

CULTURAL TRANSFER AND CULTURAL CONTACTS IN INNER ASIA

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“Inner Asia” has a range of meanings, however, in this interdisciplinary project, “Inner Asia” refers to its geographical regions, the great steppes lying between East and North Asia, which are today part of Western China, Mongolia and Eastern Russia. Thus, it can be stated that Inner Asian Studies were “transcultural” from the start.

There is a longstanding debate in the humanities and cultural studies on how to conceptualise the processes of change affected through culture contact. A key concept, mainly developed in historical studies, is that of cultural transfers: this concept is based on the observation that objects, social and cultural practices, institutions, ideas and traditions can move across boundaries, from one society to another, both intentionally and unintentionally, and only a proper comprehension of such transfers allows adequate historical analysis and comparison. Often, there are whole series of transfers, following their own routes, sometimes circulating, which has led to the notion of “cultural flows”. By taking up various approaches, we propose to explore a critical use of the notion of cultural transfer within Inner Asia. Additionally, due to the awareness of the need of a reconceptualization of the term, this theoretical framework shall be discussed during an international symposium, planned for August 2019 in Inner Mongolia, followed by a short joint field trip.

This project aims at four goals:

1. Facilitating scientific exchange on the cultural transfer and interaction at contact zones in Inner Asia through a joint two/three-days symposium on “Cultural Transfer and Cultural Contacts in Inner Asia”, together with Tongliao Minzu University, Mongolian University of Technology and Science, and Novosibirsk State University. The symposium aims at a larger framework of comparative approaches as well as interdisciplinary views on the cultural processes in the fields of global history, law, art history and archaeology, environmental studies, Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian and Russian Studies.
2. Deepening the institutional contacts between the University of Vienna and its above mentioned EPU-member institutions
3. Developing research collaborations with at least one EPU-partner for future bilateral research-projects.
4. Discussing common strategies for the archiving, sharing and making accessible of visual and oral research documentations.

The Austrian participants – Mag. Dr. Ute Wallenböck (project leader); MMag. Dr. Katharina Arnegger; ao. Univ. Prof. Mag. Dr. Friedrich Edelmayer, MAS; Mag. Thomas Immervoll, Bakk; ao. Univ.-Prof. Dr. René Kuppe; Mag. Dr. Verena Widorn; Stephanie Ziehaus, BA, BA, MA – were selected due to their academic background and research interest.

The Austrian team complements diverse academic disciplines (Sinology/Tibetology, Art History, Law, and Global History) with the main research foci on Inner Asia or indigenous people. Their competences are offered at different career levels within the University of Vienna.

The preliminary tasks of the Austrian project leader are the organization of the trip and the coordination content/ programme of the symposium (in consultation with the involved EPU partners) as well as the presentation of her lecture. The remaining five colleagues are responsible for presenting their own research results in special panels/ sessions during the symposium – presenting and amalgamate the different perspectives of each discipline. In addition, further discussions are planned with the representatives of the other EPU institutions in order to expand the EPU with possible new partner institutions.

The China side will facilitate a workshop, with the aim of presentations on research / research interests of on Inner Asia. Additionally, the scholars of the other EPU-partner institutions will also present their research / research interests.

To learn more about the intangible cultural heritage, a day-trip to the grasslands will be organized, as well as trips to the nearby cultural centers of Inner Mongolia.

Results and sustainability

- Intensive talks about the deepening of the existing cooperations.
- Discussions with the representatives of the respective EPU partner institutions on the organization of a follow-up symposium at the University of Vienna in 2020.
- Intensive talks with the representatives of the respective EPU partner institutions on joint research projects with a focus on Inner Asia for 2020.
- Intensive talks with the representatives of the various EPU-partner institutions to get access to and connect with their archives in near future. Later, the collected material will be archived in or crosslinked with the multi-media-archive HAV – the Himalaya Archive Vienna, a digital database containing, presenting and making openly accessible data which have been collected over decades during numerous research trips in the Himalayan region by members of the University Vienna.