, branch out, back and forth to the decades before and after so as to provide

Detail from © LIN Shengyuan 林圣元 (1965-) "Freedom" in MAO 100, curated by Ni Jun 倪軍 (OIPCA: New York 1993)

a long-term view of the situation at hand! We encourage the use of a variety of different sources and global perspectives on the materials at hand.

For access links and updates on the program, register here:
livingthesocialistmodern@gmail.com

The full program and more information about speakers and abstracts can be found here:

» https://www.cats.uni-heidelberg.de/medien/lsm.html

Travels through Space and Time

Illustrations in the heidICON Pool
SAI Reiseberichte Südasien

by **Dorothee Becker**

Several illustrated travelogues dating from the 17th to the 19th centuries are part of the digital collection "Literature on South Asia – digitized" which we are expanding continually with further volumes from the holdings of the CATS library. To facilitate access for scholars to the illustrations we successively enrich them with additional metadata in the heidICON pool "SAI Reiseberichte Südasien." These metadata are imported into our web presentation and the data sets of the image facsimiles are linked via the tab "Image description." The links below demonstrate this connection. They concern the fifth plate of Thomas Pennant's "The view of Hindoostan."

Around 1790, the naturalist and book and art collector Thomas Pennant (*1726 in Wales, †1798 ibid.) decided to compile a 14-volume work of travel itineraries around the globe, with texts and illustrations on diverse aspects of the regions travelled. He himself had made excursions in Europe in earlier years; for his imaginary trip around the world, he drew on written and pictorial materials collected by other travellers, such as James Rennel and William Jones, as well as Pliny and Marco Polo. By the time of his death, Thomas Pennant had succeeded in preparing two volumes of this special kind of travelogue on "Hindoostan." One of the stops in "Eastern Hindoostan" (Volume 2) is "Mysore." To give a characteristic impression of the landscape – "an immense inclined plain, with an undulated surface, which, with little assistance by dams, form in the hollows, tanks, or receptacles for water" (p. 73) - Thomas Pennant chose as the fifth plate a view at "Mooto Tahlow [Mottahalli], sixteen miles from Seringapatam." As engraver he named "Mr Chesham" (Francis Chesham). For the drawing he thanked the art collector "Hoare, Esquire, of Twiford, Hants."

We invite you to browse through the digitized travelogues in our collection and to profit from the possibilities of using the illustrations for your own academic work.

» https://heidicon.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/detail/1211594

» https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/pennant1798bd2/0006?ui_lang=eng

Plate V in the 2nd volume of "The view of Hindoostan" by Thomas Pennant (1798).

Exchange Semester from home

by **Meera Sridhara**
*MA Student, South Asia Studies*

An exchange semester can be so many things – a way to experience a new academic setting, a chance to learn from new professors and peers, and an opportunity to explore a new country and culture. And that is exactly what I had in mind for my 5th BA semester at the SAI. As with all our best laid plans over the last year, the pandemic made mine, let's say, a little difficult! However, with semesters moving online, I fashioned for myself a 'virtual' exchange semester where I took courses from the University of Toronto and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem – all from my room.

Increased accessibility and erasure of borders accompanying online semesters was probably one of the few positives of the pandemic. Experiencing classes at UToronto without having to brave the Canadian winter is a plus in my books. Time-zone-swapping and virtual continent-hopping on multiple days of the week used to initially give me a feeling of being at two places at once. Reality, however, quickly tempered the novelty as I realized this also meant that I had to complete assignments in time in three different time zones! The biggest advantage with a virtual exchange semester was the logistical items I did not have to do – no applying for visas, no endless hours spent searching for student housing in the destination city, and crucially, no money spent on airfare. Upgrading my internet connection was the extent of my expenses, a trade-off no student would complain about.

However, Auslandssemester or Erasmus Programs are also opportunities for cultural exchange and exploration, and the pandemic has affected these intangible and social aspects for all of us. I might have escaped the Canadian winter, but I also missed the chance to travel around Toronto during weekends, the chance to finally try Poutine, the chance to randomly walk into a class whose title sounded intriguing. As all of us have realised over the past year, the Zoom-cum-Room fatigue is real. The initial convenience of taking all your classes from your room over Zoom quickly morphed into the unmitigated bore of having to take all your classes from your room over Zoom!

If you are planning for an exchange semester in the Summer term, instead of completely writing it off you could consider the possibility of tailoring one that you could take from your room. It is an experience I would recommend.
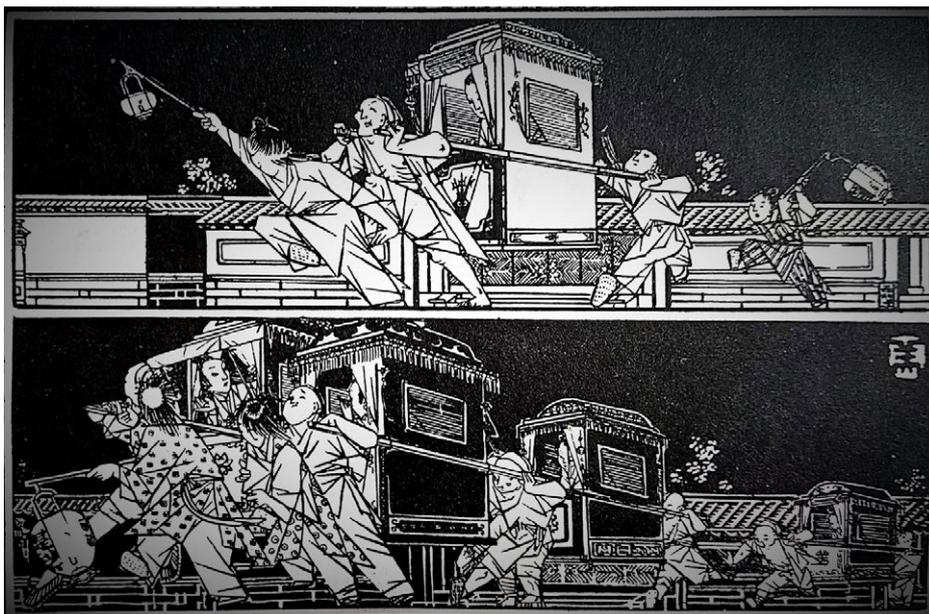
Cao Hanmei, picture 496 of The Golden Lotus, ink on paper, 17.78 x 26.67 cm, 1943, reprinted in Jinpingmei huaji, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shiji chuban jituan and Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2004). My dissertation is entitled "Modernity in Cao Hanmei's The Golden Lotus."

The Challenges of Finishing a PhD during Corona

by **Xiutang Li**
PhD candidate, East Asian Art History

2020 was an extraordinary year for all the world, the year of Coronavirus! Around a month after a novel virus was first identified in Wuhan, it had quickly spread to every part of China. I was worried about my family and my friends in China. Later, they were worried about me in Germany. The coronavirus has affected our life. That caught us on the wrong foot! Due to the shutdown of the library, I was anxious that I could not promptly access the documents and materials I needed, because I struggled hard with the first draft of my dissertation. I felt a bit down. After some time, I wanted to make a change. I told myself: I should improve myself both in my body and mind being isolated from the outside world.

In early May, I finished the first draft of my thesis and sent it to my two supervisors, Professor Dr. Sarah E. Fraser and Professor Dr. Melanie Trede. Meanwhile, I attended Professor Fraser's course "Hilfsmittel Kurs: Chinese Research Tools and Methods." I did a presentation entitled "Modernist Trends in *Shanghai Manhua,*" which was related to my thesis. During the two-month course, I made many Zoom-meetings with Prof. Fraser, discussing the ideas for my presentation, and the arguments of my dissertation. Moreover, I received some inspirational comments and advice from my peers after my presentation. All of this helped me to improve my thesis a lot. I finished the second draft of my dissertation by early June and the final version at the end of July. Finally, I finished my doctorate in November 2020.

We had to follow elaborate procedures when we returned to China because of the coronavirus. Luckily, one of my Chinese friends, Xiao Yang, and I traveled aboard the same flight to Shanghai, so we could take care of each other. We were grateful when the plane had a perfect landing at Shanghai Pudong International Airport. We filled out many forms at the airport, did a COVID-19 test, and finally were sent to a hotel for 14 days of quarantine and medical observation. Even though Xiao Yang and I could not see each other, I knew she was next door. I felt secure when I faintly heard her picking up the phone every day. Last but not least, I hope that all Heidelberg-based professors and students are successful with their research and that you all stay healthy!

Writing in a Crisis

by **Xiao Yang**
PhD Candidate, East Asian Art History

When the COVID-19 outbreak started at the beginning of 2020, I was in Osaka and coming to the end of a 6-months language program for cultural specialists supported by the Japan Foundation. At the end of March, I learned that my return flight to Frankfurt had been canceled. I had to first fly to Shanghai and wait for the resumption of international flights.

After arriving in Shanghai, I was asked to quarantine in a hotel for two weeks. Stuck in a hotel room with nothing else to do, I devoted myself to writing day and night and finished a draft of Qianfoya 千佛崖, Guangyuan 廣元, the Chapter 2 of my dissertation which I had started two years previous but made slow progress prior to my two-week quarantine. After the mandatory quarantining, I continued working at home in China in April and May. During these two months, I was able to keep in touch with my supervisor Professor Fraser via email and through online meetings. The online communication with others served to help me re-exert some control over my life.

I was finally able to buy a ticket back to Frankfurt by the end of May. Although there are abundant academic resources on the Internet, there are still many references that have yet to be digitalized. I went back and forth between my flat and the library every day confirming references. I am very grateful to the curators and staff of the CATS library. It was through their hard work that the basic operations of the library continued during this time of crisis. I was eventually able to complete my final draft in early December and returned to China together with Li Xiutang on December 12, 2020 after setting the time for online defense with the thesis committee.

The year 2020 has shown the way that a globalized world reacts to a crisis. The pandemic certainly impacted my writing process. There were minor concerns caused by the inconvenience of transportation and resource acquisition. However, this impact is nominal in comparison to the social and psychological impact. Quarantine exacerbates the tendency of a doctoral student to become isolated and makes it easier to fall prey to loneliness, anxiety, and despair. We must learn how to keep in contact with our surroundings and seek help without the convenience of face-to-face communication.

Arrival in Shanghai with Xiutang Li.

The Institute of Anthropology comprises two professorships, two associated professorships are located in the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies and the South Asia Institute. The regional focus in research is on the insular and the continental South East Asia as well as South Asia.

Institute of Anthropol

ogy

Analysis Alive!

An Essay

by **Guido Sprenger**
Acting Director

How to save university life, when students are isolated and institutes are restricted? The third semester under Corona conditions feels like the unfolding of an embodied analysis of sociality. Usually, we experience social life as diverse practices coming together in a way that feels quite natural. The manner by which we interact is a subtle combination of routine and improvisation.

In these pandemic times, much of this has come apart. For anthropologists, this is not necessarily a new experience. During fieldwork, anthropologists immerse themselves into the life of the people they work with as a means for understanding its very foundations. Often, this involves making the implicit explicit and rendering in reflective, analytical terms what otherwise goes without saying.

Amidst the drama, sorrow, and general uneasiness of the Corona crisis, something similar happens to what we call „university life." The longer this is put on halt, the clearer it becomes what this actually consists of. As we meet our students in two dimensions only, as we are packaging each aspect of our teaching for online transfer, we become acutely aware of what we used to do without much thinking.

There is a physicality to teaching that is hardly ever taken into account by accreditation processes—subtle communications, sudden glances, and unplanned conversations among students. We thus find ourselves confronted with the task to reconstitute what is lost and to rebuild it in a mostly online world.

Here are a few things one can do. How do students get to know their teaching staff? You put a video about yourself on a Moodle platform. How do students meet after class and keep talking about what they have learned? You keep your heiconf and Zoom rooms open after sessions, turn your sound and camera off, and give students time to talk among themselves. How do students get a sense of the institutes as places? You shoot a video stroll. How do students get to meet outside of class? Provide online cafés. Each aspect of the university experience is now singled out and reconstructed in a different medium.

It feels like living inside an anthropological analysis—with all its clarity and its reductionism.

At the Institute of Anthropology, we have just begun experimenting, and the summer term will see more. We sincerely hope that this will ease some of the strain that the pandemic causes and enliven student experience.

Prof. Dr. Guido Sprenger
joined Heidelberg University in 2010, after positions at the Academia Sinica, Taipei, and the University of Münster. Studying Laos since 2000, he aims to understand the reality of spirits and the way societies reproduce by processing their social and natural environment.

Digging Deeper

Contested livelihoods and sociocosmological relations among artisanal miners in Laos

by **Oliver Tappe**
Senior Researcher

When in 1901, the French traveller Alfred Raquez visited the tin mining area in the narrow valley of the Nam Phathaen river in central Laos, he was struck by the landscape pockmarked by countless pits worked by indigenous miners. Today, the valley is characterized by the precarious co-existence of local Lao artisanal and small-scale mining practices (ASM), and large-scale industrial mining operations, many of the latter run by Chinese and Vietnamese investors. Lao families working with simple tools and hardly any protective gear in small pits, overshadowed by huge, roaring excavators, are a common sight.

This DFG-funded project (2021–2024; hosted by the Institute of Anthropology) investigates the interrelations between artisanal, small-scale, and large-scale tin mining in Laos. Of particular concern are the different, sometimes overlapping labor relations of indigenous 'miner-peasant' subsistence and industrial wage labor (mainly Vietnamese migrant workers under French colonial rule as well as in the 'market socialist' present). While this project implies a political economy of mining in Laos (as an example of frontier capitalism), it pays particular attention to the interrelations between the extractive industries and their related labor relations, and local (shifting) social and cosmological configurations.

Local mining practices are entwined with specific cosmological ideas, in particular malevolent spirits dwelling in the waters. Since flooding and landslides pose considerable risks for the villagers, appeasing those entities is crucial for the well-being of the miner-peasant communities along the Nam Phathaen. French colonial administrators noted the diverse rituals and taboos around tin mining that limited the effective mobilization

Dr. Oliver Tappe
joined Heidelberg University in 2021 on a DFG funded position as researcher (Eigene Stelle). His previous research activities included projects at the Global South Studies Center (University of Cologne) and the Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology. Since 2001, he studies the history and cultures of Laos.

of indigenous labor for the first industrial mining enterprises. As a result, French capitalists recruited thousands of Vietnamese 'coolies' to run the Lao mines.

Meanwhile, the Lao villagers in the Nam Phathaen valley maintained their combined livelihoods of agricultural subsistence and regular artisanal and small-scale mining activities until the present day. However, increasing large-scale mining operations and environmental degradation have put considerable pressure on the land base, with local household economies increasingly relying on precarious mining work.

Through fine-grained ethnographic investigations of local economic and sociocosmological relations, this project sheds light on the entanglements of local subsistence strategies, transnational capitalism, and (ritually enacted) human-environment relations. How does extractivism affect local communities in Laos and their specific social and cosmological relations? From the French colonial intervention to the present Chinese Belt-and-Road Initiative, this project explores the sediments of corresponding social dynamics and ruptures.

Artisanal Tin Miners, Laos

Dr. Sophie Strauß

The Department of Anthropology is happy to announce that Sophie Strauß has joined the team as a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer (assistant professor) associated with the chair of Prof. Dr. Annette Hornbacher.

Sophie Strauß is a social anthropologist with a regional interest in Indonesia and a theoretical focus on environmental anthropology and political ecology. Her main research interests are socio-environmental conflict, the anthropology of landscape and space, ecotourism, agrarian crisis and alternative forms of agriculture, anthropology of conservation areas, anthropology of climate change, activism and social movements, anthropology of the future, and anthropology of sustainability. Sophie also has a strong interest in medical anthropology (intersectional approaches like reproductive justice), transcultural perspectives on trauma in the context of forced migration, and ethnographic methods and their ethical implications.

In her current post-doctoral research project, she focuses on social activism and sustainable visions of the future in the context of socio-ecological conflicts in Indonesia.

Sophie Strauss studied Social Anthropology, Historical Anthropology/ Human Ecology and Environmental Studies/Conservation Biology (Magistra Artium) in Göttingen and Uppsala (Sweden) focusing on conflicts over water resources in South Balinese paddy cultivation. Since then, she has conducted extensive fieldwork in Bali, and joined the Graduate School *Society and Culture in Motion* at the University of Halle-Wittenberg with a scholarship. She completed her doctoral thesis in 2020 on the role of landscape concepts in relation to tourism development in North Bali at the University of Göttingen where she was awarded the PhD *Summa cum Laude* by the Faculty of Social Sciences for her dissertation *Wie heilig sind Wald und Wasser? Die Rolle von Landschaftskonzepten im Disput um Tourismusentwicklung in einem Naturschutzgebiet in Nordbali, Indonesien* (How Sacred are Forest and Water: the role of landscape concepts in a dispute over tourism development in a nature reserve in North Bali, Indonesia).

In addition to her dissertation and her 2008 MA thesis *Konkurrenz um die Ressource Wasser. Nutzungskonflikte am Beispiel der südbalinesischen Reiskultur* (Competition for water resources. User conflicts exemplified by South Balinese paddy cultivation), Sophie Strauß has published essays with internationally recognized journals such as *Human Ecology* and *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*.

Dr. Benjamin Baumann

The Institute of Anthropology welcomes Dr. Benjamin Baumann as a new member of its team in teaching, research, and administration.

Dr. Benjamin Baumann started his position as a postdoctoral researcher (Assistent) and coordinator of the Master in Anthropology at the Institute of Anthropology, with Prof. Guido Sprenger in April 2020.

Previously, he was a doctoral and postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Asian and African Studies at the Humboldt-University, Berlin, since 2010. There, he also completed his PhD dissertation in 2017. The title of his thesis, awarded *Summa Cum Laude*, is *Ghosts of Belonging: Searching for Khmerness in Rural Buriram*. It is concerned with local identity, cosmo-ontological conceptions and ritual among Khmer-speaking Thai in a southeastern province of Thailand. He has also published a monograph, *On Centrism and Dualism: House Societies in Southeast Asia Reconsidered* (2020), co-edited (with Daniel Bultmann) *Social Ontology, Sociocultures and Inequality in the Global South* (Routledge 2020) and (with Boike Rehbein and others) *Reproduktion sozialer Ungleichheit in Deutschland* (UVK 2015), in addition to several articles in international journals and edited volumes.

Baumann's work does not only contribute to the ethnography of a rarely-studied part of Thailand, but also challenges a number of assumptions in Thai studies, including the idea that Thailand is "paradoxical." He broadens this analysis towards a theoretical innovation on the concept of ambiguity and aims at new perspectives of sociality in Southeast Asia. His work also addresses social and cultural theory, animism, film and visual anthropology, concepts of society, religion, and ritual.

Benjamin Baumann was awarded the "Humboldt Award for Good Teaching" at Humboldt University in 2017.

We are very happy that Dr. Baumann joins our institute, and we are looking forward to an extensive collaboration.

The Centre for East Asian Studies comprises four professorships of Chinese Studies, two of Japanese Studies and two of East Asian Art History. Two Associated professorships are located in the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies. Additionally, regular guest professorships have been established in all three departments and a guest lecture programme focusing on the history, culture and society of Taiwan.

Centre for East Asian

Studies

Sinology Heidelberg Alumni Network (SHAN)

Community, Careers, and News

by **Mariana Münning**
SHAN e.V. Managing Board

Sinology Heidelberg Alumni Network (Sinologie Heidelberg Alumni Netzwerk e.V., short: SHAN) is a non-profit association founded in 2006 by students of the Institute of Chinese Studies at the Heidelberg University. It is an international network for students and graduates of the Institute and for China experts and enthusiasts. Apart from organizing career and networking events for its 200 members and guests, SHAN also publishes an online newsletter. In March 2021, the 107th issue of the SHAN Newsletter was published to commemorate Dr. Wilfried Spaar (1951-2020). December 2019 saw the publication of the 100th issue commemorating Prof. Rudolf Wagner (1941-2019). Several issues in 2020 focused on the Coronavirus pandemic in China.

SHAN website:

» https://www.zo.uni-heidelberg.de/sinologie/shan/

SHAN Newsletter archive:

» https://www.zo.uni-heidelberg.de/sinologie/shan/nl-archiv/index.html
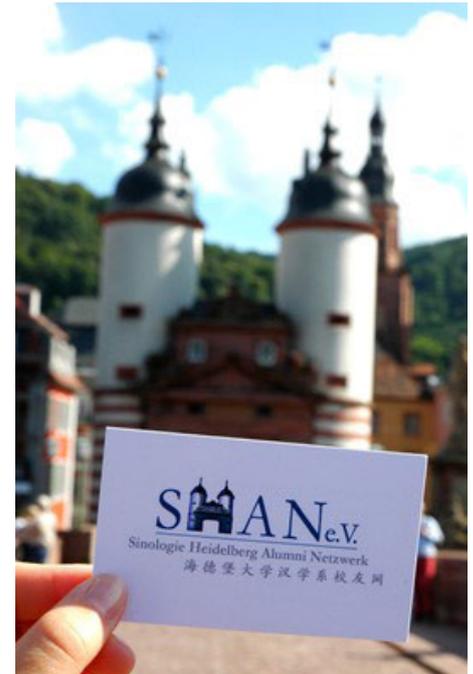
The SHAN logo against the backdrop of Old Bridge (Alte Brücke).

Prof. Barbara Mittler giving a tour of the new CATS library for SHAN members in 2019.

The Corona Team

by **Dr. Nanny Kim,**
Dr. Thomas Kampen,
Mariana Münning

Under the impression of the pandemic taking over our world as we knew it in early 2020, Thomas Kampen, Mariana Münning, and Nanny Kim formed an informal group to pool our areas of interest with the purpose of observing Corona in China and sharing our knowledge about it. With the lockdown on information in China, we felt obliged to provide materials and assessments in the SHAN newsletter. Exchange with publicists told us that SHAN is consulted and thus constitutes a small contribution to substantial information.

The published contributions appeared in the SHAN Newsletters 102, 103, and 104.

In addition, a related pilot project on health and illness in a German-Chinese comparative perspective was presented by Nanny Kim at the DVCS conference in Zuerich, 13-15 November, 2020 (*Bin ich jetzt krank? Erste kulturanalytisch-medizinische Auswertungen zu Krankheit und Gesundheit in China*).

Coming together at the Virtual Fireplace during Corona Winter

The Fachschaftsrat of the Institute Chinese Studies invited students to meet with professors and teachers at a "virtual fireplace" on heiConf during the winter semester.

by **Dario Luca Pisanelli**
Fachschaft Chinese Studies

"Flock deodorant dismantle cancel confetti" – cryptic combinations of words like these became essential in our life as students these days. They open a room on our universities online conference platform heiConf, where since last year seminars and lectures are held on. While studying from home, online conferences are the major way to get in touch with our teachers and colleagues. And even though most of us adapted quite well to this way of studying, we have also noticed that we are missing out on the personal contacts at our institute where we can talk to each other, discuss topics, and exchange new ideas. Especially in this time where everyone is at home, trying to figure out how to make the best out of this time, we may need inspiration and new ideas.

That is why we decided to try a new way of getting together online. Once a week, we opened a heiConf room and invited one of our professors, teachers or members of the institute to join us at our "virtual fireplace". Here, we asked them to give us some insight not only in their recent work, but also in their fields of interests, their career paths, or personal experiences they were willing to share with us. Many students also took the opportunity and asked for personal tips for their studies and for handling the current situation.

In our opinion this weekly event was a big success, as we had many interesting and inspirational talks within a friendly and familiar atmosphere. Professor Radich, for example, introduced us to the field of digital humanities in sinology, a field many of us had not thought
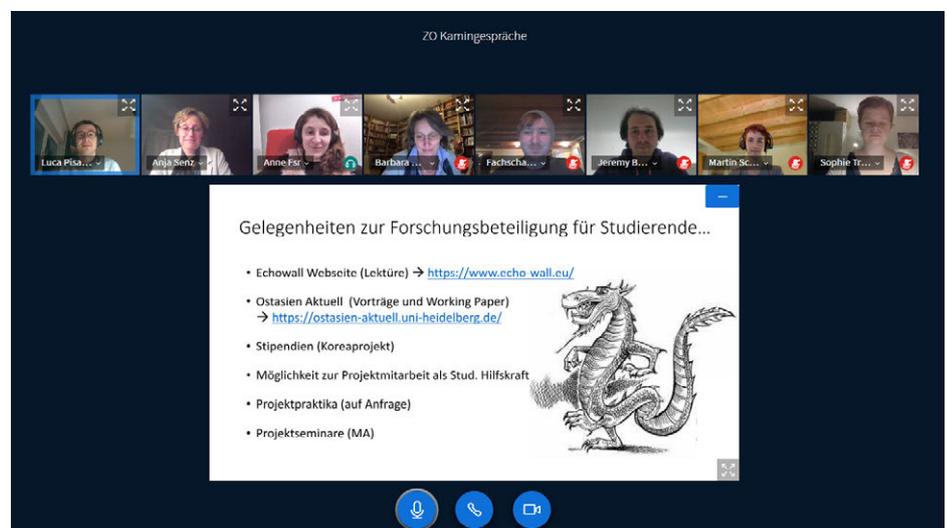
ZO Kamingespräche, Participants

about before. Mariana Münning shared her experience about her studies in London and her academic career, while Professor Mittler gave us some insight into the connections she has been making between music and sinology.

During our talks, we got new ideas for seminars and events, and we also noticed the need to share our worries and concerns about the ongoing corona pandemic. That is why we decided to continue our "fireplace talks" and also develop further online events for us students, so we can keep our institute and our academic exchange alive from home.

Online Events on Manuscript and Print Cultures in Early Modern Japan

by **Dr. Radu Leca**
Postdoctoral Research Associate

Between March 15 and 21, 2021, the Institute for East Asian Art History was the virtual host for a week-long series of events related to the theme of 'Material Text Cultures.' The organizers Radu Leca, Melanie Trede, and Emma Shuhui-Lin conceived these within the framework and with the generous support of the Collaborative Research Centre 'Material Text Cultures' (SFB 933), funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), as part of the subproject 'Interactive Materialities: Interrelationships between the Written/Painted and the Printed in Japan of the Long 17th Century.'

The week started with a four-day 'Introduction to Premodern Japanese Books for Art Historical Research and Japanese Studies' seminar led by Sasaki Takahiro from Keiō University. The seminar focused on the materiality of books and on the information contained therein. Its aim was to convey methods for analysing the "raw materials," types and processing techniques of paper, and the characteristics of each type of binding, as well as the publishing history and characteristics of Japanese books. The material was dense and felt like a compressed version of a semester-long course. Moreover, Professor Sasaki welcomed questions that led to lively discussions.

The seminar was followed by the international symposium 'In-between Manuscript and Print: Illustrated books and Scrolls from Early Modern Japan'. Its purpose was to open up discussions on the complex relationship between manuscript and print, asking how narratives are embodied in various media, and how writing and visualization practices interact with material characteristics. On the first day, discussions centred on *nara-ehon*, the seventeenth-century genre of illustrated narratives. One of the topics of discussion was the fact that the canonical printed collection of 'companion tales' (*oto-gi-zoshi*) that were often produced as *nara-ehon* dated not to 1720, but some time around the 1660s, which further complicates the relationship between manuscript and print cultures in the period. This theme was explored in broader-ranging papers on the second day, further contextualized and problematized in the discussion led by Michael Kinski from Goethe University Frankfurt, who also insisted on the necessity of integrating methodologies from digital humanities. The third day saw further explorations of narrative remediations, reaching out to the turn of the nineteenth century when premodern tropes were redeployed for the education of imperial subjects. The concluding discussion emphasized the meaning-carrying material characteristics of books and the enduring importance of manuscript culture.

Full recordings and more details of both events are available on CATS YouTube channel.

Posters of the Seminar and the International Symposium

A Fieldwork Project under Lockdown

by **Dr. Nanny Kim**
Research Associate

A dream came true in February 2019 with a collaborative project on premodern mining involving four middle-aged and occasionally a few younger historians, archaeologists, and geographers who get all excited at slag dumps and temple ruins on mountain slopes and about finding people who indulge in a chat about oral histories with them (https://www.zo.uni-heidelberg.de/sinologie/research/mining-sw/).

When heading out for a trip on January 6, first news on a new pneumonia in Wuhan were around, which did not worry me. My colleague from Shanghai was less relaxed. We completed the first filed trip and I left Kunming for Seoul on January 22 for a planned break over East Asian

New Year. When I reached Korea at night, incoming travellers had to fill an extra form, but otherwise all seemed normal. At midnight, South Korea halted flights from China and imposed quarantine—which I heard about only after arriving at my relatives'. Observing the South Korean response was interesting, becoming aware about consequences was sobering. The rest of 2020 needs no elaboration.

To be fair, lockdown is not much of a problem for academic work and is possibly even a (well-disguised) blessing. Fieldwork evidently is more affected because its cancellation cuts off all inflow of new data and information.

Hoping for an exchange of experiences and perspectives I would like to throw in some notes on practical aspects in cooperation projects. In my experience so far,

communication with colleagues remained easy and open, while institutions in China responded in different ways. One university simply halted all international cooperation, while I noticed no changes with another.

Reorienting the ongoing project meant a shift in focus from specific technological problems to general issues such as mentalities, institutions, and mining. This allows me to work on, while postponing the eventual problem of explaining results. Hoping for vaccination and the possibility of fieldwork in China by the end of 2021, I interrupted my project for three months of unpaid leave. Not particularly pleasant, but feasible. For the time being, muddling through has worked.

The major and serious concern is the future of the kind of research that we have been taking for granted: In cooperation and in exchange with colleagues in China and in a position of circumnavigating obstacles created by the control systems. It might be possible to get used to an insular and insulated research environment, but might mean the end of life as global villagers.
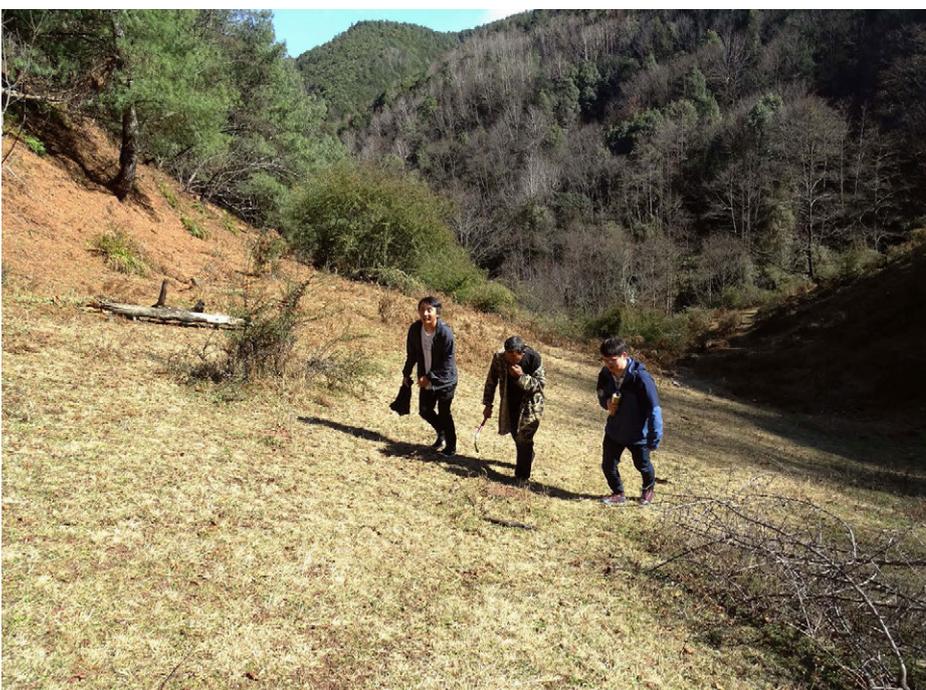
January 9, 2020, in Tangdian, Yunnan.
Left to right: Mr. Yu, our driver, a local guide,
and a young colleage (Photo: Nanny Kim)

Sara Landa

Frederike Schneider-Vielsäcker

Dr. Lianming Wang

Sara Landa approaches literature from transcultural and comparative perspectives. She is currently finishing her PhD dissertation on Chinese-German poetry transformations and joined the project "Epochal Life Worlds: Man, Nature and Technology in Narratives of Crisis and Change" in April 2021. Her new project engages with the interrelations between aesthetics, ecology, and politics in the literatures of the GDR, the Soviet Union, and the PRC between the late 1960s and the transition period around 1989. The study argues that the ecological crises pose a dual challenge: a challenge of literary representation, confronting authors with the need to redefine the relationship of 'real' and fictional worlds and in turn challenge the political and social system, thereby negotiating agency.

Frederike Schneider-Vielsäcker joined Heidelberg University as a postdoc researcher at the Institute of Chinese Studies in the winter term of 2020. This semester, she is teaching courses on queer culture in China and Chinese female science fiction writers. She is also part of the China School Academy team. Frederike did her PhD in Chinese Studies at the Free University of Berlin. Her thesis focuses on socio-political discourses in contemporary Chinese science fiction literature written by the post-80s generation. Recently, she co-hosted an event series with major science fiction writers from China at Kunsthaus ACUD in Berlin and organized panel discussions for the Frankfurt book fair. Her postdoctoral research project explores Sinophone women's writing.

Art historian Dr. Lianming Wang has been honored with the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities Award for Young Scholars.

The Academy Award, donated by the Association for Promotion of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities to mark the 75th anniversary of the Heidelberg Academy in 1984, will go to Dr. Lianming Wang for his work *Jesuitenerbe in Peking: Sakralbauten und transkulturelle Räume 1600–1800* (Jesuit Heritage in Beijing: Sacred Buildings and Transcultural Spaces 1600–1800). The prize is endowed with € 10,000. He deals with the material legacy of the Jesuit mission outside Europe, including three Beijing key structures. Based on a large number of visual evidence, the study provides a thorough insight into the global development of the art and architecture of a historically relevant clerical order and contributes significantly to the current debate about global art history.

Painting by Lao Zhu in the CATS Library's Reading Space, Photo: Susann Henker, 2021

The South Asia Institute comprises seven professorships in Development Economics, Anthropology, Geography, History of South Asia, Cultural and Religious History of South Asia (Classical Indology), Modern South Asian Languages and Literatures (Modern Indology) and Political Science of South Asia. Furthermore, the Indian Government finances the Heinrich Zimmer Chair for Indian Philosophy and Intellectual History; Pakistan funds the Allama Iqbal Professorial Fellowship and Sri Lanka enables the Chair of Sri Lankan Studies. Three associated professorships are located at the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies.

South Asia

Institute

COVID-19 Versus Democracy in India

by **Rahul Mukherji**
Acting Director

Few could have imagined that a deadly virus would take such a toll on India's citizenry and democracy. It is now well documented that the first lock down (March 24, 2020) was implemented hastily with dismal preparation. The situation this year in April 2021 is an even more worrisome humanitarian tragedy. Just when Prime Minister Modi was exuding confidence after declaring India's prowess as an exporter of vaccines that the inattention of the top leadership towards the killer second wave stood exposed. India recorded over 379,000 cases and 3600 deaths on April 28, 2021. The consequences for India's democracy are even more telling than this immediate humanitarian crisis.

To be sure, the authoritarian propensities were not created by COVID-19. The virus was afforded fertile soil. The current Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under Prime Minister Narendra Modi looks very different from its previous incarnation under Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. Under Vajpayee, Kashmiris in India's only Muslim majority state discovered their first real possibility for the central government's acknowledgement of truth and reconciliation with human rights violations. This path was also followed by Dr. Manmohan Singh's Congress-led United Progressive Alliance Government (2004-2014).

That legacy was overturned by the BJP under Modi even before COVID-19 came along. Two acts of Parliament after assuming office for the second term (May 2019) Modi violated India's commitment to secularism. The abrogation of Article 370 (2019) and the conversion of Jammu and Kashmir from a special state to a union territory signaled a reversal of the idea that the promise of special status to India's only Muslim majority would be respected. Moreover, the Citizenship Amendment Act (2019) discriminated against Muslims migrating from Pakistan and Bangladesh on the question of Indian citizenship.

COVID-19 came along in 2020 soon after these legislations. The unplanned manner in which the first lock down was imposed led to a humanitarian crisis that led to forced and often illegal migration. The Parliament was shut after March 24, 2020 and only reopened briefly in September. The closure of this citadel of democracy under right-wing Hindu nationalist electoral supremacy poses a grave challenge for democracy.

These extraordinary conditions were deployed to pass a number of legislations that would further injure democracy. The country's most significant protest movement is waged against farm laws that would kill local businesses and promote the corporate takeover of farm produce. Under this law, farmers cannot even access regular courts. Another Act of Parliament amending the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA, 2010) makes a debilitating impact on non-governmental organizations who depend on foreign funding. The FCRA amendment along with changes in tax laws would make it tougher for non-Hindu nationalist NGOs to work among citizens.

Despite these developments, there is also resilience. Farmers have stood firm. The BJP has lost elections in a couple of states. The awaited election results in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala will be crucial for testing the theory of democratic resilience.

Prof. Rahul Mukherji
is Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science, at the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg University and Executive Director of the South Asia Institute. He teaches and researches in the area of South Asian politics, political economy, and international relations with a focus on institutions.

Field Research in Jharkand

by **Jai Shankar Prasad**
PhD Candidate

Jai Prasad, Marie Curie Fellow and PhD candidate at the Dept. of Politics, SAI, conducted fieldwork in the Indian state of Jharkhand between September – November 2019, where he aimed to gain insights into bureaucratic attitudes toward tribal rights in the forests, and the institutional frameworks and ground-level governance issues that present a hurdle in the process of implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006, in India. The FRA 2006 is considered a landmark legislation that restores the historic injustice done to India's tribal population residing in and around forests run by the state. India's forest governance since Independence has seen a transformation from the colonial era exclusivist principles of forest control to a participatory and inclusive system wherein India's indigenous peoples living in and around the forests have their rights potentially legally recognized, and are supposed to play a substantive role in management of forests, wildlife protection, and afforestation and environmental conservation programmes. Mr. Prasad's PhD project seeks to interrogate the ideational roots of policy shift in India's forest governance regime, and how this affects implementation at the subnational level. During his visit, Mr. Prasad conducted key-informant interviews with officials within the forest department in the state's capital Ranchi, individual Adivasi rights activists, and the Jungle Bachao Andolan, a voluntary organization working towards restoration of community ownership of forest resources. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured, conversational mode. His preliminary findings throw light on a number of historically rooted factors that have hampered the implementation of FRA 2006. Jharkhand state was created on the grounds of Adivasi movements that called for greater control and better governance over water, forests, and land. However, the implementation of the Forest Rights Act 2006 that has the potential to redress these issues remains poor. While Jharkhand is a so-called 'tribal state', the norms embedded in its forest governance institutions have remain exclusivist. The forest department controls the implementation of FRA as any other programme related to the forest. There is rampant corruption, and claim making has not been facilitated by the administration. Lack of transparency in public records, unavailability of accurate maps, and weak or fictive forest rights committees (local village bodies responsible for forest right claims), are some indicators of institutions that have remained trapped in an exclusivist framework of forest management. The successive stages of the fieldwork will be resumed after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Jai Shankar Prasad
Marie Curie PhD fellow, Department of Political Science, South Asia Institute Heidelberg University

Teaching Sanskrit at Indian and German Universities

by **Anand Mishra**
Assistant Professor

Dr. Anand Mishra (SAI) together with Dr. Dipesh Vinod Katira of Shree Somnath Sanskrit University (SSSU), India conducted seven virtual joint reading sessions during the WS20/21 in which Sanskrit students from Heidelberg and students from SSSU as well as Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi participated. This exercise had the aim to provide the students an opportunity to gain a first-hand experience of how teaching of Sanskrit texts is done at Indian and German Universities. The same passages were analyzed, explained, and discussed by the students and faculty members of both sides. The group not only exchanged their impressions on the contrasting and complimentary nature of teaching and learning Sanskrit texts but also discussed the distinctive methodological approaches. These sessions were instrumental in identifying and delineating a number of aspects such as the constraints and chances of virtual meetings, linguistic and cultural distances, but most importantly the challenges and potential of such bi-directional exercises in the field of Sanskrit textual studies.

Prof. Ute Hüsken (SAI) and Dr. Anand Mishra also participated in a virtual round table organized by Prof. Jörg Gengnagel (Chair of Indology, Würzburg University) on November 11, 2020 together with Prof. Gopabandhu Mishra (Vice Chancellor, SSSU, India) and Dr. Sadanada Das (Leipzig) to discuss several issues related to teaching Sanskrit at Indian and German universities, such as: How does „academic" Sanskrit relate to Spoken Sanskrit, and how is it perceived by various actors and institutions? How does the present social, cultural, and political setting influence our approach to Sanskrit teaching and studying "Sanskrit cultures"? How can we constructively integrate „voices of dissent" in the context of our activities?

These meetings, joint reading session and round table took place within the framework of the project "Exploring Cultures of Learning in India and Germany" which is part of the wider programme "A New Passage to India", funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and coordinated by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Conference on March 15-17, 2021

Language Ideologies and the 'Vernacular' in South Asian Colonial and Post-colonial Literature(s) and Public Spheres

by **Hans Harder**
Professor for Modern South Asian Languages and Literatures

In the course of a SPARC cooperation between the English Department, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi, and the Department of Modern South Asian Languages and Literatures at SAI/CATS, a three-day online conference was held successfully in March 2021. Bringing together about 40 presenters from India, Germany, the USA and other countries, the conference addressed the language situation in South Asia, mainly focusing on the relationship between the so-called vernaculars and English. Speakers included some internationally well-known scholars, such as Gayatri Chakravorty-Spivak, GN Devy, Sudipta Kaviraj, Francesca Orsini, and Margrit Pernau. Chosen contributions will be published in a volume to be edited by Hans Harder and Nishat Zaidi.

Field Research at Dhaka University

by **Mostafizur Rahman**
PhD Candidate

Historical intuitionalism, a school of new institutionalism, received frequency in political science and has often been applied as a conceptual and methodological framework to explain a social and political change. A political economy account of the study embodies casual mechanisms of the change to the determination of causal variables. Intuitional progression alters policy paths, effecting behavior by following certain normative principles in achieving social and economic outcomes. Social scientists have predominantly amplified institutional progression as resulted from class conflict derived from a materialistic conception. Distinguishing from the materialistic conception of history, others suggested that the state develops certain ideas which produce change, and these changes which is resulted from a set of ideas, cannot be understood, as a result of class conflict. My PhD project incorporates a historical intuitionalism framework, both conceptually and methodologically, to examine the institutional path and casual mechanisms responsible for the Bangladeshi State's norm alternation from autarkic industrialization to market driven private industrialization. With these lines, I have conducted my field research in Bangladesh to collect primary materials to explore the causal variables and the path of Bangladesh's change.

With a research grant award of Heidelberg University's Graduate Academy, during my research stay in August-September 2019 at Dhaka University's International Relations Department, I collaborated with academics, politicians, bureaucrats, and entrepreneurs. I visited and collected primary data from Bangladesh Secretariat, National Parliament library, Finance Ministry, Industrial Ministry, Planning Ministry, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, National library, National archives, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies Library, BRACK University, BGMEA University, BGMEA, and several garments and export processing zones. Primary data collected includes budget speeches, parliamentary debates, industrial policies, newspapers and interviews with top bureaucrats, entrepreneurs, and political executives, exhibit the political economy understanding of Bangladesh's industrial transformation. The field-work reaffirmed that ideas within the State in Bangladesh played an important role in promoting its globalization.

ASM Mostafizur Rahman
PhD candidate, Department of Political Science, South Asia Institute Heidelberg University

State of Democracy in India

by **Jai Shankar Prasad**
PhD Candidate

Democracies the world over are struggling against authoritarianism and populism.[1] Among the relatively nascent democracies of south Asia, modern India, with its multiple fault lines of language, religion, caste, class, region, and ethnicity, has always been considered an 'unnatural' democracy. Economic and social backwardness and mindboggling diversity have posed severe challenges to nation building and functioning of democracy ever since the nation gained independence. Despite these hurdles, twenty-first century India emerged as a global economic and geopolitical power, justifiably proud of its robust democratic institutions, audacious economic reforms, and some of the world's largest rights-based welfare programs.[2] While India's democratic institutions continue to display much tenacity, in the last decade these have been under enormous strain. The majoritarian government of Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has systematically worked towards a Hindu rashtra (nation) in line with the ideology of the militant Hindu nationalist organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Attacks on civil liberties, politics of communalism and hatred, intolerance of political opposition, and constant undermining of India's time-tested traditions of deliberative democracy have pushed India to its lowest point in recent times, much before the pandemic hit in 2020.[3] The subsequent (mis) handling of the COVID-19 crisis in India is a testimony to how a natu-ral disaster is utilized by an authoritarian regime to accelerate deliberate erosion of public accountability, principles of cooperative federalism, freedom of expression, and civil society action.[4] Today, the idea of India as a secular, liberal, and inclusive polity deeply rooted in India's age-old syncretic culture[5] is undergoing deliberate obliteration. The nation is moving rapidly towards competitive authoritarianism.[6] As these processes and events unravel, there are also important signs of resilience and possibilities of change. India's civil society has time and again put up a brave and widespread fight to safeguard Constitutional values. Time and again, regional parties have won elections against the BJP, avowedly taking a stance to uphold India's secular and democratic heritage. The de-partment of politics at SAI is deeply engaged in puzzling over these processes, interrogating the future of democratic institutions in South Asia and India in particular. Within a larger comparative historical-institutionalist framework,[7] Professor Mukherji and his colleagues assess how political and economic ideas within and outside of the state undergird institutional resilience and change. Our explorations into policy paradigms and institutional arrangements of democratic governance, accountability, and welfare, through academic[8] and public outreach[9] activities, have begun to build a dynamic collaborative base for further research into the future of democratic institutions in South Asia.

1 Repucci, Sarah, and Amy Slipowitz. 'The Freedom House Survey for 2020: Democracy in a Year of Crisis.' *Journal of Democracy* 32, No. 2 (2021): 45–60.

2 Mukherji, Rahul, 2017, 'Governance reform in a weak state: Thirty years of Indian experience', *Governance*, Vol. 30, No.1 (2017), pp. 53–58.

3 See, Rahul Mukherji, Seyed Hossein Zarhani, Jai Prasad, and ASM Mostafizur Rahman, 'Analysing the Modi Years – Credit and Criticism', *The Wire*, April 18, 2019; Sumit Ganguly and Jai Prasad, 'India faces a Looming Disaster', Foreign Policy, July 27, 2019.

4 Mukherji, Rahul (forthcoming) 'NGOs and Civil Society' in Sumit Ganguly, Larry Diamond and Dinsha Mistree (eds), *The State of India's Democracy*.

5 In *The Hindu*, 21 August 2019, 'The monk who shaped India's secularism', Prof. Mukherji discusses the question 'What is the kind of nationalism that one can associate with Hindu tradition?'; also see, Mukherji, Rahul, Jai Prasad and Dr. Seyed Hossein Zarhani, 'Can COVID-19 malign the idea of India?'*Identities*, May 2020.

6 Mukherji, Rahul. 'COVID-19 vs. Democracy: India's Illiberal Remedy.' *Journal of Democracy* 31, No. 4 (2020): 91–105.

7 Mukherji, Rahul, and Seyed Hossein Zarhani, 2021, 'Policy paradigms and path dependence: the endogenous roots of institutional displacement and drift in India,' *Global Public Policy and Governance*, Vol. 1, No.1,(2021), pp. 78-97.

8 Prof. Ali Riaz, University of Illinois, delivered a lecture on 'Voting in Hybrid Regime: Explaining the 2018 Bangladeshi Election', based on his recent book on the same topic. Prof. Rahul Mukherji chaired the talk. The Global India Training Network Meeting held on November 19-21, 2020, at Heidelberg, involved a panel discussion entitled 'Changing Contours of Indian Democracy: Challenges and Pitfalls' on November 20.

9 Professor Rahul Mukherji delivered the following public lectures: 'How Do Democratic Institutions Decline? COVID-19 Management, Social Action and Federalism,' Department of Political Science, Jamia Millia Islamia, Jan 13, 2021; 'Authoritarianism and Democracy in Times of the Pandemic', web-talk series organized by the German Centre for Research and Innovation – DWIH, New Delhi on 'Social Impact of COVID-19, Indo German Perspectives'; 'India's Authoritarian Turn,' Global Webinar Series 'Democratic and Rule of Law Backsliding around the World', Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies, on 17 March 2021; and 'COVID-19 and democracy: How a virus can aid authoritarian propensities', on July 24, 2020, organized by the DAAD Alumni network.

"Thinking Rite": Towards Talmudo-Mīmāṃsā

by **Dr. Anand Mishra**
Research Assistant
and **Dr. Naphtali Meshel**
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The textual tradition of Mīmāṃsā associated with Vedic sacrificial rituals and the Talmudic tradition related to the Biblical and ancient Israelite sacrificial rituals evidently developed in isolation from one another in antiquity and evolved along separate trajectories in subsequent centuries. Yet a joint group of researchers from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and from SAI meets regularly to read fundamental texts from these traditions side by side—primarily Śābara-bhāṣya (ca. third c. CE), a Sanskrit Commentary on the Mīmāṃsā Sūtra of Jaimini (ca. third c. BCE), and Tractate Zebāḥîm from the Babylonian Talmud (compiled ca. sixth c. CE).

In reading these texts side by side, despite their vast cultural, religious, historical, geographical, and linguistic dissimilarities, our aim is not to establish a shared historical origin, much less to demonstrate that one tradition influenced the formation and development of the other. Rather, we aim to open up and explore the intellectual space between these two textual/ritual traditions—both characterized by dialectic discourse; by the employment of formal (and partially counterintuitive) hermeneutical tools for textual deduction; and by the treatment of (sometimes uncannily) similar scenarios—and to examine Mīmāṃsā's instrumentality for understanding ancient Jewish sacrificial literature.

The ancient Israelite sacrificial system is arguably the most elaborate intellectual edifice preserved in Talmudic literature; yet the rabbinic tradition never developed a sui generis discipline dedicated specifically to the field of knowledge of sacrificial ritual as elaborate as Mīmāṃsā. Mīmāṃsā, on the other hand, was developed specifically in the context of Vedic texts and Vedic ritual; yet the analytic and hermeneutic tools that it formulates alongside the operative categories that it develops may be applicable more widely to other ritual and textual systems as well.

While a wholesale application of Mīmāṃsā to non-Vedic rituals and texts is out of question, operative categories and modes of analysis abstracted from it offer a unique set of tools, without parallel in the ancient or modern scholarly traditions, for understanding sacrificial ritual systems outside the purview of classical Mīmāṃsā literature. A rough analogy here would be Pāṇini's system of Sanskrit grammar, which was developed for analyzing and describing Sanskrit: wholesale application of the rules and meta-rules of this system to any other language is out of question, but the abstraction of modes of analysis and operative categories from the Pāṇinian system prove to have strong explanatory power for linguistic systems in general.

Dr. Hillel Mali (NYU School of Law), Dr. Naphtali Meshel (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and Dr. Anand Mishra (South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University) during a reading session in Jerusalem in January 2020.

Field Research on Climate Measures

by **Tanvi Deshpande**
PhD Candidate

My PhD study focus is to understand how city governments in India succeed or fail in improving water security and pursue climate action in the face of changing climatic patterns. The study compares two fairly similar medium sized Indian cities experiencing water scarcity. Since there is very little secondary data available on this topic, I had to conduct extensive rounds of fieldwork in India to collate empirical data to corroborate my theoretical arguments. As part of my PhD programme at Heidelberg University I conducted field work in India including Delhi, Gujarat (Rajkot, Ahmedabad, and Gandhinagar), and Maharashtra (Mumbai and Aurangabad) between 2018 and 2020. The PhD fieldwork was planned in a manner whereby I spent a few weeks in the field sites and came back to Heidelberg to analyze the empirical data and refine my research focus.

Relevant information (e.g., government resolutions and meeting minutes, budget reports, NGO reports, old newspaper articles) was sourced from various government and research organizations. Field work also involved conducting key informant/ elite interviews with key state and non-state stakeholders working at the local, sub-national, national, and global level.

Initial engagements with the field (e.g. Delhi) helped identify and finalize the field sites and research puzzle. Key informant interviews were conducted with experts in Delhi along with acquiring second-

ary data from research organizations. This was followed by a scoping visit of the field sites including conducting elite interviews (e.g. Rajkot, Aurangabad and Delhi), and collating available secondary information on the cases from research organizations and governments. This field work helped a) validate case selection, b) identify governance challenges, climate action, and relevant stakeholders, c) refine the explanatory/research variables, that is the dependent and independent variables, and d) identify potential alternative explanations for the study.

Subsequent field work involved in-depth engagements with the field sites to collate secondary and primary data (through elite interviews) on water supply management and climate measures to conduct both within case and comparative case analysis. This fieldwork helped finalize the research variables, theoretical arguments ,and alternative explanations. Fieldwork in one of the field sites was stalled due to COVID-19, and interviews were conducted telephonically.

Following fieldwork the data was analysed, which helped consolidate the empirical chapters. Currently, a first draft of the thesis has been consolidated and submitted to the supervisor.

Tanvi Deshpande
Marie Curie PhD fellow, Department of Political Science, South Asia Institute Heidelberg University

CASR Annual Lecture delivered by Ute Hüsken

On November 5, 2020 Prof. Ute Hüsken was invited to deliver the Annual Lecture of the Centre for the Advanced Study of Religion (CASR) at the Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society (MF) in Oslo, Norway. Her presentation, "Female Agency and Religious Conservativism: New Roles for Women in Hinduism," analyzed the details of two conservative settings in India, namely the case of priestesses in Sanskritic Hinduism in Pune (Maharashtra) and a school imparting Vedic education to girls in Benares (UP) and therby explored situations of pronounced change in the religious and ritual agency of women, looking at religious agency as a process.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the presentation was online and Prof. Hüsken's research stay at MF (Oslo) had to be postponed to (hopefully) 2021.

Prof. Dr. Frank Korom

We are happy to announce that a Humboldt Lifetime Research Award has been granted to Prof. Dr. Frank Korom of Boston University, USA. Professor Korom is an internationally renowned authority in anthropology and folklore studies. The main focus of his research is the Indian subcontinent in all its regional diversity. Viewing contemporary folklore and popular culture as intrinsically connected with processes of modernization and globalization, and placing particular emphasis on diaspora studies, Professor Korom has very significantly contributed to our understanding of present-day cultural dynamics in and beyond South Asia.

Hosted by Professor Hans Harder at the South Asia Institute, together with Christiane Brosius and William Sax, Frank Korom will join CATS for a number of stints from 2021 onwards to pursue his research on a translocal Sufi tradition and devise joint projects with the colleagues in Heidelberg.

Britta Cierniak

On April 30, 2021, Britta Cierniak leaves the South Asia Institute. She began to work for the Departments of Law and Modern Indology, or Indology II, in 1984. Her well-deserved retirement after 37 years of work at what is now called the Department of Modern South Asian Languages and Literatures comes as a rupture to her colleagues and friends. She has been an unfailing anchoring point in our group of scholars, teachers, and students for decades. We will miss her competence, friendliness, spontaneity ,and warmth, and always remember her fondly. Farewell, Britta Cierniak, and all the very best for the years to come!

Publications
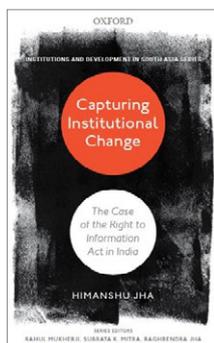
Himanshu Jha
Capturing Institutional Change: the case of the Right to Information Act in India
Oxford University Press, 2021

Dr. Himanshu Jha's *Capturing Institutional Change: the case of the Right to Information Act in India* was published by Oxford University Press (2021). The book examines the what, why, and how of institutional change through the lens of transformation in the 'information regime' in India by tracing the passage of the Right to Information Act (2005). Using archival material, internal government documents, and interviews, this book uses an alternative historical institutional approach to demonstrate the causes of institutional change favoring accountability. The book was favorably received in mainstream media and academic circles, and was selected among the 10 books to read in 2020 by the Print. This is the first book in the Oxford Institutions and Development in South Asia series edited by Rahul Mukherji, Subrata Mitra, and Raghbendra Jha.
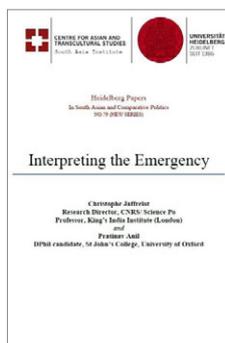
Ronja Gottschling
"Interpreting the Emergency", January 2021, 20 pg.

in *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics – HPSACP*, No. 79

The article "Interpreting the Emergency" by Christophe Jaffrelot and Pratinav Anil was published as the newest issue of the Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics (HPSACP). In the article, the authors analyze postcolonial India's first experiment with authoritarianism as a complex political phenomenon.

The HPSACP series is hosted by the Department of Political Science, South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg. The series draws on ongoing research projects at the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg, seminars by visiting scholars and the wide scholarly network engaging with South Asia. The e-papers are available online and can be downloaded at no cost for the user.
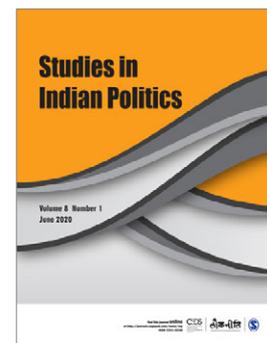
Rahul Mukherji and Seyed Hossein Zarhani (eds.)
Governing India: Evolution of Programmatic Welfare in Andhra Pradesh
London, New York, Routledge, 2020, 250 pg.

Prof. Rahul Mukherji and Dr. Seyed Hossein Zarhani published an article titled "Governing India: Evolution of Programmatic Welfare in Andhra Pradesh" in the journal, Studies in Indian Politics (Vol. 8 Issue. 1, 2020). See: https://doi.org/10.1177/2321023020918054. This paper explores how clientelistic politics could transform into programmatic politics, with a paradigm shift in policy from clientelistic to programmatic service delivery, in a subnational Indian state, undivided Andhra Pradesh. It concludes that a combination of powering and puzzling within the state led ideas to tip after evolving in a path-dependent way, resulting the most successful implementation of the right to work in Andhra Pradesh.

Research Articles

As results of her ongoing projects "Changing Patterns of Women's Ritual Agency", "Perspectives on Festivity" and "Navarātri, Navarātra and Durgāpūjā in South Asia and Beyond, " Ute Hüsken published the following articles:
"Frauen als Priesterinnen im ‚Sanskrit-Hinduismus' - eine Tradition im Wandel?" *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Südasienkunde* 37: 1-25.
"South Asian Festival Culture." In *Routledge Handbook of South Asian Religions*, ed. by Knut A. Jacobsen, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 384-398.
"Navarātri." In *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*, ed. by Knut A. Jacobsen, Helene Basu, Angelika Malinar, and Vasudha Narayanan. First published online: 2020.
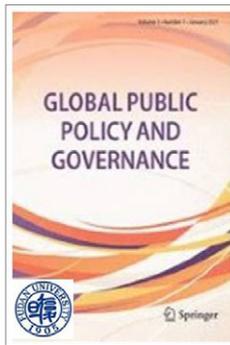
Rahul Mukherji and
Seyed Hossein Zarhani
"Policy paradigms and path dependence: the endogenous roots of institutional displacement and drift in India "

in *Global Public Policy and Governance – GPPG* (Springer Nature)

The article titled "Policy paradigms and path dependence: the endogenous roots of institutional displacement and drift in India" by Professor Rahul Mukherji and Dr. Seyed Hossein Zarhani got published in the first issue of the Springer Nature journal, Global Public Policy and Governance – GPPG (2021). The paper demonstrates the impact of path-dependent policy paradigms on institutional progression. This could involve institutional journeys from democracy to authoritarianism, from federalism to centralization, and vice versa. First, the authors posit that policy ideas are more important than material interests for the evolution of historical paths. Second, the sequence of path construction is equally important. This paper points to the significance of policy ideas for the construction of two sequences – a layering-tipping-displacement path and a path of institutional drift.

Tanvi Deshpande
The Researcher's Guide to the Indian Bureaucracy
Economic & Political Weekly

In January 2021, the *Economic and Political Weekly* published Tanvi Deshpandes article titled "The Researcher's Guide to the Indian Bureaucracy." The postscript provides personal reflections of navigating the bureaucratic maze, especially at the local level, to collate information both pre and post COVID-19. The article gives an insight on how to a) approach a city-level bureaucracy (e.g. standard protocols), and b) traverse bureaucratic hierarchies and politics. Fieldwork of this nature, involving qualitative interviews, necessitates a flexible timeline. COVID-19 has made it even more challenging to conduct fieldwork not just in terms of potential health risks but also because the city officials are busier than usual. This piece was an outcome of a larger PhD research focusing on understanding how city governments in India improve water supply management and build climate resilience. The article aims to guide future researchers who intend to work with or study the bureaucracy closely.
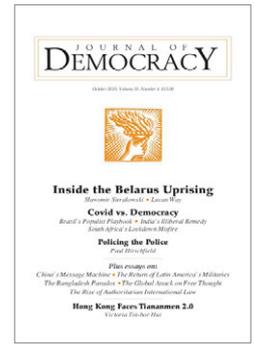
Rahul Mukherji and
Christoph Wulf
Does COVID-19 affect Democracy
Journal of Democracy 2020

Prof. Rahul Mukherji's paper titled "COVID-19 vs. Democracy – India's Illiberal Remedy" was published in the *Journal of Democracy* Volume 31, Number 4 (October 2020). The paper deals with the impact of the COVID-19 on Indian democracy. It argues that COVID-19 aided the government to constrain the institutions of democracy. Moreover, authoritarian propensities had a deleterious effect on COVID-19 management.

The world's largest democracy is sliding toward competitive authoritarianism, and the COVID-19 pandemic has sped it along the way. In responding to the virus, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government not only imposed a strict nationwide lockdown—with devastating collateral damage—but also adopted a governing style that weakened the position of India's states and cut the parliamentary opposition out of decision-making. The hollowing-out of judicial review and the government's attacks on the media have intensified the threat to democratic governance. It will take a Herculean effort for a weak opposition, acting in an adverse institutional environment, to confront the BJP's authoritarian politics head on and halt India's backsliding before the country has passed the point of no return.

Anna Scarabel
Vegetarianism and Ahiṃsā in the Anuśāsanaparvan of the Mahābhārata
CrossAsia E-Journals
January 2021, 35 pg.

This article, published in the Interdisziplinäre Zeitschrift für Südasienforschung Nr. 6 2020, draws on research for the author's MA thesis "Vegetarianism and Ahiṃsā in the Anuśāsanaparvan of the Mahābhārata (XIII.114-117)" submitted on the 18th of April 2018.

This article analyzes the adhyāya s 114 to 117 of the 13th book of the Mahābhārata, which enjoins the vegetarian diet as the greatest non-violent practice. However, several verses of this section allow "exceptions" to the ahiṃsā rule that may be seen as logical inconsistencies. Instead, I argue that such apparent contradictions can be resolved if we consider that the Mahābhārata addresses two different audiences: the people leading a contemplative life (nivṛtti) and those engaged in an active life (pravṛtti). As a result of their class duties, Hindu warriors may also hunt and eat animals.

Rajan Khatiwoda, Simon Cubelic, and Axel Michaels (eds.)
The Mulukī Ain of 1854: Nepal's First Legal Code. Documenta Nepalica 2
Heidelberg University Publishing, 2021. 884 pg.
https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.769

The Mulukī Ain of 1854—the law code with constitutional features drafted at the initiative of Prime Minister Jaṅga Bahādura Rāṇā—is the foundational legal text for modern Nepal and translated here for the first time in its entirety from the original Nepālī. It covers almost every aspect of public, criminal, private, and religious law, ranging from the organisation of the state and courts to murder and other delicts, the workings of the caste system and the joint family, matters of purity and penance, customary law, widow-burning, and witchcraft. As such, the Mulukī Ain is a unique source not only for the political, social, and economic life of 19th-century Nepal, but also for the place of traditional Hindu jurisprudence in South Asian legal cultures. The voluminous, 800 page text was translated with funds from the Lautenschläger Research Prize awarded to Axel Michaels in 2015. Patrick Olivelle (University of Texas at Austin) and Saubhagya Pradhananga (National Archives Nepal) contributed forewords to this translation.

Global India

by **Tanvi Deshpande**
PhD Candidate

The seventh Global India Marie-Curie network meeting was organized and hosted by the Department of Political Science, South Asia Institute (SAI), Heidelberg University. Global India is a European Training Network funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 program. This network meeting brought together six different EU universities and nine Indian partners. The universities part of this network include Heidelberg University, Kings College London, the University of Warsaw, KU Leuven, Dublin City University, and the Institut Barcelna d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI) Barcelona. The Indian partners comprise of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Benaras Hindu University, Jamia Milia Islamia, Jadavpur University, the University of Kolkata, the University of Mumbai, the South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF), the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), the People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR), the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), and the Kimmage Development Studies Centre.

Spread across three days, the 15 Marie Curie PhD fellows shared their PhD findings and received feedback from scholars both from within and outside the network. Senior scholars from Heidelberg University, including Professor Aurel Croissant, Professor Marcus Nüsser and Professor Sebastian Harnisch, chaired some sessions of the network meeting. Training sessions were also organised for the Marie Curie fellows on November 21, including a) how to present in academic conferences, b) how to target journals and book pub-

lishers, c) exploring academic and non-academic careers.

As part of the network meeting two public events were organised. Eminent scholars were invited to discuss governance issues in India. The first meeting commenced with an inaugural session on the November 19. Following opening remarks by Professor Aurel Croissant, Professor Niraja Gopal Jayal from Jawaharlal Nehru University spoke on 'the reinvention of citizenship in the new India.' Following which, Professor Amrita Narlikar, President of the German Institute of Global and Area Studies discussed 'India's foreign economic policies under Narendra Modi.' The inaugural session was chaired by Professor Rahul Mukherji from Heidelberg University. Also, a public event titled 'Changing Contours of India's Democracy: Challenges and Pitfalls,' was organized on November 20. The session was chaired by Professor John Harriss of Simon Fraser University. This session saw

prominent activists and scholars present their views. Aruna Roy, the Magsaysay awardee and founder of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), Professor Suhas Palshikar, former Professor at University of Pune, and Professor Rahul Mukherji (Heidelberg University) discussed the state of India's democracy.

Governance and Politics in South Asia

by **Jai Shankar Prasad**
PhD Candidate

The lecture series 'Governance and Politics in South Asia,' organized by the department of political science focuses on themes of contemporary, empirical, and theoretic relevance, in the fields of South Asian studies, comparative and international politics, environment, welfare governance, and trajectories and futures of India's public institutions. In the last semester, despite the pandemic, well-known academics as well as upcoming scholars from around the globe found a platform with the lecture series. Eminent scholars such as Christophe Jaffrelot, King's India Institute (London); Sanjay Ruparelia, Ryerson University (Toronto); Ravinder Kaur, University of Copenhagen; Gabrielle Kruks-Wisner, University of Virginia; and Akshay Mangla, University of Oxford delivered talks in this lecture series. The students of South Asia Institute could join in scholarly debates and learn about scientific research with robust methodological framework and how to apply it. Professor Jaffrelot spoke about the Emergency (1975–1977) as a period during which authoritarian tendencies in Indian polity surfaced in specific ways, laying emphasis on the need to look at the Emergency not solely as an aberration, but as an ever-present danger of democratic institutions being side-lined in a nation like India. Contradicting the dominant imagination of the Emer-gency as suspension of democracy by an absolutist leader, Indira Gandhi, tends to on the one hand underplay the coalition of classes and groups that legitimised the process, and over-determines the agency of the ensuing underground resistance in restoration of democracy post-Emergency. Dr Sanjay Ruparelia spoke about his research around the politics and viability of India's establishment of Aadhaar in 2009, providing unique biometric identity cards to target cash transfers and social entitlements to deserving recipients, allowing government to 'see like a state.' Dr Ruparelia explored why the politics of sight is a crucial dimension of India's new welfare architecture, analyzing the assumptions, implementation and consequences of these two competing visions of social welfare in India. As an open event with an online feature, participants from different parts of the world could attend and engage in academic discussions. Dr Ravinder Kaur, in her talk around her recent book, delved into the history of India's capitalist transition into an enclosure of global investment flows. She argued that far from being a counter-force against free-market globalization, twenty-first-century Indian hyper-nationalism is deeply entwined with the promise of capitalist growth, and the idea of India itself became a business enterprise, one that aims to portrays itself as factory of the world.

CATS Library's Courtyard, Public Art "CATS/web 2018" by Friedemann von Stockhausen, Photo: Susann Henker, 2021

The Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies comprises five professorships for Global Art History (with a focus on South Asia and the Middle East), Buddhist Studies (with a focus on South- and East Asia, including Tibet), Visual and Media Anthropology (with a focus on South Asia), Cultural Economic History (with a focus on Japan) and Intellectual History (with a focus on China). Two Associated professorships are located in the Centre for East Asian Studies and in the History Department.

Heidelberg Transcultu

Centre for
ral Studies

The Digital Archive of Nepalese Arts and Monuments (DANAM)

Nepal Heritage Documentation Project's open-access Database

by **Radha Malkar**
Coordinator NHDP

The Nepal Heritage Documentation Project (NHDP), funded by the Arcadia Foundation, began its work in September 2018 as a two-year pilot phase with an aim to document historical monuments in the Kathmandu Valley. The project was granted an extension of six years in October 2020. In these two and half years, the team has documented 600+ monuments in the Kathmandu Valley and west Nepal. This data is available on the Digital Archive of Nepalese Arts and Architecture (DANAM) as well as Heidelberg University Library's image database, HeidICON. NHDP further aims to document and make an inventory of over 1500 monuments, 2500 inscriptions and 8000 ob-jects, along with elements of in-tangible cultural heritage related to the monuments, e.g. rituals, festivals, and other social events and religious practices.

DANAM was created especial-ly to present and store the data resulting from NHDP's work. The datasets contain structured in-formation (in English and Nepali) about the monuments, i.e., their location, description, history, ar-chitectural details including mea-surements, damages and threat assessments and relevant reli-gious and social activities. They also include historical and recent photographs, maps, plans and drawings, relevant objects, and editions of selected inscriptions. The database is also equipped with a thesaurus containing the technical terms pertinent to the documented monuments.

We have also added a feature of 'heritage focus areas' which show specific areas in the Kathmandu valley where the concentration of monuments is dense.

Within DANAM, we have devel-oped a separate resource model to record historically and socially important and significant inscrip-tions. These in-depth studies are a result of an associated project on the "Anthropology of Inscrip-tions: Memory and Cultural Her-itage in the Public Sphere" within the frame of the Flagship Initiative "Transforming Cultural Heritage." A selected corpus of inscriptions from the 15th century to the pres-ent will be documented, edited, and published in digital form in close collaboration with NHDP.

DANAM is based on Arches (v.4), an open-source software platform for cultural heritage in-ventory and management devel-oped jointly by the Getty Con-servation Institute and the World Monuments Fund. All content is available to the public free of charge.

» DANAM:
http://uni-heidelberg.de/danam

» HeidICON: https://heidicon.
ub.uni-heidelberg.de/pool/nhdp
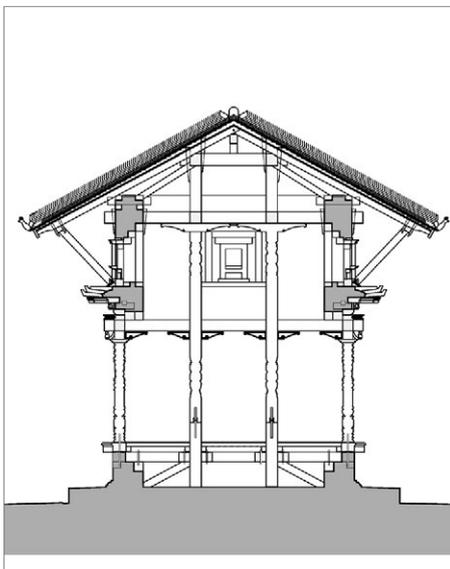
Maṇimaṇḍapa South at the Patan Darbar Square, section, drafted by Anil Basukala, 2020

Maṇimaṇḍapa South at the Patan Darbar Square, Photo by Bijay Basukala, 2018

Worlding Public Cultures:
The Arts and Social Innovation

WPC's Heidelberg team (f.l.t.r): Prof. Dr. Monica Juneja, Dr. Franziska Koch, Dr. Miriam Oesterreich, Moritz Schwörer, Costina Mocanu, and Franziska Kaun

In January 2020, the HCTS chair of Global Art History received a major BMBF grant as part of the international research platform Worlding Public Cultures: The Arts and Social Innovation (WPC). WPC is a collaborative project conceived by the Transnational and Transcultural Arts and Culture Exchange (TrACE) network. It is funded by the Trans-Atlantic Platform for the Social Sciences and Humanities until December 2022.

Institutionally, the WPC platform is constituted by five teams: Montréal, Ottawa, London, Amsterdam, and our team in Heidelberg. The latter consists of six researchers led by Prof. Monica Juneja and Dr. Franziska Koch.

With WPC, we aim to develop a critical art theory and practice-based approach to social innovation. The project's key concept "worlding" serves as a tool to recast public narratives about transcultural connections and frictions of the present. Such narratives are produced and circulated through art, exhibitions, as well as scholarship in art history and cultural studies.

In a series of four academies organized in collaboration with the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), the Tate Modern (London), the National Museum of World Cultures (Amsterdam), the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, and the Institute for Cultural Inquiry (Berlin), we will query the role of cultural and educational institutions, often still trapped within Eurocentric and colonial frameworks, with a view to exploring together their potential to usher a critical consciousness of the challenges of a plural society. How can scholarship, curating, and pedagogies work as agents of change?

WPC's Heidelberg team will organize the final Academy "Ways of Showing, Telling, and Knowing: Transcultural Positions in Curating and Pedagogies" in April 2022. Together with the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden and the Institute for Cultural Inquiry in Berlin, we plan an event involving academics, curators and members of the public. An international call for contributions will be published soon.

As a warm-up event, WPC's Heidelberg team will organize the e-workshop "Decolonial Theory, Transculturation, and Latin American Positions – Entangling Art Histories," featuring Dafne Cruz Porchini, Rolando Vázquez Melken, and Patricia Zalamea as guest speakers. It is scheduled for June 16-18, 2021, and will include reading discussions and moderated interactive panels for MA students, keynotes by guest speakers, and a concluding roundtable.

Further news on both the e-workshop and the Academy will be published on the HCTS-Website and via the CATS mailing list.

» http://bit.ly/WPC-HD

Johannes Becke

I took up my position as leader of the research group "Gathering the Dispersed. State Evasion and State-Making in Modern Jewish, Kurdish and Berber History" (funded by Volkswagen Foundation) in the fall of 2020. My team members will join the HCTS in the summer term of 2021 – one PhD student will study the Berber/Amazigh national movement, one postdoctoral researcher will explore the Kurdish-Iraqi proto-state. The research group will contribute to the theory-building on stateless politics by translating the framework of James Scott (*The Art of Not Being Governed*, 2009) into a Middle Eastern context.

The research group builds on my previous work as a postdoctoral research fellow (Oxford) and as assistant professor (Heidelberg Center for Jewish Studies). I wrote my PhD thesis (Freie Universität Berlin) on expansionism in the Middle East, thereby exploring Israel as a Middle Eastern society: While the Zionist movement originated in Eastern Europe, Jewish-Israeli culture emerged from the interaction between Jewish settler-immigrants and local Palestinian Arabs, with a growing impact of Jews who immigrated to Israel from the Middle East.

Israel Studies is a recent phenomenon in German academia. I am currently editing a special issue of the Journal of Israeli History (with Derek Penslar) on the emergence of the research field: In addition to Israel, the US, and the UK, Israel Studies is slowly emerging on South Asian and East Asian campuses. In this context, I am looking forward to discussing with my new colleagues at the HCTS and the CATS how the study of "West Asia" could be fit into Heidelberg's broader research architecture – clearly, the Middle East is crucial to our understanding of transculturality, not just in the case of Arab-Israeli relations.

Johannes Becke is the author of *The Land Beyond the Border. State Formation and Territorial Expansion in Syria, Morocco and Israel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2021) and the co-editor of *Israel Studies. History, Methods, Paradigms* [German] (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2020, co-edited with Michael Brenner and Daniel Mahla). He was appointed as Professor of Israel and Middle East Studies at the Heidelberg Center for Jewish Studies (Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg) in 2020. In cooperation with Prof. Henning Sievert (Middle Eastern and Ottoman History, Heidelberg University), he launched a joint MA degree in Middle East Studies in 2019. Together with Frederek Musall and Beyza Arslan, he hosts the research podcast "Mecca and Jerusalem" [German] on Muslim-Jewish relations (funded by Volkswagen Foundation).

Details:

» http://www.hfjs.eu/hochschule/bengurion/

Martin Dusinberre,
Joachim Kurtz (eds.)
**Uses of the Past between
Europe and East Asia**
The Historical Journal 64,
No. 1 (Special Issue), February 2021

The Historical Journal continues to publish papers on all aspects of British, European, and world history since the fifteenth century representing the best contemporary scholarship. Contributions come from all parts of the world. The journal aims to publish some thirty-five articles and communications each year and to review recent historical literature, mainly in the form of historiographical reviews and review articles. The journal provides a forum for early career scholars making a distinguished debut as well as publishing the work of historians of established reputation.

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Cover Image
Indonesian Muslims offering Eid al-Adha prayers at the Great Mosque of Al-Azhar, during the outbreak of COVID-19 in Jakarta, Indonesia, July 31, 2020.
(Antara Foto via Reuters)

Photos
All CATS architecture photos in this issue.
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Public Art at CATS
Friedemann von Stockhausen, *CATS/web 2018*