

### **Knowledge on the Move: Circulation, Domestication, and Transcultural Reconfigurations**

Heidelberg, 25–29 July 2010

“Knowledge on the Move” was the topic of the summer school 2010 of the cluster of excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context” at Heidelberg University. Thirty young scholars from all over the world discussed the multi-faceted cultural contacts between Asia and Europe since the early modern period.

“Global exchange of knowledge is by no means an exclusively modern, let alone postmodern phenomenon”, so the organiser, Prof. Joachim Kurtz, at the beginning of the summer school. “Knowledge migration has played a central role in the evolution of knowledge cultures at all times and in all regions of the world.” Accordingly, one of the central issues addressed by the summer school was the way in which knowledge has been transformed in its passage through various regions, cultures and polities.

The keynote lecture on the exchange of knowledge between Russia and Israel was given by Prof. Rivka Feldhay (Tel Aviv University). She examined the dissemination of ideas by the Russian intelligentsia in Israel by looking at literature, music, and other cultural phenomena. Two other lectures on the first day focused on the “Geographies of Knowledge”. Prof. Dhruv Raina (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) spoke about the dialogue between

French missionaries and Indian astronomers at the Mughal court. Prof. Henrique Leitao (University of Lisbon) then explored the neglected influence that knowledge which came to Europe from Asia during the Portuguese maritime expansion had on the so-called “Scientific Revolution”.

On the second day, scholars examined the “agents” as well as the “media” that play an important role in transmissions of knowledge. PD Dr. Dagmar Schäfer (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin) elaborated on different codes of communication in Asia and Europe, and Dr. Marcus Popplow (TU Berlin) addressed the circulation of technical knowledge by means of drawings and models. In the afternoon, Dr. Yu Li (Williams College, Williamstown) discussed print media and the transfer of knowledge through books. Dr. Roland Wenzlhuemer (Heidelberg University) focused on the relations between knowledge, information and technology. He illustrated this phenomenon with the telegraphic information flows in the 19th century.

The third day focused on appropriations of knowledge. In the session entitled “Translation and Domestication”, Dr. Benjamin Zachariah (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin) asked how historians can trace the ways in which ideas move through languages and continents. Prof. Joachim Kurtz (Heidelberg University) then described how European philosophy and logic were domesticated in East Asia, paying particular attention to translation strategies that allowed recipients to link new notions with existing concepts.

A special feature was the session on “Digital Storytelling in the History of Science and Thought”. It introduced new methods in the presentation of research results through digital narrative techniques such as podcasts and short films. Grace Yen Shen (York University, Toronto) used dance videos to demonstrate how art and science can complement each other. Hugh Shapiro (University of Nevada, Reno) encouraged scholars to consider including short films and other media as a method of presenting their research results.

Finally, the participants were asked to form work groups and reframe their own research projects in the context of new questions that had arisen with regard to the mobility of knowledge. The format of presentations was optional. One group notably staged a performance in which the participants, or rather the actors, embodied the various forces that make knowledge move. This performance was a prime example of possible new forms of scientific presentation.

The summer school “Knowledge on the Move” received much positive feedback from participants. They especially liked the variety of disciplines and perspectives represented in the course programme. The organisers were equally satisfied. Prof. Joachim Kurtz concluded: “We appreciate that so

many young and gifted scholars from so many countries participated in the summer school. The discussions had a very high level throughout and they opened up new perspectives for all of us.”

The next summer school of the Cluster of Excellence will be held in summer 2011.

Further information about the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context” is available at [www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de](http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de).

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