

**Image – Object – Performance:
Mediality and Communication in Early Modern Contact Zones
of Latin America and Asia**

Between the 30th of May and the 1st of June 2011, the Workshop “Image – Object – Performance: Mediality and Communication in Early Modern Contact Zones of Latin America and Asia” took place at the University of Hamburg. It was hosted by the Emmy Noether Research Group “Text, Image, Performance: Change and Ambivalence of Cultural Orders in Colonial Contact Zones (Provincia de Charcas and the Philippines, 17th-18th Centuries)”, directed by Astrid Windus, and supported by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, the Department of History of the University of Hamburg and the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft). Scholars from Europe, America and Asia met and presented concepts of mediality and communication from various historical regions, based on multiple types of sources. It was the aim of the workshop to discuss, from different methodological and thematic perspectives, the possibilities and problems of the inclusion of visibility, materiality and performance as analytic categories of history and anthropology. Furthermore, as stressed by Astrid Windus in her opening remarks, it was paramount to examine and to compare not only single phenomena or levels of communication and their medial expressions, but also to discuss larger methodological and inter-medial dimensions of the human production of cultural, religious and political meanings.

Antje FLÜCHTER of the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context” of the University of Heidelberg gave the opening lecture in the panel “Performative Production of Meaning”. In her paper “Exchanging a Globe for a Dress? Presents and Intercultural Communication in Early Modern India”, she presented different levels of interaction and communication in diplomatic encounters between European ambassadors and Indian rulers in early modern times (1498-1620), as reflected in European sources. In these encounters, it was necessary to create a trans-cultural language of body and ceremonial expressions. One type of trans-cultural language was the exchange of presents. The difficulty of communication through presents and the translation of the messages transported through them were addressed in three examples. All of them showed a permanent lack of appropriate presents from the Europeans at the Indian courts. The value of the present, adjusted to the circumstances, was essential and the ambassadors rarely seemed to have assessed the situation appropriately. Flüchter showed that these material dimensions of diplomatic encounters were marked by trans-cultural disagreements about “real” and “symbolic” values and about what had to be considered “poor” or “precious”.

Eberhard CRAILSHEIM from the University of Hamburg presented another situation in which the performative production of meaning could be identified. In his exposition “The Baptism of Sultan Azim ud-Din of Sulu (1750): A Performative Production of Spanish Colonial Power in the Philippines in the Context of the Regional Moro Conflict”, he referred to a text from 1750 which narrates the unique moment in the history of Spanish colonial Philippines when the Muslim sultan Azim ud-Din of Sulu was baptized in Manila earlier that year. On the one hand, the solemn reception of the sultan in Manila represents a situation when wealth and power of the colony were displayed to him. On the other hand, the sultan himself was staged during the ceremonies for the inhabitants of Manila and the nearby area. The celebrations took place in a time of severe Spanish-Muslim conflicts, when Muslims “pirates” raided the coasts of the Philippines. The baptism could therefore be exploited politically by the Spanish governor of the Philippines. He used the chance to stage the sultan and all he represented symbolically (as an object of fear and hope) to unify his province and to gain political advantages. In the subsequent discussion, the function and relevance of the ceremony of baptism in the historical context was assessed and related to the sultan’s claim to power, as well as to the reasoning of the governor’s actions. With regard to the methodological problems of historical analysis of performative phenomena through texts, the question was raised as to which extent we have to consider *first* the textual and narrative structures of the source before talking about the performative character of the event itself. Or if we rather should understand the text as *one element* of the performative staging of the governor’s power, as a different medium, addressed to a non-present European audience.

Otto DANWERTH of the Max-Planck-Institut für europäische Rechtsgeschichte dealt in his paper entitled “Struggles about Dead Bodies and Meanings: The Treatment of Indigenous Corpses in Late Inca and Early Colonial Peru” with public rituals involving Andean corpses, shedding light on the complexity of public performances in colonial Peru. First, he outlined the function of *purucaya*, a pre-Hispanic ceremony of conversion, by which the dead Inca ruler was transformed into a divine ancestor. These deceased rulers participated as mummies in state rituals, which helped to maintain authority during the time of the Inca’s rule. This was followed by an analysis of the role of traditional rituals in the transitional period of the early colonial years (first half of the 16th century). Taking the example of the Inca puppet-ruler Paullu Inca, Danwerth showed that pre-Hispanic rituals, like the *purucaya*, were still accepted by the colonial authorities and publicly performed in Cuzco. Only from late 16th century onwards, as a consequence of the Catholic battle against indigenous idolatry, the struggle about dead bodies

took place, including the secret withdrawal of bodies from Christian cemeteries by Indians and their funerals according to indigenous religious practices as well as the massive destruction of Andean mummies by the Spaniards. The paper showed on one hand the prominent role of rituals for the negotiation of religious and political orders in a colonial contact zone like the central Andes over a long time. On the other hand, it made clear that for a complex understanding of the communicative functions of this type of media, it is very important to consider (micro-)historical changes in power relations in different moments, places and cultural environments of the contact zone.

After the panel on “Performative Production of Meaning”, the first group of PhD students from the junior research group „Cultures in Dialogue in the Andean World” of the University of Heidelberg presented their common approach to group identity and social coherence in the Andes. Thereby, Markus SCHOLZ, Maret KELLER and Niels HECHT focused on the liturgical year and the celebration of religious festivities in the province of Cajatambo (colonial Peru). A comparison of religious practices, considerations of climatic particularities, and the dogmatic background revealed an active and ongoing process of adaption, persistence and mediation between and within the cultures involved. The celebration of All Saints’ Day served as an example for the use of images, objects and performances as mediums of expression and formation of religious social identity in colonial Peru. A specifically important statement of the exposition was that the degree of popularity of “catholic” festivities among the indigenous population could be put in relation to its concordance with the (pre-Hispanic) agricultural calendar and the climatic and geographical particularities of different habitats within the contact zone. That means that we have to extend our own categories of analysis to understand certain processes of cultural transformation not only as culturally or communicatively “constructed”, but also as products of their respective “natural” environments.

In his evening lecture “Communication and Performance. The ‘Fiesta’ as a Medium for the Construction of Colonial Authority and Indigenous Identity in Early Modern Philippines”, Reinhard WENDT of the Fernuniversität Hagen linked the categories of performance and communication. The missionaries, who played an eminent role in the colonization of the islands, applied attraction strategies to win souls for the church and subjects for the king. The pomp of the fiestas was used to propagate and to implant concepts of “a true faith”, of a “civilized life”, and of a “political order ordained by God”. In any case, the fiesta and its different communicative and performative elements also enabled the Filipinos to preserve

some pre-colonial traditions, to take on and process foreign influences, and to develop new collective attitudes and behaviors. In these processes of interaction, native and foreign actors created the basic elements of indigenous Philippine identity. In the discussion, the participation of the masses in the celebrations and their respective freedom and creativity was addressed. Furthermore, the paper gave reason to many interesting commentaries and questions comparing the Philippine case with other cases from Latin America – an effect intended by the organizers, which was to break with the traditional perspectives on cultural contact and transformation focused either on the “Atlantic” or the “Pacific”. One was the fact that on the Philippines, religious images, especially sculptures from the Virgin Mary or the Catholic saints, which were displayed and venerated publicly in mass processions and on high Catholic holidays, were owned by private persons. They had commissioned the statues on their own costs and transmitted them from generation to generation. This differed from the production, administration and veneration of important holy images in Latin America, which were property of the church or the communities who owned the churches. Another important difference was that the Catholic confraternities, which played an extremely important role in the religious life of Spain and Latin America, played a minor role in the Philippines. On the other hand, parallels were found in the fiestas of South America in regard to syncretism, the function of the fiesta as colonial tool of empire, and as platform for social hierarchy.

The second panel “Visuality and Visual Systems” started on Tuesday, 31st with the presentation of the art historian Jens BAUMGARTEN of the Universidade Federal de São Paulo, “The Production of Baroque Religiousness in Brazil”. He analyzed concepts of visuality and imagination in Franciscan visual representations in colonial Brazil and their references to post-Tridentine models. In his stylistic and iconographic comparison between European “models” and their Brazilian representations, Baumgarten gave an insight to the complex structures which characterize visual communication on one hand, and the transformation of visual systems within a trans-cultural context on the other. Of special importance for the latter was the superimposition of the visual traditions of different religious orders, especially Franciscans and Jesuits, in certain images, objects and church spaces of the colonial context; but also the “lack” of a religious visual culture among the indigenous people of Brazil, which had to be taken in consideration by the missionaries. These assumptions break with the idea of “pure” (Franciscan or Jesuit) visual traditions and their continuation in the Americas. Baumgarten also focused on the Jesuit intellectual Antonio Vieira and his sermons which show the decisive role of imagination and emotion for missionary politics. His approach, Baumgarten lead to the important question of the functions of visual and bodily or sensorial experience within the

baroque stagings of Brazilian colonial churches (tears as second function of the eyes, importance of physical body contact, addressing the olfactory sense).

Catholic church bells stood in the center of the presentation of Regalado Trota JOSE of the University of Santo Tomas (Manila), entitled “A Cross Standing on a Dragon, or a Dragon Supporting a Cross? Islamic Designs on Catholic Church Bells? Questions in the Philippine Setting”. These bells represent markers of religious space, time and even status. Jose demonstrated that from about the middle of the 19th century to just before 1880, the iconographies of many church bell founders’ signs manifested motifs related to the Christian iconography of the cross as well as to Philippine Islamic art. Two theories were discussed on how to explain the presence of the latter influence. In the Philippines, a constant war was raging between Muslims and Spaniards; therefore it is possible that, first, some of the Muslim prisoners in Manila worked on the casting of the bells or, second, that Islamic motifs on some of the captured enemy cannons have inspired the regular bell casters to incorporate them on the crosses. In both cases, the example illustrates – once again – the inter-religious migration of motifs and iconographies and the spaces for creative interpretations of traditional signs by the native artisans and artists.

Another aspect of Philippine cultural and social life was exhibited in the paper “China-Spain-Philippines: Images and Representations” by María Dolores ELIZALDE PÉREZ-GRUESO of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC, Madrid). Besides the Muslims in the South, the Chinese played also a crucial role within the Spanish colonial society of the 19th century. Elizalde analyzed the Spanish perception of both China and the Chinese population living on the Philippine archipelago. Using texts and images, she showed the different Spanish views of the Chinese empire, and the importance attached to China's population living in the Philippines. She explained how these perceptions, which can be understood as one facet and/or product of trans-cultural interactions, evolved according to the roles they played on the islands. Among the images of China, which were evoked, were those of a great empire with a refined culture and hope for the Christian faith. The Chinese in the Philippines, on the other hand were associated with hard work and the galleon trade. Another association which was also included in the successive discussion was the one of fear and mistrust, as the large number of Chinese in Manila awed the few colonial rulers, starting with their rebellion in 1603. The special role of the Chinese-Filipino *mestizos* was also addressed, mainly in the sector of the arts and crafts, and the Chinese participation in the Philippine fiestas.

Margit KERN, art historian of the Freie Universität Berlin, analyzed in her contribution about “Translation Processes in the Art of the Early Modern Age: “The Mass of Saint Gregory”, a Feather Mosaic from 1539” a unique piece of art as another example of the superimposition and entanglement of Christian and indigenous iconographies and materialities. Kern emphasized the most complicated aspect of dealing with visual representations of the past – the question of possible *receptions* and readings of hybrid iconographies. Therefore, she selected a special motif in this image, namely three pineapples on the rim of a stone sarcophagus. These were understood as references to the “discovery” of America and as a deliberate reference to the American character (*americanità*) of the feather painting. Granting the various possible readings and multiple codifications of signs within the cultural translational process, Kern developed the thesis that the fruits are to be read in a Eucharistic context, replacing grapes as Eucharistic fruits. Thereby, the feather mosaic may be seen as a model case for the development of trans-cultural visual languages in the art of the early 16th century.

The second group of PhD students, of the Emmy Noether Research Group of Hamburg and of the Fern Universität Hagen, pointed out similarities and differences in their methods and theoretical approaches. They stressed the convergences with regard to the over-fading of concepts, the contest of categories and the analytical focus. All investigations focused on contact zones in the 17th and 18th centuries. Andrea NICKLISCH demonstrated the function of ecclesiastical silverworks in Bolivia as a medium of a transfer of meaning. These objects, which were a central part of the mass, were charged with mythological and biblical symbols. The altar, hence, became a cultural contact zone, in which different systems of knowledge and visuality mutually influenced and pervaded each other. The focus of Ulrike BOHSE was on the negotiation processes of gender roles in Charcas (colonial Bolivia). Taking the painting “Las novicias” from the Museum of Santa Teresa in Potosí as an example, she raised the question of possible cultural continuities between the *acla*-centers of Pre-Hispanic times and Christian convents, analyzing women as a constitutive element of the colonial society. Finally, Imke RATH presented Christian systems of knowledge and “strategies of understanding” in the missionary context of the Philippines. In which ways could the indigenous population and its beliefs be perceived by Spanish missionaries? Taking the depiction of the purgatory in the tableau “The Last Judgment” in the church of Paete as an example, Rath asked for possible visual representations of the specific relationship between Christian and indigenous belief systems in this colonial contact zone. The fact that indigenous religiosity on the Philippines differed completely from that of Latin America (at least from that of the so-called indigenous “high-cultures” in Mesoamerica and the Andes), requires different interpretations of

iconographies which at first sight seem to be “the same” as in the Latin American context. Rath’s paper, therefore, revealed once again the importance of trans-regional comparative studies for a deeper understanding of the complexity of multi-medial communication processes.

The last group of PhD students from the junior research group “Cultural Transfer as a Factor of State Building” of the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context” of the University of Heidelberg presented their papers. First, Gauri PARASHER displayed the use of court files for the investigation of the administrative structures of early 18th century India. A central point in her presentation was the discussion about the controversial Malabar rites. These denominated customs or practices of the natives of South India, which the Jesuit missionaries allowed their neophytes to retain after conversion. As they were accused to be idolatrous or superstitious, they were forbidden by Rome later. Then, Barend NOORDAM talked about the flow of gifts and knowledge transfer in the diplomatic relations between the Dutch United East India Company's (VOC) embassies and the Manchu court in the middle of the 17th century. Thereby, he showed how the VOC shaped the diplomatic practice towards the Chinese political system and that knowledge must not be seen as neutral when it comes to technical knowledge in the military production. Weapons had a certain value as diplomatic presents; moreover, they have to be considered prototypes in the VOC’s sales program.

The third panel “Communication and Materiality” started with Astrid WINDUS, of the University of Hamburg, and her presentation on “The Creation of Sacredness: Material Culture as a Factor of Trans-Cultural Knowledge Production in the Bolivian Altiplano (17th-18th Century)”. She underlined the function of material artifacts for the religious communication between Europeans and Indigenous in the Bolivian highland of the 17th and 18th centuries. Investigating the visitation instructions and reports of the church of Carabuco, she showed that material and visual artifacts like religious objects and pictures can be used along with more classical written sources for the analysis of the communicative production of religious meaning. She argued that religious knowledge and the symbolisms and rituals connected to it are configured by the transmission and transformation of material, visual and spatial artifacts and structures, and by their specific receptions and uses. Thereby, it is precisely the act of the visitation of the church building, carried out in the form of a procession, which itself has to be considered a performative production of cultural meaning, as it gave significance to the holy objects it verified. Subsequently, the discussants developed special interest in the process of the visitation, the number of the available reports and the contents of the inventory lists. Also,

the reason for the wealth of the church of Carabuco was inquired and the conditions for the creation of sacredness reconsidered.

The lecture of Peter Conrad KROEFGES, archaeologist of the Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí (Mexico), continued with the topic of materiality, speaking about “Material and Immaterial Manifestations of Cultural Contact in the Huasteca of the 16th Century”. In his approach, he demonstrated cultural communication in Mexico, from an archaeological viewpoint. Two examples were given from the Mexican Huasteca region, where cultural contact was manifested since pre-Hispanic times on a material and immaterial level: first between the Huasteca people and the Aztecs (Nahuatl), and second between Huastecans and Spaniards. Kroefges outlined the interests, actions and reactions of the involved agents in either episode, referring to archaeological data as well as to ethno-historical sources from the colonial period. In the pre-Hispanic case, he demonstrated that episodes of migration and imperial expansion of Nahuatl groups into the Huasteca led to language shifts and exchange of artistic styles and belief systems. The second example showed that Spanish colonial politics relocated indigenous groups for economic benefits, political control, and defensive purposes until the early 18th century. In both cases, cultural consequences seem to include mutual adoption or refusal of life styles and belief systems.

In the panel on “Intermediality”, the paleographer Ana María MARTÍNEZ DE SÁNCHEZ of the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (Argentina) gave a speech on “Orality and Scripture: Sermons as Media of Communications”, showing the intriguing entanglement of oral and textual forms of communication. Taking sermons from Córdoba as an example, she pointed to the function of sermons as worldwide media of communication for the Catholic Church. Its characteristics varied over time. Since the mid-18th century, sermons were structured in a neoclassical style, but in the beginning of the following century they took the form of religious discourses. At the beginning of the 19th century, the pulpits became platforms for the public presentation of new ideas, which were seething in society. Her analysis of "marks" (i.e. corrections, substitutions or visual aids) in the sermon manuscripts showed the close relationship between the spoken and the written word. Moreover, Martínez underlined the fundamental role of the preacher (*concionador*) as an author and speaker of the pieces of oratory. In the discussion, the audience then inquired about the possible addressee of the content of the sermons and their ability to grasp the meanings of the Latin quotes and the classical allegories. These, in any case, diminished after 1750, and passages of the New Testament became more crucial in the sermons.

The last lecture, “One Text, Many Narratives. The *Comentarios Reales* by Inca Garcilaso de la Vega”, came from Ulrich MÜCKE of the University of Hamburg. By means of a critical review of the concept of the workshop, he raised the question about the accessibility of images, objects and performances without the help of texts as sources. Reversing the issue, he alluded to the fact that text always includes non-text, such as pictures and performances, and thereby produces mental images. This is why historical analysis always needs an entangled, multi-perspective and contextual approach. Afterwards, Mücke presented his reading of the “*Comentarios Reales*” by Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, strongly questioning older interpretations of the text and proposing a multi-layered reading of the “*Comentarios*”. He emphasized that a thorough contextualization of the book is necessary, including the chronology of the life of the author, to better understand the opus. According to Mücke, at least five different narrative models can be found in the text: First, a collection of stories which provides the reader with a cultural structure of the past; second, an analysis of language and religion; third, an autobiography of Inca Garcilaso as an “eye-witness”; fourth a historiography; and fifth a record of Garcilaso as an expert at the court of Spain. Scrutinizing several of his stories, taking as examples Garcilaso’s statements about Inca architecture, *quipus*, oxen and wheat, the weakness of mono-layered interpretations became clear. Mücke then argued that text is at the core of all interpretation of performance, and understanding the text, as media and mediator, must be the first step to historical analysis.

In the final wrap-up, the Emmy Noether Research Group “Text, Image, Performance”, as host of the workshop, emphasized that the outcome of the workshop has to be seen as more than the sum of its single presentations. The intention was also to discuss and further develop existing methodological approaches in the historical research about trans-cultural communication processes and their media. Concerning this matter, the comparative inter-regional, inter-disciplinary and inter-medial perspectives of the workshop-concept provided lots of synergetic effects. For a more coherent resume of the results of the workshop, the organizers summarized once again the paramount topics and central questions which had emerged throughout the sessions. In several papers, the use of culturally-bounded terms as analytical categories for research had emerged as a fundamental problem: What do we mean if we speak of “values” (in cases of exchange), or “conversions” (in religious communication)? These questions go back to an old and well-known (but still not resolved) problem of cultural studies, the lack of “indigenous voices” in the sources. One possible instrument to deal with this situation is the recourse to more than textual media as historical sources, like images,

objects, performances. This methodological shift opens up many new perspectives, but obviously bears as many difficulties. If we speak of performances in a historical dimension, we mostly deal with *textual* or *visual descriptions* of performances, not with the performances themselves. Something similar happens if we try to include in our reflections objects as parts of material cultures. While archaeology through its methodology based on serialities and chronologies is aimed to make statements about the material products of human interaction themselves, the claim of cultural studies is to ask for the structures and discourses which determined the human *production* and *use* of these objects. Therefore, historical research including objects as sources, depends not only on the objects themselves, but on their *representation* in texts or images within a certain context. This raises the question of what is the medium we are dealing with: The text or the performance? The object or the text?

In the concluding discussion about these issues, the need for a thorough usage of sources and a documentation of all steps of analysis was stressed, as well as a close consideration of the macro contexts and the fact that all cultural phenomena underlie transformation processes in the long run. Despite the methodological problems, it was argued in favor of transcending the line between text, image and object, and to focus on the general goal of the historian, namely to “say something about the past”. Images as well as texts – especially those from non-European contexts – can bear the same methodological problems, because they contain European as well as non-European hypertexts and/or rely to very different visual systems. With regard to the baptism and the fiestas in the Philippines, it was added that also performative acts did have a hypertext which has to be de-coded. And, as one participant stated, despite the importance of writing and scripture for the New Cultural History, the way to understand the material world often goes through the immaterial one. The importance of the usage of archeological sources in history was emphasized once more, for example as a methodological tool to define spaces and regions. Another important remark in the discussion regarding the comparative look at different Latin American and Asian contact zones was the need to consider the different historiographical traditions (i.e. Philippine, Spanish, Portuguese, Brazilian, Bolivian, Mexican, US-American etc.) which shaped the research about these regions and the development of its respective theories and methodologies. One example is the post-colonial Latin American interpretation of the so-called “Barroco mestizo” (an artistic style which contains local iconographic elements like fruits, animals or mythological beings) as a statement of subversion and resistance by the “indigenous” people against the Spanish colonizers. Another example for the complicated relationship between historiography and methodology is the situation in the Philippines, where questions of identity and language are intimately linked

to an anti-Hispanic nationalistic historiography. Regarding the question of how to read and analyze the trans-cultural iconographies of these contact zones, a methodology was demanded which is able to transgress the limits of traditional formal, stylistic and iconographic analysis and remains flexible in its interpretations to meet with the concept of “multiple readings”. In this sense, a re-reading of Aby Warburg was suggested.

One last important remark concerned the question of terminology, especially the concepts of hybridity, trans-culturality, and inter-culturality. Not to mention once again their problematic aspects (for example the point that talking about “hybridity” presupposes the existence of “preceding”, non hybrid or “pure” forms of cultural practice), they are still helpful to describe phenomena of cultural transformation. But to avoid homogenizations, the specific uses and understandings of these terms should be defined and explained for every single case, taking in account that people in their times not necessarily perceived what we call “trans-cultural phenomena” as “trans-cultural”.