Frontiers of Knowledge - Health, Environment and the History of Science

Veranstalter: Cluster of Excellence „Asia and Europe in a Global Context", Heidelberg University
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„Frontiers of Knowledge" was the topic of the 2011 Annual Conference of the Cluster of Excellence „Asia and Europe in a Global Context" held from October 5th to 7th at Heidelberg University. The purpose of the conference was to explore the fields of Health, Environment and the History of Science, while challenging the conventional intellectual divisions between Europe and Asia.

In the evening of October 5th, the first keynote speaker, KAUSHIK SUNDER RAJAN (Chicago), gave a lecture on „Property, Rights and the Constitution of Contemporary Indian Biomedicine" marking the opening of the conference. He focused on the contested relationship between intellectual property and the re-institutionalisation of pharmaceutical development in contemporary India. In particular, he traced the development of a case of a patent on the anti-cancer drug Gleevec.

The first podium discussion, chaired by JOACHIM FRIEDRICH QUACK (Heidelberg), took place in the morning of October 6th which focused on Ancient Medicine. FRIEDHELM HOFMANN's (Munich) exploration of Egyptian medical receipts, dating from the second and early first millennia BCE and their relationship to Near-Eastern and Greek medical traditions, demonstrated that some basic prescription formulae appear in all otherwise divergent medical systems. Examining medical stories, medicinal recipes, and amulets from the Hippocratic and Galenic traditions, ANN ELLIS HANSON (Yale) showed how earlier medical concepts from Hippocratic texts were appropriated and amended to fit into later medical writings in the Roman and Byzantine Egypt traditions. Continuing the theme of transmission, VIVIAN NUTTON (London) drew attention to issues of translating medical texts and traditions with a focus on the re-contextualisation of Galenic writings into the Syriac and Arabic.

The second podium discussion was dedicated to the circulation and changing concepts of knowledge, the diverse ways in which knowledge is produced, and how it is shared and appropriated in cultural encounters. MARTA HANSON's (Baltimore) analysis of the geography of diseases in China from the 1870s to the 1920s clearly showed that certain concepts of knowledge can be visualised and circulated. On the one hand, they help rethink the relationships between the nature of disease and the environmental context. On the other hand, they also act as political images legitimating colonial control. Dissecting the processes of the rapid institutionalisation of science in colonial India, DHRUV RAINA (New Delhi) employed the interpretive frames of „engraftment" and „entanglement" to investigate the varied uses of traditional and modern resources of knowledge in learned communities. Likewise, challenging the standard dichotomies between tradition and modernity, as well as East as opposed to West, JOACHIM KURTZ (Heidelberg) explored the processes of searching for a new epistemological framework in Late Qing China. He presented a case study that focused on the attempts of Chinese philosophers to identify new sources of certainty in the face of the epistemic ruptures, which, he argued, continue to shape what we now understand as Chinese modernity.

The afternoon session was divided into five separate panels. The focus of the panel on „Politics, Civil Society and the Environment" was the earthquake and subsequent nuclear disaster in north-eastern Japan on March 3rd, 2011. ITO KIMIO (Kyoto) offered a critical perspective on the issues that civil society in Japan is currently facing in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear plant crisis. Focusing on the micro-history of the town of Kaminoseki in Yamaguchi prefecture, MARTIN DUSINBERRE (Newcastle/Heidelberg) demonstrated how nuclear politics at the local level came to be dominated by the rhetoric of a „brighter future" in post-war Japan. In

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contrast to this historical approach, KERSTIN CUHLS (Heidelberg) offered an overview of how governmental research organisations in Germany and Japan provide predictions on future trends in societal change. Further they mapped out possible preventive measures and responses to earthquakes. Following the three papers, GERRIT JASPER SCHENK (Darmstadt) discussed how such disasters can be properly assessed and analysed in the context of cultural histories.

The panel „Between Beauty and Health" focused on the visual itineraries of changing bodies in China's transcultural mediascapes during the 1900s and 2000s. The speakers LIYING SUN, ULRIKE BUECHSEL, XUELEI HUANG and BARBARA MITTLER (all Heidelberg) illustrated how the changing notions of beauty and health are reflected in the visual sources of twentieth-century Chinese media. These notions were further problematised by the discussants CHRISTIANE BROSIUS, THOMAS MAISSEN, and KATJA PATZEL-MATTERN (all Heidelberg), who questioned concepts like cosmopolitanism, liberation, or Baudrillard's analysis of consumer culture.

The panel „Large Dams" examined cases of contested environmental knowledge of riverscapes, focusing on the issues of dealing with water flows in India and China. RAVI BAGHEL (Heidelberg) described how rivers in India are seen as national entities and supplies of water to be equally distributed all over the country. ALEXANDER ERLEWEIN (Heidelberg) discussed the changing perceptions of dams and their revaluation in the context of climate change. MIRIAM SEEGER (Heidelberg) explored how competing discursive factions include governmental narratives and exclude perspectives that take into account environmental knowledge involving the Nujiang dams in Southwest China. Continuing this theme, NIRMALYA CHOUDHURY (Berlin) analysed how public involvement in planning large infrastructural projects becomes a slippery ground, where a mismatch of expectations on substantial outcomes reduces the legitimacy of the exercise.

Another afternoon panel, this time with a focus on Japanese religions, traced the concepts of space and time in the emerging transcultural cosmologies of pre-modern Japan. While DOMINIC STEAVU (Heidelberg) investigated Chinese cosmological discourses on the human body, ANNA ANDREEVA (Heidelberg) analysed how mountains were conceptualised as cultic centres in the ritual activities of ascetics. Finally, MAX MOERMAN (Barnard/Columbia) demonstrated how Buddhist notions of space shaped early modern debates on astronomy and political geography in Tokugawa, Japan.

„What Can(not) Be Said in Revolutionary Times" was devoted to the flows of concepts and institutions in a transcultural context. The conversation focused on the borders of and obstacles to the aforementioned flows, as well as their relations to shifts in the meaning of concepts, such as despotism, democracy and, citizenship. In this context, PASCAL FIRGES (Heidelberg) discussed Istanbul during the French Revolution and JULTEN ABDELHALIM (Heidelberg) reflected on the events of 2011's Arab Spring in Egypt. In her summary of the presentations, ANTJE FLÜCHTER (Heidelberg) pointed out that notions pertaining to revolutionary ideology have become globalised to such a degree that comparisons to „authentic" European or Western predecessors have little relevance.

The day concluded with the second keynote lecture by JANET HUNTER (London), who spoke about the market collapse and confusion that occurred in the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. The lecture paid close attention to the responses of producers, traders, and consumers to the sudden collapse of infrastructure, dislocation of institutions, and altered patterns of supply and demand.

The third day of the conference opened with a podium discussion on „Seascapes and Shipping" chaired by HARALD FUESS (Heidelberg) and discussed by CHRISTOPHER GERTEIS (SOAS). In his second conference presentation, Martin Dusinberre (Newcastle/Heidelberg) traced the maritime routes of a Japanese merchant navy ship, the „Yamashiro-maru", from Newcastle to Hawaii between 1884 and 1912. ROLAND WENZLHUEMER (Heidelberg) offered insight into the redaction of ship newspapers and, more generally, life aboard the passenger steamers in the 1890s. ROLF WIP-

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PICH (Tokyo/Lucerne) scrutinised 19th century piracy in Chinese territorial waters and the anti-piracy measures taken both by the Chinese authorities and the western treaty powers in the context of flourishing international trade, the Taiping Rebellion (1852-1864) and the Opium Wars.

The second podium discussion of the day critically engaged with Kaushik Sunder Rajan's work on the attribution of epistemic shifts to different „techno-scientific regimes" and bio-capital. The sociologist-cum-anthropologist ADITYA BHARADWAJ (Edinburgh) presented findings from a long-term multi-sited ethnographic study and examined the notion of „subject mobility" in pursuit of the clinical application of human embryonic stem cells (HESC) in India. This theme was complemented by SANDRA BÄRNREUTHER's (Heidelberg) introduction of her on-going study on in-vitro-fertilisation in India, emphasising the multi-dimensional notion of „biovalue". TSJALLING SWIERSTRA (Maastricht) examined the Dutch debate on organ transplants, outlining how new technologies shape old moralities and produce new moral frameworks.

The afternoon was divided into four sessions. In the first, SINJINI MUKHERJEE (Heidelberg) focused on the case of family members donating organs for kidney transplants in India. The discussant Kaushik Sunder Rajan presented an elaborate response to all the papers highlighting the differences between the approaches of Moral Philosophy, Medical Anthropology, and Science and Technology Studies. The panel „The Many Shapes of the World" discussed concurrent regimes of spatial representation in early modern Asia. In their paper „Chinese Sages and Dutch Measures", MARTIN HOFMANN and DAVID MERVART (both Heidelberg) addressed the diversity of spatial regimes in the writings and maps of the Japanese samurai-scholar Nagakubo Sekisui (1717-1801). Then MONICA JUNEJA (Heidelberg) explored what she called „capricious reversals" of naturalist vision, by looking at pastiche as an art form. The panel was chaired by FRANK GRÜNER (Heidelberg) and commented by Dhruv Raina.

The panel „Stress" focused on the anthropological, historical and epidemiological approaches to this supposedly modern phenomenon. While SASKIA ROHMER (Heidelberg) offered insight into the historical roots of stress as a Western concept, HASAN ASHRAF (Heidelberg) examined the genesis of stress as an effect the neoliberal textile production regime had on factory workers in Bangladesh. Finally, MARIA STEINISCH (Heidelberg) looked at stress in the Bangladeshi garment industry from an epidemiological perspective and ADRIAN LOERBROKS (Heidelberg) presented epidemiological data on the association between stress/mental health and respiratory diseases in Europe and Asia.

The last panel of the conference, „Asymmetrical Translations", focused on the mind and body in Indian and Western Medicine. WILLIAM SAX (Heidelberg) opened this panel with an analysis of the activities of Ayurvedic doctors in the Malappuram district of Kerala. JOHANNES QUACK (Heidelberg) presented two case studies from his ethnographic study of mental health care in India. The final day of the annual conference closed with a talk by ANANDA SAMIR CHOPRA (Heidelberg) on translations and asymmetries in Ayurvedic nosologies and biomedicine.

Bringing together scholars from all over the world, the Annual Conference „Frontiers of Knowledge" furthered international exchange on health-related, environmental issues, as well as on the history of science. In addition to historical issues, such as reassessments of Ancient Medicine in Asian and European contexts, the conference also traced the development of health- and environment-related conceptions of knowledge across time. In this respect, the conference highlighted both Asian and European perspectives on, for instance, large environmental projects and their political or social implications. Moreover, talks and discussions on the transcultural aspects of medical technologies raised controversial contemporary issues, such as stem cell research, in-vitro fertilisation, and their impact on modern globalised societies. The 2011 Annual Conference „Frontiers of Knowledge", chaired by Harald Fuess, was organised by Research Area C „Health and Environment" of the Cluster of Excellence

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„Asia and Europe in a Global Context". The Cluster's next Annual Conference will take place in October 2012.

Conference overview:

Welcome by Axel Michaels and Harald Fuess

Keynote Lecture I
Kaushik Sunder Rajan (Chicago): „Property, Rights, and the Constitution of Contemporary Indian Biomedicine: Notes from the Gleevec Case"

All day: Heidelberg Research Architecture (HRA) Poster-Presentation

Podium Discussion I – Ancient Medicine
Chair: Joachim Friedrich Quack (Heidelberg)

Friedhelm Hofman (Munich): „Egyptian Medicine"
Ann Ellis Hanson (Yale): „Medical Stories, Medicinal Recipes, & Amulets from the Hippocratics to Galen"
Vivian Nutton (London): „The Tyranny of the Text: Greek Medicine into Arabic"

Podium Discussion II - Circulation and Changing of Conceptions of Knowledge
Chair: Dominic Steavu (Heidelberg)

Marta Hanson (Baltimore): „Visualizing the Geography of Diseases in China, 1870s-1920s"
Dhruv Raina (Delhi): „Knowledge 'Engrafted', Concepts 'Entangled': Departures from Conceptions of Radical Break and Discontinuity in Histories of the Sciences"
Joachim Kurtz (Heidelberg): „Relocating Certainty in Late Qing China: Philosophy, Science, and the Call for a New Epistemology"

Panel Session I: Politics, Civil Society and the Environment
Chair: Harald Fuess (Heidelberg), Discussant: Gerrit Schenk (Darmstadt)

Martin Dusinberre (Newcastle/Heidelberg): „Hoping for a Brighter Future: Nuclear Politics at the Local Level in Postwar Japan"

Ito Kimio (Kyoto): „The Fukushima Daiichi Case from the Viewpoint of Political and Cultural Sociology"

Kerstin Cuhls (Heidelberg): „National Foresight Activities revisited: Assumptions about Earthquake Prediction"

Between Beauty and Health: Visual Itineraries of Changing Bodies in China's Transcultural Mediascapes (1900s-2000s)
Chair: Barbara Mittler (Heidelberg), Discussants: Christiane Brosius, Thomas Maissen, Katja Patzel-Mattern (Heidelberg)

Liying Sun (Heidelberg): „Nationalism, Athleticism, Phryneism and Transculturality: Changing Notions and Visual Representations of 'Healthy Bodies' in Chinese Pictorials (1900s-1940s)"

Ulrike Büchsel (Heidelberg): „Markers of Modernity: Healthy and Sexualized Bodies in Chinese Advertising (1920s-1930s)"

Xuelei Huang (Heidelberg): „Ideologies of the Leg: Women's Legs and Changing Prototypes of the Ideal Woman on China's Silver Screen (1920s-1970s)"

Barbara Mittler (Heidelberg): „From Small Feet to Large Hands and beyond: Propagating Beautiful and Healthy Bodies in China's long 20th century"

Christiane Brosius (Heidelberg): Between Health and Beauty: An Indian Perspective

Thomas Maissen, Katja Patzel-Mattern (Heidelberg): Between Health and Beauty: A European Perspective

Panel Session II: Large Dams: Contested Environmental Knowledge of Riverscapes
Discussant: Thomas Lennartz (Heidelberg)

Ravi Baghel (Heidelberg): „Water flowing Waste to the Sea: Tracing a Genealogy of the Technocratic Understanding of Rivers in India"

Alexander Erlewein (Heidelberg): „The Reevaluation of Dams in the Context of Climate Change: Debates, Policies, Consequences"

Miriam Seeger (Heidelberg): „The Nujiang Dams: A Contested Intellectual Frontier"

Nirmalya Choudhury (TU Berlin): „Legality and Legitimacy of Public Involvement in Infrastructure Planning: Observations from Hydropower Projects in India"

Across Time and Space: The Transcultural Cosmologies of Japanese Religions
Chair: Joachim Kurtz (Heidelberg)

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Dominic Steavu (Heidelberg): „Cosmologizing the Self: Chinese Iatromancic Technologies in Japanese Buddhist sources“

Anna Andreeva (Heidelberg): „Mapping out the Cultic Mountains of Premodern Japan: The Case of Mt Asama“

D. Max Moerman (Barnard/Columbia): „Vasubhandu versus Copernicus: Japanese Buddhist Cosmology and the History of Science“

What can(not) be said in revolutionary times: Shifting universal concepts in transnational contexts
Chair: Antje Flüchter (Heidelberg)

Pascal Firges (Heidelberg): „France 1796: Is the Ottoman Empire a Constitutional or a Despotic state?"

Birte Herrmann (Heidelberg): „Tian'anmen Square 1989: What is 'Democracy'?"

Julten Abdelhalim (Heidelberg): „Egypt 2011: Can Subjects become Citizens?"

Keynote Lecture II
Janet Hunter (London School of Economics): „The Markets have Collapsed into Complete Confusion: Market Operation after the Great Kanto Earthquake of September 1923“

All day: Heidelberg Research Architecture (HRA) Poster-Presentation

Podium Discussion III – Seascapes and Shipping
Chair: Harald Fuess (Heidelberg), Discussant: Christopher Gerteis (London, SOAS)

Martin Dusinberre (Newcastle/Heidelberg): „From Newcastle to New Nation: Japan, the World, and a Ship, 1884-1912“

Roland Wenzlhuemer (Heidelberg): „In Transit: Ship Newspapers and Life aboard Passenger Steamers, c. 1890“

Rolf Wippich (Tokyo/Lucerne): „19th Century Piracy and Anti-Piracy Measures in Chinese Waters“

Podium Discussion IV - Travelling Technologies, Tracing Transculturality: Paradigm Shifts in Science, Medicine and Society
Chair: William Sax (Heidelberg), Discussant: Kaushik Sunder Rajan (Chicago)

Aditya Bharadwaj (Edinburgh): „Mobile Subjects, Immobile Technologies: Transnational Travel for Human Embryonic Stem Cells in India“

Sandra Bärnreuther (Heidelberg): „Biovalue: The Case of IVF in India“

Panel Session III: Travelling Technologies, Tracing Transculturality: Paradigm Shifts in Science, Medicine and Society (part two)
Chair: William Sax (Heidelberg), Discussant: Kaushik Sunder Rajan (Chicago)

Sinjini Mukherjee (Heidelberg): „New Technologies, Normative Ideals: Kidney Transplantation and Kins as Organ Donors in India“

Tsjalling Swierstra (Maastricht): „Forging a Fit Between Technology and Morality: The Dutch Debate on Organ Transplants and New Reproductive Technologies“

The Many Shapes of the World: Concurrent Regimes of Spatial Representation in Early Modern Asia
Chair: Frank Grüner (Heidelberg), Discussant: Dhruv Raina (Delhi)

Monica Juneja (Heidelberg): „The 'Capricious Reversals' of Naturalist Vision - Pastiche as Art in Early Modern Eurasia“

Martin Hofmann and David Mervart (Heidelberg): „Chinese Sages and Dutch Measures — The Diverse Spatial Regimes of Nagakubo Sekisui (1717-1801)"

Panel Session IV: „Stress“: Anthropological, Historical and Epidemiological Approaches to a „Modern“ Phenomenon
Chair: Adrian Loerbroks (Heidelberg)

Hasan Ashraf (Heidelberg): „'Exporting Garments, Importing Stress': The Effects of the Neoliberal Textile Production Regime on the Garment Workers' Health in Bangladesh“

Saskia Rohmer (Heidelberg): „Stress: The History of a Western Concept“

Maria Steinisch and Adrian Loerbroks (Heidelberg): „Stress and Mental Health in Asia: Perspectives from Public Health“

Asymmetrical Translations: Mind and Body in Indian and Western Medicine

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Chair: William Sax (Heidelberg)

William Sax (Heidelberg): „Healing Mind and Body in Kerala“

Johannes Quack (Heidelberg): „Asymmetrical Translation of Psychiatry in India“

Ananda Samir Chopra (Heidelberg): „Ayurvedic Nosologies and Biomedicine – Translations and Asymmetries“

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