Editorial (Prof. Dr. Klaus Herbers)

Lots, the Future and God’s Will
Strategies for Coping with the Future in East Asia and Europe

Lots, the Future and God’s Will

Should we allocate research funding in the future by drawing lots? How would the IKGF cope with this? Drawing lots as a means of decision-making has a long tradition, one that is still alive today. The most recent pope of the Coptic Church was selected by lot. As Michael Grünbart (University of Münster) explained during a recent workshop (https://www.ikgf.uni-erlangen.de/events/event-history/workshops/2019/2019-09-Lot-and-Randomization.shtml), three names were placed in an urn and a young boy had to draw the decisive slip of paper. During the discussion of the workshop, it became apparent how similar the issues related to the drawing of lots are if we compare East Asia with Western Europe.

Decision-making and pursuing happiness by lot? Even today, some lotteries are still called “Glückshafen” (pot of luck), as Matthias Heiduk pointed out during the same workshop.

Still, decision-making by lot, or sortes, was a contested practice in the Latin West during the end of the ancient period. Papes during the 9th century condemned such procedures in the form in which they were practiced, for example, in Bretagne: “This is why we decide that the drawing of lots, by which you make all of your judicial decisions, is no different from what the fathers condemned as divination and magic.” (Unde ad illorum similitudinem sortes, quibus vos puncti in vestris discriminatis iudicis nichil audit quod ills illi patres damnumarent, divinationes et maleficium esse decernimus.)

On the other hand, there were, of course, arguments in favor of the drawing of lots: the Bible provided numerous examples. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), one of the most original scholars of the 13th century, invoked the most important passages in his Summa Theologica:

III–IIae q. 95 a. 8 arg. 2 Praeterea, ea quae a sanctis in Scripturis observata leguntur non videntur esse illicita. Sed sanctori vaeni, tam in veteri quam in novo testamento, inveniuntur sortibus usi esse. Legitur enim sortem VII, quod iudicio sortium punivit Achar, qui de anathemate surripuerat. Saul etiam sorte deprehendit filium suum Ionathan medium comedisse, ut habetur I Reg. XVII. Jonas etiam, a facie domini fugiens, sorte deprehensus, est in mare deiectus, ut legitur I. Zacharias etiam sorte exit ut incensum poneret, ut legitim Ioniae I. Zacharias etiam sorte aequa ab apostolis in apostolatum electus, ut legitim Act. I. Ergo videtur quod divinatio sortium non sit illicita.

Object 2. There is, seemingly, nothing unlawful in the observances which the Scriptures relate as being practiced by holy men. Now, both in the Old and in the New Testament, we find holy men practicing the casting of lots. For it is related (Joshua 7:14, sqq.) that Josue, at the Lord’s command, pronounced sentence by lot on Achan who had stolen the anathema. Again, Saul, by drawing lots, found that his son Jonathan had eaten honey (I Samuel 14:58, 59 sq.): Jonas, when fleeing from the face of the Lord, was discovered and thrown into the sea (Jonah 1:7, sqq.): Zacharias was chosen by lot to offer incense (Luke 1:19); and the apostles by drawing lots elected Matthias to the apostleship (Acts 1:26). Therefore it would seem that divination by lots is not unlawful.

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What Thomas deduced from these examples seemed clear enough: “Therefore it would seem that divination by lots is not unlawful.” (Ergo videtur quod divinatio sortium non sit illicita.)

In late Antiquity, Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) had already acknowledged in his Confessions how the Bible could offer advice, especially in cases of doubt or ambiguity. Accordingly, his conversion to Christianity is described in the following manner:

“Eagerly then I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I laid the volume of the Apostle when I arose thence. I seized, opened, and in silence read that section on which my eyes first fell: Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envyng: but ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, in concupiscence. No further would I read; nor needed I to: for instantly, at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.”

However, to draw lots remained an ambiguous procedure in the Middle Ages. Despite the quotations from the Bible or Augustine, the Christian practices continued to a certain degree the Roman Sortes Virgilianae, which were officially disallowed or, at least, deemed suspicious. We have to take these ambiguities into consideration. Numerous books, literary traditions, and practices indicate that both aspects – condoning and prohibiting lots – could actually coexist.

If we consider the different legal sentences during the Middle Ages (which are at our disposal in our database of medieval legislative texts: http://www.ikgf.uni-erlangen.de/publications/databases/), we can find many cases in which lots were either permitted or not. The practice of casting lots was criticized by the ecclesiastical authorities and, above all, in papal Respnsas, canonical collections, and the decisions of Councils as a pagan tradition that failed to respect the will of Almighty God as the only one knowing the future. On the other hand, stressing the possibility of wanting to know God’s will was one way to Christianize the Sortes Sanctorum, a collection of oracles, integrated lots into a liturgical framework by placing them onto an altar or combining them with orations, missa and benedictions.

Hence, not only did Thomas Aquinas eventually adopt a cautiously positive view of drawing lots, but even the classical church law, as it has been transmitted to us by Gratian since ca. 1140, provides a less critical evaluation when it points out that lots may help to destroy human doubts. Lots are nothing evil, they instead indicate the divine will against human doubt. (Sors non est aliquid mal, sed res in humana dubiatur diuinam indicantis voluntatem.)

The divine will – do we find here the kind of Zukunftsschau that we have studied comparatively in the West and East repeatedly and continuously at the IKGF by using the word “divination”? If that were the case, the drawing of lots would appear to be one means of exploring this will.

Prof. Dr. Klaus Herbers
(IGKF, deputy Director)

Since the founding of the International Consortium for Research in the Humanities “Fate, Freedom, and Prognostication” in 2009, it has hosted 155 international visiting scholars by mid-2019. Over these years, it became clear that an organization was needed that could serve “as a sustainable platform for scientific exchange in our field of research,” as Michael Lackner, president of the society, pointed out. This is why the International Society for the Critical Study of Divination e.V. was established in 2016. Starting with 33 founding members, it has grown steadily over the past year, so that it now encompasses more than 90 registered members. According to Professor Lackner, the society “is conceived as a network for scholars doing research on the wide range of topics connected with arts and techniques connected with the desire to cope with the future. Divination, however, can also be applied to the search for ‘hidden’ phenomena in the past.”

Due to the connection between both the Society and the Consortium, with its considerable international outreach, there are various opportunities for scientific exchange. The Consortium organizes workshops and conferences on a regular basis, and Lackner adds, “several of our visiting scholars have been encouraged to coordinate workshops in their special field, which makes our network even more extensive.”

An International Journal and a Book Series

The immediate focus of the Society is the publication of the International Journal of Divination and Prognostication as well as the book series Prognostication in History which have both been launched with Brill publishers in 2019. Prognostication, in all of its forms, is an extremely diverse anthropological phenomenon, which so far has been understudied in the Humanities. The journal and book series approach the topic from a cross-cultural, multi-disciplinary perspective, aiming both to broaden specific knowledge and to enhance critical reflection. While the main focus is on Asia and Europe, all topics related to divination and prognostication in the past and present are welcome. The research fields of the Society’s members mirror the composition of our Consortium: they include history, philology, social anthropology, religious studies, art history, history of science, sociology, and political science. Due to the disciplinary background of its “founding fathers,” there is a certain emphasis on Sinology and European Medieval and Early Modern Studies but over the years, several other areas have been added to the research field of the Consortium by the many visiting fellows who have stayed at Erlangen. Indeed, scholarly work that pursues new topics and disciplines is highly encouraged. Lackner, for example, points out that the Society “would highly benefit from the participation of psychology,” indicating a lack of scholars from that field in the past.

For the selection and review of articles and book proposals, Lackner points out, “both the journal and the book series rely on our network of visiting scholars, but both are equally open to contributions by specialists in the fields that have not yet been ‘screened’ by the Consortium.” Needless to say, the Journal will adopt a double-blind peer review process to meet international standards and guarantee the highest academic quality. The first issue of the Journal has already been published. The editors of the journal are Michael Lackner and Charles Burnett (Warburg Institute), while the Managing Editor is Michael Lüdke (Erlangen University).

The Editorial Board consists of various scholars whose names can be found on our website. The content of the first issue includes five articles, by Darrel Rutkin, Anne Schmiedl, László Sándor Chardonnens, Joanna Komorowska, Jeffrey

FOCUS

International Society for the Critical Study of Divination, International Journal and Book Series

International Society for the Critical Study of Divination
The first titles of the book series have also been published this year. The series editors are Michael Lackner, Klaus Herbers (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg), Chia-Feng Chang (National Taiwan University) and Alexander Fidora (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). The first title is Divining with Achi and Tārā: Comparative Remarks on Tibetan Dice and Mālāī Divination; Tools, Poetry, Structures, and Ritual Dimensions by Jan-Ulrich Sobisch (September 2019). The second title, Glimpses of Tibetan Divination. Past and Present, edited by Petra Maurer, Donatella Rossi and Rolf Scheuermann, appeared in November 2019.

The Society for the Critical Study of Divination welcomes everyone interested in the critical study of fate, freedom and prognostication, in all of its forms and techniques, to become a member of the society. The membership fee is 50,00€ and supports the publication of the journal. Members will receive a free print copy or free electronic access to the journal.

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If you wish to keep in touch with our activities, please follow us on our homepage or social media accounts.

The Society at a glance

Foundation date: July 2016
President: Michael Lackner
Vice President: Chia-Feng Chang
Secretary: Zhao Lu (NYU Shanghai)
Members (to date): 98
Website: www.iscsd.de

Overview of the lectures in the summer semester 2018

10.04.2018: How Did Hellenistic Astrology end up in Medieval China? Horoscopy in Tang China
Jeffrey Kotyk (Chinese Studies, Leiden University; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

24.04.2018: How to Forestall Misfortune: Religious and Political Strategies in Early Medieval Italy
Carola Föller (Medieval History, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

08.05.2018: A Pope, a Saint, and a Fererunner of the Antichrist: Eschatological Interpretations of Contemporary Events advanced by the Roman Curia under Gregory IX
Wendan Li (Medieval History, Free University of Berlin)

15.05.2018: Design your Own Paradises: Millenarianism in the Gelug School of Tibetan Buddhism
Olad Csujo (Universität Belgrad)

29.05.2018: The Course of History, Eschatology, and Transcendence in Medieval Latin Christianity
Klaus Herbers (Medieval History, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg; IKGF Deputy Director)

05.06.2018: SPECIAL LECTURE: Political Counselling in the Ancient Near East; or, On Prognostication as Sense and Nonsense
Stefan Maul (Astronomy, Heidelberg University)

12.06.2018: Siting Dreams: Incubation Practice in Late Ming China
Bright Vanka (East Asian History, Lawrence University; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

19.06.2018: Prophetic Body Signs in Early Modern Romance Literature
Felix Garnett (Romance Studies, Trinity University)

26.06.2018: Fate and Freedom in the Postsocialist Chinese Popular Imaginary
Kwok-kan Tam (Comparative Literature and Culture, Hong Kong Education University; HKCEC Visiting Fellow)

03.07.2018: Sheltered in the Heavenly Jerusalem: Late Medieval Concepts of Eschatology within the Teutonic Order
Susanne Ehrl (Medieval Literature, University of Regensburg)

10.07.2018: On the Relationship between Learned Magic and Divination: Scrutinizing the Leipzig Magica Collection
Bernd-Christian Otto (Study of Religions, Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies, University of Erfurt)

The role of astrology, as a conduit through which culture and knowledge were transmitted from West to East during the Medieval period, is only now beginning to be understood. It is through documenting the development of astrology in East Asia that we can shed light on the largely unstudied currents of Eurasian cultural exchange which had far-reaching influences in the secular and religious fields.

How Did Hellenistic Astrology end up in Medieval China?
Horoscopy in Tang China
Jeffrey Kotyk (Chinese Studies, Leiden University; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

The talk established a chronology for the first substantial introduction of foreign astrology into China on the part of Persians and Buddhists in the eighth and ninth centuries. I argued that astrology from Iran and the Hellenistic world played a significant, albeit hitherto largely unrecognized role in the development of Buddhism during the Tang dynasty, which subsequently deeply influenced the religious traditions across East Asia for several centuries. This established a foundation for the later development of horoscopy in China between the ninth and sixteenth centuries. In particular, we note the introduction of Arab astrology, based primarily on the work of Claudius Ptolemy, during the fourteenth century.

I pointed out that, although Indian astrology was made available in China from the fourth to seventh centuries, it was never widely implemented in China during this period, for it was only in the eighth century, with the introduction of Mantrayāna or Esoteric Buddhism, that Chinese Buddhists developed a pressing need to observe astrology. This subsequently sparked popular interest in foreign astrology among both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist communities in China, a development that fostered the simultaneous development of astral magic comprised of elements from multiple sources, including some that dated back to the Greco-Egyptian and Near Eastern traditions. Around the turn of the ninth century, the translation of astrological materials shifted from Indian to Iranian sources as a result of Persian astronomers working at the court. The popularity of astrology additionally facilitated the proliferation of uniquely Chinese astral deities in Chinese Buddhism, most notably Tejaprabhā Buddha and the seven stars of the Big Dipper. This understudied interaction that resulted from the deep interest in astrology marks a significant transmission of cultural and religious knowledge through multiple civilizations.
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How to Forestall Misfortune: Religious and Political Strategies in Early Medieval Italy
Carola Föller (Medieval History, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

To forestall misfortune was an essential endeavor in the fragile worlds of premodern times and is, therefore, a meaningful field of research. Early medieval Italy, in particular, was affected by long-term wars, natural disasters, and epidemics after the end of the western Roman Empire. The lecture focused on strategies of coping with the future by analyzing two examples from early medieval Italy. I was especially interested in the concrete approaches, as well as the figurative patterns that were used. What kind of strategies were pursued? And what kind of representations were used?

The first example was Pope Gregory the Great’s reaction to the plague at the end of the sixth century; a time characterized by severe political crises and natural disasters. After his predecessor, Pope Pelagius II, died of the plague, one of the first actions that Pope Gregory performed was to organize a huge procession, which boasted several thousand participants, who – after three days of penance – filled the city of Rome, divided into seven processional groups. The sermon delivered by the pope to initiate the procession provides an insight into the conception of the procession, the strategies Gregory pursued, and the state in which he imagined the world to be. Gregory embedded the procession within a framework of apocalyptic visions and tried to protect the participants from both the earthly threat of the plague and the last judgment of doomsday.

The second example concerned the donation by Leo, an otherwise unknown bishop, to the church of Saint Mary of Faleri, presumably during a period of relative political calm in the first half of the 8th century. When Bishop Leo made his donation, he decided to carve the charter in marble and install it in the church, so that it would be eternally visible to the public. The text of the inscription, in addition to indicating the precise amount of the donation, is, in large part, dedicated to specifying sanctions. In particular, it stipulates that all people who violate the terms of the donation shall be anathematized. Instead of apocalyptic scenarios, Leo relied on the system of juridical sanctions of the church, which was also closely connected to heavenly punishments. Thus, in times of legal uncertainty in the post-imperial world, he resorted to the legal framework of the church and the institution of the bishopric.

The close connection between the earthly, political sphere, and the spiritual, religious sphere is characteristic of early medieval Western Europe. Moreover, in both Gregory and Leo’s case, the punishment or sanction is rendered to the individual sinner rather than to the community as a whole. Aside from the responsibility assigned to the individual, the success of the procession and the donation depended on the involvement of the community. As those receiving punishment, the community had to enact the ritual and demonstrate its compliance with the law. However, a striking difference between these two cases can be found in terms of their respective conception of the future: in Gregory’s view, the actual strategies would only be useful for the near future, whereas Leo envisions eternity until the end of times.

A Pope, a Saint, and a Forerunner of the Antichrist: Eschatological Interpretations of Contemporary Events advanced by the Roman Curia under Gregory IX
Wendan Li (Medieval History, Free University of Berlin)

The great propagandistic quarrel between the Roman Church and Emperor Frederick II after Frederick’s excommunication in 1239 is one of the classic cases of the use of apocalyptic eschatology in medieval politics. However, the earlier involvement of the papal Curia with eschatological concepts and imagery has been overlooked, mainly because of a lack of coherent sources. This earlier period was less influential but still instrumental in shaping the subsequent growth of apocalyptic discourses.

The talk aimed to shed light on apocalyptic discourses in the Roman Curia since 1227—the beginning of the pontificate of Gregory IX—by examining three apocalyptic figures in the curial sources: a Pope (Gregory IX), a Saint (Francis of Assisi) and a Forerunner of the Antichrist (Frederick II). The talk focused on two questions: 1) What were the links between the eschatological interpretations of contemporary events advanced by the curial circle of Pope Gregory IX?; and 2) How did this conviction affect the papacy’s self-understanding and course of action?

Different causes lay behind the growing prominence of apocalyptic visions in the first half of the 13th century in the Roman Curia: assumptions of widespread heresy, the threat posed to the Papal States by Emperor Frederick II, a desire for reform within the Roman Church and enthusiasm for the crusade. The talk suggested that an eschatological understanding of contemporary events in the Roman Curia could be understood as an attempt to make sense of the historical positions, to determine the papacy’s own position, and to move others to a specific course of action. In this way, Pope Gregory IX justified the excommunication of Emperor Frederick II and the canonization of the saints of the mendicant orders using apocalyptic discourses and prophesied the victory of the Roman Church against the forerunner of the Antichrist.

Design Your Own Paradises: Millenarianism in the Gelug School of Tibetan Buddhism
Olaf Czaja (Tibetology)

Among others, the Tibetan religion has also dealt with the question of how the present world era will come to an end and how a new one will begin. Central to this question was the descent of the future Buddha Maitreya. Maitreya played a vital role in all Tibetan schools, but it seems that he took center stage for the followers of the Gelug school to which the Dalai Lama belongs. This is manifested in particular liturgical and meditative forms of worship, but also processions and giant thangkas and statues showing the future Buddha. It is also revealed in monasteries and political-administrative institutions that are dedicated to and named after Maitreya’s heavenly abode. It is evident that the Maitreya worship was not just about future expectations, but equally about shaping the here and now. Moreover, by examining paintings used in the cult of
Maitreya, one can show that his heaven developed into a fully-fledged Buddhist paradise. This was particularly the case for Gelug adherents.

The development can be linked to another paradise presided over by Buddha Sakyamuni, an embodiment of Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug school. This paradise was specifically designed for Gelug monks and laypeople. At the beginning, its worship was limited to certain monasteries and monasteries, but it became more popular from the eighteenth century onward. The worship of both Buddha Maitreya and Buddha Sakyamuni was essential for the religious identity of the Gelug tradition and was formed by the school’s religious and political needs.

When the signs of judgement become evident, when concepts change, their influence does not spare practices. Although the biblical basis seems to be entirely fixed, Medieval Christian notions of the end of times and the course of history exhibit great diversity and dynamism.

Siting Dreams: Incubation Practice in Late Ming China
Brigid Vance (East Asian History, Lawrence University; IKGF Visiting Fellow)

What is the relationship between place and dreams? Through legend, poetry, travel writings, gazetteer publications, and other writings, Nine Carp Lake (Jiu li hai 九鯉湖) in Fujian province was associated with the divinity of the so-called Nine Immortals. Nine Carp Lake is an established dream incubation site, marked textually since the ninth century. According to the Ming Comprehensive Gazetteer, travelers and locals alike prayed to these immortals for dreams and “without exception, they have a numinous experience.” The place was imbued with divinatory power by textual association. Legend and place were specifically linked to dreams and dream divination.

I argue that Nine Carp Lake brought various actors together who rendered dreams accessible to others. Immortals, dreamers, writers, and readers anchored dreams to this place, constructing a landscape of words and dreamed associations, and anticipating future visitors who continued the dream prayer practice in dreaming and in writing. In my research, I focus on three types of interactions, all grounded in Nine Carp Lake: 1) interactions between humans and immortals or spirits; 2) interactions between dreamers and late Ming readers; and 3) interactions between dreamers and writers.

To this end, I examine several Ming gazetteers, poems by Buddhist monks and literati, the travel writings of Xu Xiake, dream narratives examples from the largest extant Ming dream encyclopedias, and the recorded dream of Tang Yin, which was authored by his close friend and contemporary Zhu Yuming. In these sources, we see the intersection of geographical, social, sacred, and dreamed space. Nine Carp Lake was a site for dreamers, writers, readers, and immortals.

As Robert Shields wrote, “sites are never simply locations. Rather they are sites for someone, and of something.” Dreams are not placeless. By sitting dreams at Nine Carp Lake, I establish the fundamental importance of geography in the generation of dream knowledge, using historical examples of the ways in which dream divination was both practiced and understood.
Fate, Freedom and Prognostication. Strategies for Coping with the Future in East Asia and Europe

Prophetic Body Signs in Early Modern Romance Literature

Folke Gernert (Romance Studies, Trier University)

The signatures inscribed on the surface of the human body as well as its very form and shape are believed not only to provide information about an individual’s character and moral qualities but allegedly also to predict the future. In medieval and early modern Romance literature, we find many characters who act as physiognomists in the fictional world, interpreting the bodies of the other characters. Research projects concerned with the fictionalization of physiognomic lore as a practice of divination need to analyze two pertinent questions: firstly, the different forms in which this kind of knowledge was divulged and, secondly, the scientific legitimacy and epistemological status of physiognomics and related practices. Literary texts like the Book of Good Love, the Celestina or Don Quixote allow us to track the different stages of the reception of medieval authors like Michael Scott. Until recently, little attention has been paid to the way in which physiognomic lore confers verisimilitude on these narratives and makes the outward appearances of the figures more meaningful.

Other authors ridicule those who believe in soothsaying. Rabelais, for example, mocks metoposcopy by alluding to the ‘horns’ on the forehead as a visible sign of cuckoldry. Another strategy used to denigrate the occult sciences consists of alluding to the practitioners themselves, which is why the figure of the bawd (Delicado’s Lozana or Aretino’s comadre) is often depicted as an expert in occultism. In La Gitanilla, Cervantes sharply distinguishes between two different semiotic practices – reading the palm of the hand (palmystry) and the forehead (metoposcopy) – by stressing how their scientific prestige diverged.

The case of Cervantes clearly illustrates how authors discuss the epistemological status of divinatory practices in their literary texts. The very essence of divination and soothsaying, i.e., their putatively forward-looking character, make them a highly intriguing tool for writers who can exploit the latent uncertainty of all kinds of prognostication and thus play with the expectations of their readers.

Fate and Freedom in the Postsocialist Chinese Popular Imaginary

Kwok-kan Tam (Comparative Literature and Culture, University of Hong Kong: IKGF Visiting Fellow)

Socialism in China represents a break from traditional culture and a turn toward science and materialism, which regard concepts of fate as false beliefs and “superstition.” However, since the 1980s, when China began to open up to the West and adopt a market economy, the ideological control on culture has relaxed. Ancient texts on philosophy and religion have been republished and made available for circulation. Interest in traditional Chinese belief has revived. Together with the renewed interest in ancient philosophy and wisdom, the belief in fate has also enjoyed immense popularity. Because of the rise of popular culture, folk beliefs have returned and generated fresh interest. In film, TV drama and online novels, there are themes that deal with how the concept of fate affects people’s behavior, even though those who have been educated in Marxism and hold advanced university degrees, such as MBAs.

In the entertainment industry, fate works as one of the most popular recurrent themes. Baidu, which is China’s Google, hosts hundreds of sites related to fate prediction. Different religious sects, with their different methods and ways of prognostication, can be found on these sites, which provide explanations about how divination works and how divination methods have developed over China’s long history. Astrology, palm reading, face reading, and numerology are some of the most popular methods. Fortune-telling by means of temple oracles has been digitized for easy access. Because of the Internet, traditional Chinese divination practices that had been preserved in Hong Kong and Taiwan have been reintroduced into China and permeate the realm of popular belief.

In the fiction of Yu Hua, a noted short story writer, there are several works that are entitled “Predestination” or “Destiny” that give full account of strange happenings in life that can only be explained by means of predestination.

In films made in the past 30 years, “fate” and predestination are some of the most popular themes. Jia Zhangke’s film “A Touch of Sin” (Chinese title: Predestination (Tian zhuding 天注定)) recounts the lives of four people who have either murdered others or committed suicide. The killers and the victims seem to have choices in life, but actually what they do can only be explained as outcomes of predestiny.

Apart from popular belief, what is more illuminating is the fact that the concept of fate has featured in government-sponsored TV dramas, such as Ming Yun (Destiny) and Guojia Ming Yun (The Destiny of the Nation). Both of these dramas promote the concept of fate, but integrate it into a new discourse that claims that fate can be changed and mastered under the leadership of the CCP. Some of the concepts and visual scenes in these TV dramas evoke images of traditional beliefs in astrology and cosmic energy (qi), but they are now understood in terms of nuclear power and energy.

It should be noted that the concepts of fate and destiny have been evoked in today’s China and thus open up new vistas for research on how traditions are reinvited in the postsocialist discourse.

Sheltered in the Heavenly Jerusalem: Late Medieval Conceptions of Eschatology within the Teutonic Order

Susanne Ehrich (Medieval Literature, University of Regensburg)

In the heyday of the eschatological interpretations of history at the turn of the thirteenth century, interpretative patterns of the end times formed a central basis of legitimacy for the Teutonic Order in the self-understanding as a knightly order, right from the Order’s beginnings. Using various sources from the context of the Order, the lecture showed how eschatological patterns were used by the Teutonic Order to justify its existence from its founding up through the fifteenth century. Already in the prologue to its statutes, the knightly order justified itself in the context of salvation history with an eschatological thrust, portraying itself as the knighthood, prophesied by John in Revelations, which would make way for the...
accompanied by a pronounced awareness of battling against the heathen. This belief was eternal peace in Heavenly Jerusalem—through perfection of the world—and thereby, in the end, justifying the Order. Being designed as a text to be read aloud, the manuscript in the vernacular, dating from the fifteenth century and now housed in the central archives of the Teutonic Order (Hs. 787), provides testimony to the fact that an awareness of their exclusivity in terms of salvation history served the brothers of the Order as a kind of cibus spiritualis for many years, and could be digested, as it were, bit by bit.

On the Relationship between Learned Magic and Divination: Scrutinizing the Leipzig Magica Collection
Bernd-Christian Otto (Study of Religions, Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies, University of Erfurt)

The university library of Leipzig hosts one of the most extensive and complete early modern collections of hand-written manuscripts about ‘learned magic’ in continental Europe. The collection was sold in 1710 for an extraordinary price, and it is one of the few early modern collections of ‘learned magic’ that have survived to this day.

It represents the ‘state of the art’ of ‘Western learned magic’ around the turn of the 18th century and thus attests to both the longue durée nature of this textual-ritual tradition – with numerous texts dating back to late antiquity and the Middle Ages – as well as early modern adaptations and innovations. With 113 texts translated into German, it demonstrates that the vernacularization of ‘learned magic’ in German-speaking Europe happened significantly earlier than assumed thus far. With over 65% of the texts devoted to the Solomonic art of ‘conjuring spirits,’ the collection provides ritual knowledge that was highly contested and illegal at that time, thus demonstrating that this knowledge was far more elaborate and versatile in the 17th and 18th centuries than previously assumed.

The lecture provided an overview of the history and contents of the collection and then focused particularly on its divinatory texts and techniques. As it turns out, these are incredibly versatile and sophisticated, often relying on conjuration techniques, thus significantly differing from the more established or ‘mainstream’ divinatory disciplines found in early modern Europe (astrology, geomancy, chiromancy).

It was finally considered why, from the viewpoint of the early modern practitioners of ‘learned magic,’ both deterministic and manipulative worldviews seem to coexist with little friction, which indicates that this seeming contradiction constitutes a modern stereotype...
What is commonly referred to as “supernatural” in modern times, occupied a prominent place in the worldview of pre-modern times. It is, therefore, unsurprising that these “supernatural” phenomena were also incorporated into the legal system and that there are numerous references to divinatory practices in different legal texts of the Middle Ages. On April 17–18, 2018, the IKGF hosted a workshop on Medieval canonical collections as sources for mantic practices (“Mittelalterliche Rechtssammlungen als Quellen mantischer Praktiken”). Experts on medieval canonical law examined these texts concerning the legal evaluation of divination: here, the standards were set very early on and later updated frequently. Prohibitions on the consultation of fortune-tellers, for instance, appear in the first canonical collections in the Early Middle Ages until the 13th century. Although some texts reflect the personal viewpoints of the compilers, it is very difficult to gain insights from these sources with regard to the actual mantic practices occurring in the Middle Ages.

Cornelia Scherer (Erlangen) analyzed the Collectio Hispana, a chronologically structured collection of synodal files and letters, mainly from the popes, which was produced in the 7th century on the Iberian Peninsula. There is little found in the Collectio Hispana regarding the subject of divination: only ten canons deal briefly with this topic. The same holds true for the Lex Ribuaria, a 7th-century collection of Germanic law, which was introduced by Lucas Bothe (Berlin).

Roy Flechner (Dublin) investigated the Collectio Hibernensis, compiled in Ireland at some point between 690 and 748. Book 25 of the Hibernensis, entitled De sortibus (“Concerning lots”), broadly accepts the casting of lots as part of the process of decision-making. Flechner argued that the casting of lots is related to divination, since both are ways of anticipating events or actions in the future by supernatural means. Nevertheless, the latter is condemned in the Hibernensis, while the former is accepted. Book 25 consists of five chapters concerned with the prerogative to cast lots in doubtful or uncertain cases, as well as with the justification behind allowing the use of decision-making through lot casting.

Burchard of Worms, the renowned compiler of a collection of 20 books of canonical law, was at the center of the contributions by Birgit Kynast and Ludger Kämper (both Mainz). His early 11th-century work was influential, drawing on earlier collections but adjusting the penance to a possibly more realistic level.

Lotte Kény (Bonn) closed the workshop with a survey of the discussion on the use of lots in the process of decision-making and elections in two decretal collections from the 13th century.

In a special lecture, Hans-Christian Lehner and Stephanie Plass (both Erlangen) introduced the IKGF-database and discussed its use with the participants of the workshop. A publication of the proceedings is intended.

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

Miscellaneous – Letter of Support

The IKGF has made tremendous progress in establishing the study of divination and prognostication as a new field of research. In light of the end of the current funding phase in 2021, the Consortium has been exploring possible ways of creating a sustainable research environment that will provide a permanent base for this important field of study. Given the IKGF’s embeddedness within the university, the FAU will have to play a crucial role in sustaining at least part of the existing research program. Taking note of the impressive academic record of the Consortium, more than 60 renowned international scholars have recently sent the following letter of support to the president and the dean.

Dear President Hornegger,

Dear Dean Trinczek,

First of all, we, the members of the International Society for the Critical Study of Divination, the former and current Visiting Fellows of the International Consortium for Research in the Humanities (IKGF) and the members of the Advisory Board of the IKGF, would like to thank you for your continuous support of the Käte Hamburger Centre over the years! We are also extremely pleased that you, President Hornegger, expressed the importance of supporting the IKGF beyond its second funding phase during the birthday festivities of Professor Lackner, and further stated that you are committed to sustaining IKGF out of FAU resources as a permanent institution of the university.

In our view, such a step would be more than justified since the IKGF has been greatly successful: the publication record is already incredible, including the two massive handbooks that are well on their way into print. The forthcoming exhibition at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum is boldly conceived and commendable. The quality of academic works produced at the IKGF is impressive, and so is the international distribution, gender balance, and diversity of academic profiles.

A point you should greatly appreciate is how the IKGF has contributed to the university’s internationalization. The Consortium has gained momentum and established an extraordinary research platform for international networking in the Humanities. More than 150 visiting fellows have stayed in Erlangen over the past years. Moreover, the IKGF has drawn attention beyond the core disciplines of Chinese and Medieval European Studies as it is the only research center worldwide that focuses on prognostication from a comparative perspective. More than 50 international transdisciplinary conferences and workshops have been organized during the past 10 years. Thus, the center is widely visible and attracts a constantly increasing number of international scholars from the humanities that wish to spend some time for collaborative research in Erlangen. The value of this contribution cannot be overstated.

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The new Elite MA program on decision making funded by the Elite Network of Bavaria is an enormous success of the IKGF structure and is generating keen interest from students around the world. In fact, FAU is only admitting about 20% of current applicants to the MA program. By connecting to colleagues across other departments at the university and developing new teaching initiatives, IKGF can play an active and innovative role. In this context, the IKGF can further broaden its set of interests by reaching into concepts of reasoning, cognitive science, decision-making strategies, epistemology, economy, and others more, in this way transcending its original boundaries of Medieval Studies and Sinology. Here, we see the highest potential for the future development of the present IKGF and for broadening its appeal to the university student body and faculty alike. We hope that faculty from other academic units will be even more engaged in, and supported by, the IKGF. Altogether, proceeding from the IKGF’s strong record of existing success, the new MA program provides the opportunity for the IKGF to become even more inclusive overall, extending its success beyond its present limits.

As you are aware, the evaluation panel and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research requested the university to provide further financial support as a condition for obtaining further funding (particularly two internal one-year fellowships per year) in order to facilitate the IKGF’s possible continuation after the second funding phase. We respectfully request you now to not only maintain your current level of support, but to also intensify it in such way that it will allow to sustain the operations of the IKGF for the future.

At this critical moment in the history of the IKGF, we recognize the possibility that the IKGF might simply be discontinued at the end of its current second phase. However, given the documented success of the IKGF, its expansive international network and visibility, its broad transcultural appeal, track record of continuous innovation, and the efficiency of the infrastructure that has been so fully developed over the past years, losing the IKGF would mean losing far more than the IKGF itself. Hence, we are ready to support every effort to continue the IKGF for the benefit of the university and the Humanities.
IN BRIEF

• Approved – “The Digital Decretum Burchardi”-Project: The Academy of Sciences and Literature at Mainz approved the proposal for the “Digital Decretum Burchardi”-Project. The project will be led by Prof. Dr. Ingrid Baumgärtner (University of Kassel), Prof. Dr. Klaus Herbers (IKGF, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg), and Prof. Dr. Ludger Körntgen (Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz) from the Institutes for Medieval History. The group gained the funding for the critical text edition, analysis of historical contexts and reception, and digital editing of the most influential collection of laws from the 11th century. The research also focuses on the passages about magic and mantic practices as a mirror of the medieval belief systems. (Funding: 18 years; ~ 6 Mio. €)

• Renovation Works Completed: After last year’s successful renovation of building D3, the repair work on the roof of the historic building of D1 has just been concluded. From now on, we will again be able to organize all events in our own facilities.

• News from our fellows and staff: It is a pleasure to introduce to you the new member of our IKGF Research Fellow team, Yung-Yung Chang. Dr. Chang has studied political science, history and economics at Freie Universität, Berlin. Her dissertation focused on “East Asian Regionalism: Power, Interests, and Ideas. A Critical Assessment of ASEAN’s Role in the Evolution of East Asian Regionalism.” She succeeds former IKGF research fellow, Zhao Lu, who joined the New York University, Shanghai, as an assistant professor.
At the International Research Consortium “Fate, Freedom, and Prognostication: Strategies for Coping with the Future in East Asia and Europe,” we are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of our former visiting fellow who died on 26 October 2019, at the age of 53.

Dr. Wannenmacher was a visiting fellow at the International Research Consortium from February 2012 to November 2012 and again from November 2014 to April 2015. During her stays, she pursued the research projects “Super Hieremiam: Prophecy and Politics in the Thirteenth Century” and “The ‘Pseudo-Joachim’ Commentary Super Hieremiam: Edition and Open Questions.”

Dr. Julia Eva Wannenmacher studied theology, Classical Latin, and philosophy at the Humboldt University and the Free University of Berlin, and received her PhD in church history from the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg in 2002. She collaborated in compiling critical editions of central texts in medieval theology (Joachim of Fiore) and nineteenth-century philosophy (German idealism). For the last few years, she participated in work on a critical complete edition of the works and letters of Jeremias Gotthelf at the University of Bern. Her teaching included courses on medieval history, church history, and systematic theology at the Humboldt-University of Berlin and the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.

Her main research interests were medieval exegesis and theology as well as apocalypticism and political prophecy from antiquity to the early modern period. She also contributed to the study of the history of monastic orders. Based on her deep commitment to animal welfare, she recently also devoted herself to the study of the foundations of animal ethics in the history of ideas and systematic theology.

We have lost a valued member of our IKGF family and will keep her fondly in our memory as a scholar, colleague, and friend.

We extend our heartfelt thoughts and deepest sympathy to her family.
OUTLOOK

The Consortium has entered the final phase of the second funding period. Thus, during the remaining two years, our staff may be torn between the past, present, and future. Many of our core projects need to be concluded, which occupies much of our attention. To name just a few, there are two handbooks, several volumes that will appear in the book series “Prognostication in History,” the International Journal of Divination and Prognostication, and the exhibition in collaboration with the Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg. At the same time, we organize our usual academic program with conferences, workshops, lectures, interdisciplinary colloquia, and reading sessions. Of course, we are also working on strategies that will allow us to extend our research into the future.

THE NEXT fate

The next issue of fate will contain:

- a special on the 10-Year Anniversary of the International Consortium for Research in the Humanities.
- the last in a series of workshops to prepare the Handbook of Prognostication in Medieval European and Mediterranean Societies.