Cultural Transfers in Dispute: An Introduction

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[... ] there is no vantage outside the actuality of relationships among cultures, among unequal imperial and nonimperial powers, among us and others; no one has the epistemological privilege of somehow judging, evaluating, and interpreting the world free from the encumbering interests and engagements of the ongoing relationships themselves. We are, so to speak, of the connections, not outside and beyond them.¹

Cultural Transfers in Dispute explores the role which representations of transfers play in the construction of cultural identities. Our conception of cultures and cultural change has altered dramatically in recent decades. In an era that describes itself as the »global« or »globalised« age,² no longer do we understand cultures as isolated units, but rather as hybrid formations constantly engaged in a multidirectional process of exchange and influence with other cultures.³ Edward W. Said sums this up in his 1993 classic Culture and Imperialism: »[... ] the history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowing.«⁴ This view is not only

³ On hybridity see Peter Burke, Cultural Hybridity (Cambridge & Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009).
⁴ Said, Culture and Imperialism, op. cit. (note 1), p. 261. The context is Said’s refutation of the argument that nationalism is a Western idea that was imported to newly independent peoples but is essentially »foreign« to them. The full quote is: »A confused and limiting notion of priority allows that only the original proponents of an idea can understand and use it. But the history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowings. Cultures are not impermeable; just as Western science borrowed from the Arabs, they had borrowed from India and Greece. Culture is never just a matter of ownership, of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of appropriations, common experiences and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures. This is a universal norm.«
applied to formerly colonised or otherwise dominated civilisations, but to all, including Europe/the »West«. Eurocentric views constructing a European singularity going back to antiquity and neglecting influences on Europe have long come under severe criticism, culminating in the allegation of a Theft of History (Jack Goody) from the rest of the world.

As a result, research on transfers between cultures has become established as a comprehensive paradigm in the social sciences and humanities. Many recent trends in historiography like »world system theory«, »(new) global history«, »postcolonial studies«, »entangled history«, »connected histories«, »shared history«, »histoire croisée«, and »transcultural history« are marked by their primary concern with phenomena of cultural exchange. They define themselves by the place they grant to cultural interconnectedness as a factor of history. This perspective marks a strong difference to older »indigenist« views that privileged internal societal development and in which »external factors have generally been

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6 Jack Goody, The Theft of History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). In its attempt to deconstruct Europe's self-fashioning this book is at some points overzealous and flawed. See also the criticisms in the contributions of Tim Geelhaar and Friedhelm Hoffmann in the present volume.

seen as contingent". Those focussing on transfer claim the opposite: That without taking into account cultural contacts one is not able to understand history.

A milestone on the road from the indigenist to the externalist view was the publication in 1963 of William Hardy McNeill's *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* which very much focussed on cultural exchanges and their effects on societies and was to become a standard textbook in academic history teaching on *World Civilisation*. Almost fifty years on, transfers between cultures past and present have come to be regarded as the rule rather than the exception, to the extent that the idea of clearly separable cultures is dissolving. As Peter Burke poignantly stated in 2009, today »many of us are prepared to find hybridization almost everywhere in history« and accusations of cultural essentialism are rife.

Transfer is thus at the centre of current academic and intellectual discussions about culture(s). Yet the present volume does not seek to simply add more case studies to the plethora of publications on cultural transfer. Nor does it set out to argue against the study of transfer. Its raison d'être is situated on a different level. Our aim is to contribute to transfer studies by suggesting a critical reflection on how cultural transfer is represented. For transfer phenomena, of all things, are not something that is simply »revealed« or »found«. Instead

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the production of knowledge about cultural transfer is, like all knowledge production, always itself subject to cultural, political and ideological conditions. These affect whether particular transfer phenomena are noticed at all, regarded positively or negatively, held to be more or less probable, completely denied or even invented from scratch. Nor are the consequences neutral: findings can be used to glorify or debase cultures, to accuse or exonerate, to mediate between different cultures or to divide them. Statements about cultural transfer figure prominently in discourses about »us« and »them« in many if not all cultures. They influence notions of cultural identity and are in turn informed by such notions. This is why the present volume proposes a critical enquiry into these statements as »representations of transfers«, referring to the concept of »representation« as suggested for historiographical use notably by the French protagonist of the »New Cultural History«, Roger Chartier, as a »base [...] for identifying and articulating the many relations that individuals or groups cultivate with the social world«. By introducing »representations«, Chartier explicitly rejected two older concepts: 1) »ideology« which (in a materialist view of history) views ideas as the direct expression of social conditions, thus implying the priority of social over cultural factors, and the direct dependency of culture from social facts, 2) »mentality« which (in a structuralist view of history) implies that in a given society or group (or individual) there is only one, unified, all-encompassing guiding mental framework. Against these concepts he put forward an understanding of human ideas as »representations« which 1) at the same time describe and shape the cultural and social world humans live in, and 2) exist always in plurality, contradiction and interdependency in a given society and even in a single individual’s mind. This plurality leads to »conflicts (or negotiations) among groups as struggles among representations in which the stakes are always the ca-


14 It is however important to note that the use of the concept of representations by no means implies taking the relativist position that there is no social reality outside of representations, and that historical knowledge is just »one mode of fictional invention among others«. Chartier strongly emphasises that »the past history has taken as its object is a reality external to discourse, and that knowledge of it can be verified« (Roger Chartier, »Introduction«, in: id., On the Edge of the Cliff, op. cit. (note 12), pp. 1–10, quotes p. 8).
capacity of the groups or the individuals to ensure recognition of their identity.\textsuperscript{15} In the present volume we understand disputes about transfers as such «struggles of representations» in which cultural identities are at stake.\textsuperscript{16} Analysing concrete examples of controversial representations of cultural transfers from Asia, Europe, and the Arab world, we aim for a critical self-reflection on the intellectual practices that underpin our attempts to study and describe the relationships between our own and other cultures.

_Cultural Transfers in Dispute_ is the first book to apply the concept of «representations» to cultural transfer. However the editors are by no means the first to ask for a reflection on the production of knowledge about transfer. There have already been recurring appeals for transfer historians to examine their concepts and their own role and calls have been made for a historical approach to transfer historiography itself. For instance, Sebastian Conrad and Shalini Randeria are aware that their transnational perspective itself stands in the context of increasingly global relations and see the need for a historical approach to their own perspective of «entangled history».\textsuperscript{17} Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann argue for an approach of «Histoire croisée» that takes into account the work of the historian him- or herself.\textsuperscript{18} Peter Burke points to the importance of considering «the language that we use to analyse cultural mix, hybridity or translation as itself part of cultural history».\textsuperscript{19} And Hartmut Kaelble notes the lack of disciplinary histories of comparative history or transfer history.\textsuperscript{20} Yet despite these calls surprisingly little work has been done in this direction.\textsuperscript{21} The focus has been mainly on the terms chosen to name the very process of transfer: acculturation, appropriation, borrowing, circulation, diffusion, exchange, translation, translocation, crosspollinations etc.\textsuperscript{22} The present volume does not claim to fill

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  \item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid., quote p. 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Cf. Conrad & Randeria, »Einleitung: Geteilte Geschichten», op. cit. (note 7), p. 42.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Cf. Werner & Zimmermann, »Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung«, op. cit. (note 7), p. 617.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Burke, _Hybridity_, op. cit. (note 3), p. 35.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Cf. Hartmut Kaelble, »Die Debatte über Vergleich und Transfer und was jetzt?«, in: _H-Soz-u-Kult_ (08.02.2005), URL: http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/id=574 &type=diskussionen (accessed on 21.04.2011). See also Werner, »Zum theoretischen Rahmen«, op. cit. (note 8), pp. 15–23, here p. 16 for a similar call.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Useful overviews and reflections on the terms are: Burke, _Hybridity_, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 34–
this void. It should be made clear from the start that we do not seek to give a historical account of transfer research. Representations of cultural transfer are far too vast a research topic to expect such a history any time soon. The scope here is much more humble, namely to sharpen awareness for the conditionality and the effects of statements about cultural transfer, by presenting and discussing twelve cases of representations of transfers between Europe, East and South Asia, and the Arab world.

What is cultural transfer? It is a «building block of cultural development» and does take place «in almost all human societies almost all the time».23 Virtually every process in history may be understood as a cultural transfer and every historical situation as a product of transfer. Cultural transfer is indeed a concept of «genuine shorelessness», as Michael Werner, pioneer of research on Franco-German transfers, puts it, not at least because the concept of «culture» itself is so soft.24 It seems almost impossible to give a general definition of cultural transfer which is really operable, i.e. one that allows us to tell historical processes which are cultural transfers from others that are not.25 In other words, cultural transfer, like beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder. The representation of transfer already starts when we decide to regard a process as a cultural transfer. Only by defining certain units of culture (e.g. regions, societies, religions, nations or civilisations – terms that pose their own problems of definition) does the concept at least gain some acumen.

In order to limit the field and ensure common ground between the contributions, in this volume we have defined as units Asia, Europe, and the Arab world. It is the representation of transfers between Europe and Asia (East and
South\(^{26}\) and between Europe and the Arab world that we examine – again, not exhaustively, but rather by way of a first tentative attempt to grasp the problem. In all three areas, statements about cultural transfer undoubtedly play an important role in the definition of »own« and »other« culture, whereby the patterns of representations are certainly varied and complex. By choosing three areas instead of just two we have aspired to transcend the often infertile dichotomy of simply opposing »Europe« with some »non-Western« or »Oriental« culture. The actual choice of areas was suggested by the profiles of the three editors, a German historian of the Middle Ages, a German scholar of modern Islamic studies and a political scientist from South Korea, where study of the »diffusion« of Western political and social concepts to East Asia is very vibrant.\(^{27}\) However, the approach followed in this volume would have been equally applicable to Africa or the Americas.

Chronologically, we have not limited the choice of cases examined in this volume to the modern period. Although most studies on transfer touch on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, pre-modern societies, too, are now increasingly seen as deeply marked by cultural exchange, and not only superficially, but on a deep level.\(^{28}\) This applies not only to the already accepted notion of an early modern world linked by »connected histories«\(^{29}\) after the beginning of the European expansion around 1500, but also for earlier centuries.\(^{30}\) There have been attempts to date back the existence of a world system marked by cross-cultural exchange to the period of 1250–1350 or to diagnose an »archaic globalization« stretching back even further.\(^{31}\) »Old World Encounters« in Eurasia along the

\(^{26}\) On the geographic and cultural notion (»meta geography«) of »Asia« and its sub-regions see Osterhammel, *Verwandlung der Welt*, op. cit. (note 5), pp. 137–140.

\(^{27}\) Cf. the contributions by Young-Sun Ha and Jungwoon Choi in this volume.


Silk Road in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages have been a much-researched topic in recent decades. Some authors even argue for setting the beginning of globalisation five thousand years ago. In the present volume the focus for the pre-modern era lies on the medieval period which is a particularly fruitful field for research on representations of transfers and their role for the construction of cultural identities. Realisation has grown in postcolonial studies that Europe often interrelates non-Western cultures to its own medieval past. As Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul remark:

In its positive and negative senses, whether glorified as the cradle of Europe and its nations or as the barbaric past that they left behind, »the medieval« has – at various times and in various circumstances but nonetheless with consistency – supplied a spatiotemporal baseline for many dominant narratives. It is enlisted as support for the concept of »the West«, [...] and as the negative contrast to the desirable notions of progress and modernity. [...] European colonizers established their superiority in temporal terms by mapping colonial lands and peoples as backward in time, and, in many cases, as still living in the Middle Ages. While the colonies were in a developmentally anterior stage, the colonizers had the knowledge of this earlier medieval stage and of the further developments that would lead the colonies to enter modernity. Colonizing nations could thus see themselves as both fully understanding the position of the colonies – better than the colonies themselves – and as the most appropriate tutors in the mission of »civilizing« these lands.

If »the medieval« is a favourite pattern by which »the colony« is conceived, the representations of medieval transfers may be of interest for the analysis of representations between centre and colony too. The historiography of the Middle Ages is also a major battlefield of statements about the relationship between »Islam« and »the West«. This is not an entirely new development, but after the rise


34 Kathleen Davis & Nadia Altschul, »The Idea of the Middle Ages outside Europe«, in: Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World. The Idea of »the Middle Ages« outside Europe, ed. by id. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), pp. 1–24, quotations pp. 1f. On the relationship between Orientalism and Medievalism see also the contributions by Kristin Skottki and Dorothea Weltecke in this volume, with more references.
of Islamic fundamentalism since the 1970s and even more so after the shock of the attacks of 9/11, we today witness a veritable escalation. Not struggles but true «wars» of representations about the medieval past are taking place, embroiling not only medievalists but a much broader public.

Significant in this context is the «Aristotle Affair», a heated and bitter controversy among French intellectuals, echoing not only in scholarly journals, but in newspapers across the world. It was provoked by a book about the seemingly obvious matter of the transfer of Greek philosophy to medieval Europe. *Aristote au Mont Saint-Michel: Les racines grecques de l'Europe chrétienne* («Aristotle at Mont Saint-Michel: The Greek Roots of Christian Europe») was published in the spring of 2008. Its author, medievalist Sylvain Gouguenheim, argues that European (Latin) Christianity was not culturally «indebted» to Islam, as it had received ancient Greek knowledge mostly from Byzantine immigrants and directly from Greek texts, rather than transmission via Arabic translations (or at least these translations were done by Christian Arabs not Muslims). Gouguenheim thus turns against an established and well-documented scholarly consensus about the role of medieval Islamic civilisation as the main recipient, preserver and transmitter of ancient Greek scholarship to medieval Europe. Islam, he states, could not possibly be that transmitter, as it was not interested and not capable of taking up Greek thought. Ancient Greece was «radically alien» to Islamic civilisation, which was not curious about alien cultures, whereas Christianity on the contrary was and thus inherited massively from Greece, preparing the ground for the openness of modern Europe. The first review appeared immediately after the book’s publication at the beginning of April in *Le Monde des Livres*, the literary supplement to France’s most important newspaper: «What If Europe Did Not Owe Her Knowledge to Islam?» In the last line of the review its author answered in the negative: «Europe’s culture […] did not owe much to Islam. In any case, nothing essential». Public debate broke out immediately. In the following weeks several other newspaper reviews were published, all either decidedly affirmative or negative. Already on the 30th of April a public

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36 «la Grèce – comme Rome – représentait un monde radicalement étranger à l’Islam» (ibid., p. 127); «[…] l’Islam médiéval n’a pas développé de réelle curiosité pour les sociétés extérieures.» (p. 167).


38 See critical yet balanced overview by Florian Louis, «L’affaire Aristote: Retour sur un em-
campaign against the book had been launched by *Libération* newspaper. Signed by more than fifty medievalists, its title contradicted the conclusion of the first review in *Le Monde des Livres*: »Yes, the Christian Occident Is Indebted to the Islamic World«.39 Another public letter was initiated by Gouguenheim’s own colleagues from the École Normale Supérieure in Lyon, distancing themselves from him and exhorting the other academic teachers, students and alumni of the prestigious institution to join them.40 The affair was not limited to France. Major international newspapers published reviews of the book by this hitherto unknown medievalist.41

In Gouguenheim’s book the mode and aim of the representation of transfer are quite obvious: It is a blunt denial of transfer in order to disavow a European cultural »debt« to Islam. It has been thoroughly dismissed in reviews written by professional academic medievalists.42 Some have even gone so far as to accuse Gouguenheim of »learned Islamophobia«.43 Yet there are other cases where »the work of representation« is much more difficult to identify.44 Modes of representations of transfer are not always obvious to see, but may be very subtle, and they may even contradict the intentions of those who maintain them. Nonetheless they may quite effectively stabilise dubious assumptions about cultural essentialisms. A case in point, again from the discipline of medieval studies, is the idea, heralded by distinguished scholars working in the field, that the Christian military orders were modelled on an Islamic institution.45 This idea is not a new

one, but itself has a long history. Elaborating on notions originating almost two hundred years ago, Orientalists and medievalists have since developed a fully-fledged model case of cultural transfer from the Islamic »Ribât«, a supposed »Muslim military monastery«, to the Order of the Templars and their likes. The total absence of evidence for this transfer did not hinder the dissemination of this hypothesis; instead, the lack was used as an argument for the transfer, with the help of theories of acculturation provided by anthropology. Yet it is clear that not even the »model« institution of the »Ribât« as a »Muslim military monastery« actually existed, as has now been established. A critical retracing of the scholarly historiography of the supposed »Muslim military monastery« shows that the scientific object of the »Ribât« was from the outset constructed in close connection with the military orders and in the conceptual terms of Western monasticism. From the moment of its birth at the beginning of the nineteenth century it was linked to the Christian military orders and served to explain their existence, as the Enlightenment had made religious chivalry inexplicable in the frame of its own culture. Elements of violence were perceived as alien to Christian culture. Islam, on the contrary, was (and is) viewed as a culture naturally prone to religious violence. An outside stimulus from this culture could explain the uncanny phenomenon of Christian institutions which merged the life of the monk and the warrior. These are the premises on which the Ribât was fashioned as the model of the military orders.

What is troubling is that this representation has been promoted mainly by scholars renowned for their pioneering work on cultural connectedness, e.g. by the Spaniard Miguel Asín Palacios (1871–1944), professor of Arabic philology and Oriental studies, who dedicated almost his entire work to detecting medieval cultural transfers between Islam and Christianity and vice versa, or by

49 Cf. Feuchter, »The Islamic Ribât« op. cit. (note 46).
50 Asín Palacios is best known for his claim that Dante’s masterpiece had been largely inspired by Islamic texts like the Hadith, the story of Muhammad’s ascension to heaven (known in Latin...
the Brazilian-Spanish medievalist Américo Castro (1885–1972), who is famous for his vision of Spain as a culture of fusion of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish elements, marked by the *convivencia* («living together») in medieval al-Andalus.\(^{51}\) Yet by supporting the idea of the cultural transfer from the Ribât to the military orders, these scholars unwittingly reinforce the very cultural boundaries they otherwise try to dismantle.

Denial or invention, blunt or subtle work of representation, openly presentist aims or almost unconscious essentialist background motives: representations of transfers work in manifold ways, as the cases studied in this volume show, and a lot more research will be needed in order to grasp the full extent of the research field. The representations of transfers gathered in this volume have no claim to totality and represent only an initial survey.

Unrepresented Transfer

As mentioned above, the representation of transfer starts already when we decide to regard a process as a cultural transfer. On the other hand, some transfer phenomena are not noticed at all, and this non-representation is also a form of representation, which may speak volumes about the cultural preconditions of the intellectual community involved. This is the case *Bee Yun* makes in his contribution *Does the History of Medieval Political Thought Need a Spatial Turn? The Murals of Longthorpe, the Secretum secretorum and the Intercultural Transfer* as the *Liber scalae Machometi* and the writings of Ibn ‘Arabi, a Sufi scholar from Murcia (born around 1164, died 1240). Cf. Miguel Asín Palacios, *La escatología musulmana en la Divina Comedia* (Madrid: Maestre, 3rd ed. 1961), transl. *Islam and the Divine Comedy* (London: Murray, 1926).

of Political Ideas in the High Middle Ages. He discusses a transfer of ideas from an early medieval Arab text to a late medieval English cycle of paintings, and argues that this transfer could not be represented by scholars because they adhered to a concept of space which excluded Islam. In Longthorpe Tower, an aristocratic manor in Cambridgeshire, fourteenth-century frescoes show visualizations of the state as the king’s organs. Yun is able to demonstrate that many of the visual metaphors are borrowed from the text of the *Secretum Secretorum*, an Arab mirror of princes dating from the tenth century. Translated into Latin and many other European languages from the eleventh century onward and thought to be written by Aristotle, it was one of the most popular medieval texts. Yet towards the end of the Middle Ages the philosopher’s authorship was increasingly questioned and the text fell into oblivion. Modern scholars did not take it into account when they dealt with the history of the organologic state-metaphor in the Middle Ages, nor did art historians when interpreting the fresco cycle at Longthorpe.

In a similar quest to spotlight a non-representation, Kristin Skottki’s study discusses the writings of three major scholars on medieval Christian perceptions of Islam, Richard W. Southern, Norman Daniel, and John V. Tolan (*Medieval Western Perceptions of Islam and the Scholars: What Went Wrong*?). After finding that all three systematically underrate the knowledge medieval Westerners actually had of Islam and depict them as ignorant of Muslim culture, Skottki shows that this representation of medieval ignorance is based on the relationship that modernity has constructed with the »medieval« as its Other. Ironically, this construction of alterity finds a close resemblance in the modern Western construction of the Oriental. Skottki finds that »perceptions and representations of Muslims [by medieval Westerns, JF] which do not fit into a religious framework of interpretation are often overlooked«.

Transfer Represented as Re-Importation

As seen in the case of the Aristotle Affair, a perceived cultural »debt« incurred by a cultural transfer can be disavowed by bluntly denying the transfer. This is a very obvious way of dealing with the problem and thus a relatively easy one to refute. A more sophisticated way of writing off the debt and the underlying alleged hierarchy between »lending« and »borrowing« culture is to represent the transfer as re-importation. There are two fine examples for this pattern in the present volume, one from East Asia, the other from the Arab world. As Heiner Roetz shows in his overview about representations of transfer in China past and present, *Transfer in Dispute. The Case of China*, Confucian traditions could be
interpreted in very different ways two thousand years ago when it came to advocating or rejecting the idea of importation of Buddhism from India. Both sides not only claimed that their favoured teaching – traditional Chinese beliefs or Buddhism – was older than the other, but also invented genealogies of transfer: The proponents claimed that ancient Chinese philosophers like Laozi had already been apt pupils of the Buddha. Some went even so far as to identify the Buddha with Laozi, who had allegedly emigrated to India and civilised the Indians. So Buddhism was just a returned teaching of Chinese origins. The Daoist opponents of Buddhism however turned this representation around and claimed that Buddhism was only a despicable Indian corruption of originally Chinese ideas. The imputation that the newly imported idea was based on an earlier export from China reappeared in China nearly two millennia later in response to the transmission of Western knowledge, with the theory of the »Chinese origin of Western learning« (xixue zhongyuan) which extends to the claim of having influenced Western Enlightenment. Claims like this are very important as the People’s Republic is more and more legitimising its system in cultural or civilisational terms (as opposed to the traditional universality of historical materialism) in order to stave off Western demands for the introduction of democracy and human rights. Roetz goes on to ask whether this is just »a transparent attempt to present what is in fact a mere borrowing from abroad as a continuation of one’s own cultural ‹heritage›«. Instead of giving a simple affirmative answer, Roetz points to the often underestimated circumstance that in order for ideas to be successfully transferred, they have to find »resonance« in the borrowing culture: »Transfer depends on and cannot be set against the inner developmental potential of societies, which are already laid out for it.«

The second case is Friedhelm Hoffmann’s in-depth study of the importation of Western, notably French, law to Egypt and its subsequent representation. Legal Authenticity, Cultural Insulation and Undemocratic Rule. ‘Abd-al-Razzāq Ahmad al-Sanḥūrī’s (1895–1971) Sharia Project and Its Misrepresentation in Egypt is focussed on the French-trained jurist ‘Abd-al-Razzāq Ahmad al-Sanḥūrī, the main actor of legal transfer not only to Egypt, but to many Arab states. Hoffmann shows that al-Sanḥūrī is both praised for his achievements, notably the fusion of Islamic Sharia and French Civil Law, and criticised for not having integrated Sharia thoroughly enough. He is regularly cited to justify Shariatisation and at the same time reproached for not having completed it himself. Yet he himself wanted only to keep as much Sharia law as was compatible with Western law – not the other way around. In the event, the transfer

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al-Sanhūrī stands for is represented both as positive and as a »cultural invasion«. Interestingly, this attitude has been shared in principle both by the authoritarian regimes in power since the Free Officer’s Revolt (1952) and by the religious fundamentalist opposition, as it served the purposes of both parties well. One of the twists in this highly ambivalent representation of legal transfer is that French law is sometimes depicted by modern Arab jurists as heavily influenced by the Mālikī school of Sharia law, thus making of the importation of French Law a re-importation or even a »cultural theft«.

In a way Sylvain Gouguenheim’s aforementioned point that Muslims had learned in the first place from the Eastern Christians how little (in his opinion) they then transmitted to the Western Christians, is also a variation of this mode of representation, because it supposes that the same entity – Christians – is at both ends of the double transfer.

Alleged Transfer

A wide field of representations concerns transfers that are suggested despite there being little or no evidence for them. The first contribution here is by Wolfram Drews. Analysing interpretations of the controversy about images in eighth- and ninth-century Byzantium, *Jewish or Islamic Influence? The Iconoclastic Controversy in Dispute* shows how Byzantine hostility to images has been explained by both medieval and modern scholars as Islamic and/or Jewish influence. However, these external explanations seem extremely unlikely. Rather there were common roots for hostility to images in all of the three religions, and it was only during a process of negotiation of identities in the Early Middle Ages that the different positions on images and the respective »transfer theories« emerged, seeking mutual demarcation. Drews points to the fact that the first accusations of Muslim influence on Byzantine iconoclasm were raised by Christians living under Muslim rule – it was they who felt the most need to draw clear lines between the religions. This blaming of the Muslims (or the Jews) could serve to exonerate Orthodox traditions of hostility to images seen as deviant in retrospective.

Tim Geelhaar presents another alleged transfer in his *Did the Medieval West Receive a »Complete Model« of Education from Classical Islam? Reconsidering George Makdisi and His Thesis*. The U.S. Orientalist George Makdisi had claimed that the medieval Islamic system of higher learning was borrowed by Christian Europe, and that the principle of the college as a charitable foundation, the scholastic method, philology and historical criticism of texts had all been developed first in the East and then transferred to the West. Although all of these claims
seem highly disputable or have been refuted (it is now clear that there were pious foundations long before the colleges in the West). Geelhaar argues that Makdisi’s work still is a valuable contribution to transcultural studies, not at least because of his comprehensive perspective. For Makdisi himself knew very well that his hypothesis was situated in a culturally highly sensitive field and proceeded with due caution and far from »a simplistic antagonism of superiority and inferiority«.

A special field of alleged transfers is found in the relationship between the colony and the motherland. A major criticism from postcolonial studies is directed against the view »that colonial undertakings were marginal and perhaps even eccentric to the central activities of the great metropolitan cultures«, or at best »a function of the imperial intervention«. Recent studies have turned this perspective around and described the colonies as »laboratories of modernity« where »the hallmarks of European cultural production« were often found first. Andreas Weiß deals with two special cases of alleged transfer from the colony to the motherland (Colonialism and Violence. Alleged Transfers and Political Instrumentalisation): First, in 1786, the British politician Edmund Burke moved an impeachment against Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of India, accusing him of importing violent methods of rule to the motherland. He thus created the topos of reproach of »Asian despotism«. Second, in the late twentieth century German historians connected the Holocaust with the violence committed during the Herero War (1904–1907) in German South West Africa. The latter hypothesis is currently very controversially discussed in Germany. Weiß argues that both connections »from periphery to core«, albeit very different, followed the same pattern and were made up for political ends: Burke wanted to eliminate his political enemy Hastings; the German historians shared, according to Weiß, a bundle of presentist motives, ranging from political to careerist.

Another example of alleging transfer between »core« and »periphery«, this time the other way around, is critically retraced in the contribution by Joseph-Simon Görlach, Western Representations of Fascist Influences on Islamic Thought. It is centred around the concept of »Islamofascism«, the label currently used to express the idea that radical Islam is similar and/or even genealogically linked to fascism. Görlach retraces the history of this juxtaposition and shows that it started long before the events of 9/11. He specifically examines and refutes the alleged transfer of totalitarian ideas from French scientist and Nobel Prize winner Alexis Carrel to the leading theoretician of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb.

The possibility of a much more nuanced discussion of the question of the

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transfer of fascism than implied by the polemical catchword »Islamofascism« is demonstrated by Benjamin Zachariah in his contribution on India. In Transfers, Formations, Transformations? Some Programmatic Notes on Fascism in India, c. 1922–1938, he first explores the vagueness and deeply negative connotation of the concept of fascism, showing how both elements make analysis difficult or even undesirable. He then goes on to ask whether there was a real fascist influence on India. In the end, he discards the »original« and »copy« problem in which the original of Fascism »is in Europe and the outside world copies it, either properly and correctly, in which case it is fascist (in our case) or imperfectly (in which case it is not fascist, although it might have similarities)«. Opting to say goodbye to such simple ideas of copying Zachariah proposes instead a »model of ideas gravitating towards each other«.

Representing Transfer through a Person

While Kristin Skottki shows how modern scholars underestimated intercultural competences of medieval scholars, Dorothea Weltecke is concerned with a personality from the Middle Ages who has often been described as an agent and sponsor of transfer and has become a symbolic figure for medieval cultural borrowing and hybridity (Emperor Frederick II, »Sultan of Lucera«, »Friend of the Muslims«, Promoter of Cultural Transfer: Controversies and Suggestions). Frederick II (1194–1250), ruler of the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Sicily (where he spent most of his life), has been depicted by many scholars as an Islamophile, a hybrid, semi-Oriental personality and a promoter of scientific transfer from Eastern (Arab) to Western (Christian) culture. Others have recently vigorously challenged that, arguing that Frederick was neither that erudite nor particularly culturally interested. Weltecke sides neither with the former nor the latter view. Rather, taking a similar line to Skottki, she shows how both views suppose a strict mental division between the cultures that did not exist for contemporaries: »scientific knowledge crossed religious boundaries between Jews, Christians and Muslims«; it was not »conceived in terms of Orientalness«. For additional proof, Weltecke cites Oriental Christian sources that show that they did not share the image of Frederick as the friend of the Muslims.
Representing Transfer through a Concept

Young-Sun Ha’s contribution *The Global Diffusion of the Western Concept of Civilisation to Nineteenth-Century Korea* follows the »internal wars of discourse« that accompanied the external challenge by Western powers at the end of the nineteenth century. Ha retraces the conceptual history of »civilisation« in East Asia using the method of German historian Reinhart Koselleck. The Korean reaction to the West was mediated by both the Chinese and Japanese models for dealing with the challenge. Korea was traditionally culturally very close to China, but came more and more under the influence of Japan, which was very successful in adapting to the Western challenge. Thus, after having initially followed the Chinese example by rejecting all things Western as »heretical«, some Korean intellectuals from the 1880s onward borrowed a differentiated concept of gradual »enlightened« from Japan, in which »civilised« states were regarded as the highest level. However, it was argued in Korea that enlightenment should not be imported in a blind and sterile way, i.e. without regard for the country’s own values. Around 1900 Chinese intellectuals adopted the same position from Japan, and even China- and Confucianism-oriented Koreans were able to admit openness to »civilisation«. These changes in Korean discourse came too late to have any real effect under the circumstances of East Asian power relations. Korea was unable to save its independence and build a new »civilisation«, as it was occupied by Japan in 1910.

It is the immediately following epoch of Japanese occupation that Jungwoon Choi discusses in a contribution that also demonstrates how resistance to a transfer can be surmounted. *The Importation of Love from Modern Europe to Korea* centres on the most important Korean writer of the first half of the twentieth century: Yi Kwangsu, first a fierce nationalist, but later a collaborator with the Japanese, almost single-handedly imported the European love story to Korea in order to model a new type of tough nationalist fighter. This use as a »discursive vehicle« made it possible for the European idea of love to overcome the resistance of traditional Korean views, which regarded the idea as immoral.

Representation of Cultural Transfer through an Image

The figural motive on the cover of our volume is an important representation of the intellectual entanglement of Europe and the Arab world. It is a

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55 I am indebted to Friedhelm Hoffmann for his essential contribution to these paragraphs.
detail from *The Triumph of Saint Thomas Aquinas* by Florentine Renaissance painter Gozzoli (c. 1420/22–1497 under his real name Benozzo di Lese di Sandro), which features the medieval Andalusí-Moroccan philosopher Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126–1198). A larger detail is shown on page 35. Done probably between 1470 and 1475, the painting shows the triumphant Doctor of the Church Saint Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274), undoubtedly the greatest philosopher of the Latin Middle Ages with Aristotle and Plato at his side. Below his feet, the defeated Averroes is huddled on the ground – our cover motif. He is holding a half closed book, while Aquinas has several open ones on his lap and a big one open to the viewer, in front of his chest.

Averroes’ greatest achievements were his commentaries on Aristotle and Plato. They were widely read in the Latin Middle Ages; as Aristotle was among Scholastics simply referred to as »the Philosopher«, so Averroes was as »the Commentator«. His influence on all medieval understanding of Aristotle’s work was huge and much admired. However, after 1250, some aspects of Averroes’ thinking – or rather what was made of it by his Western followers – were attacked by several Latin scholars, Thomas Aquinas foremost among them. Aquinas was seen not so much as the receiver of Averroes’ commentary, but as the one who surpassed and refuted him. This is represented in the image by Gozzoli, and also by other medieval artists in the Latin West before and after him.

The importance of Averroes’ influence on Aquinas became the topic of a ma-

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56 The painting, originally installed in Pisa cathedral (Italy), has been kept in the Louvre in Paris since 1813. It is 2.30 m high and 1.02 m wide. Our large detail on page 35 shows only the middle third of the painting. The upper third features Jesus, Saint Paul, Moses and the four Evangelists, protecting Saint Thomas from above. The lower third represents a Church assembly presided over by a pope, probably Sixtus IV (1471–1484). The relation of the assembly motif to Aquinas is not clear.

57 The text on the left of the big book held by Aquinas is from the Bible, Proverbs 8, 7: »Veritatem meditatitur guttur meum et labia mea detestabuntur impium« (»My mouth will meditate on truth, and my lips will detest the impious man«). This is, together with the text on the right, the beginning of one of Aquinas’ great works, the *Summa contra gentiles* (Against the Gentiles): »Multitudinis usus, quem in rebus nominandis sequendum philosophus censet, communiter [obtinuit ut sapientes dicantur qui res directe ordinant et eas bene gubernat]«. (»The usage of the multitude, which according to the Philosopher is to be followed in giving names to things, has commonly held [that they are to be called wise who order things rightly and govern them well]«). The written commentaries to the left and the right of Averroes read: »Vere hic est lumen ecclesie« (»He is really the light of the Church«) and »Hic adinvenit omnem viam discipline« (»Here he found every way of knowledge«).

58 On the so-called Latin Averroism see the contribution of Dorothea Weltecke in this volume with detailed references. Cf. also John Marenbon, »Latin Averroism«, in: *Islamic Crosspollinations*, op. cit. (note 22), pp. 135–147.

59 Earlier medieval versions of the motif are to be found in the polyptych by Francesco Traini for the Church of Santa Caterina, Pisa, created about 1349, in the frescoes for the Spanish Chapel of Santa Maria Novella, Florence (1365–68) by Andrea di Bonaiuto, and in two paintings by Giovanni di Paolo (c. 1430 and c. 1445, Musée Calvet, Avignon and Art Museum, Saint...
JOR debate at the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century between the reformist theologian and Mufti of Egypt Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905) and the secular Christian Syro-Lebanese Faraḥ Anṭūn (1874–1922), who was influenced by the French linguist and historian Ernest Renan (1823–1892). Since then the debate about Averroes and the impact of his work on Western and Arab-Muslim thought has never subsided. It is no coincidence that Faraḥ Anṭūn’s treatise on »Averroes’ Philosophy« was reprinted recently in Morocco, where there is growing interest in the medieval rationalist philosopher and his possible contribution to contemporary reformist trends in Islam. On its cover we find the detail of the huddled Averroes. Images of the »Triumph of Saint Thomas Aquinas« have been reproduced in toto or in parts in other Arabic publications about the philosophical contacts between Europe and the Arab world.


61 Indeed, the transfer of Averroes’ and Saint Thomas Aquinas’ commentaries on Aristotle even went on between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. In the early-eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire Asʿad al-Yānawī (d. 1731), a native of Ioannina in present-day Greece and member of the Naqshbandī Sufi order, became interested in translating the work of the Stagirite from its original Greek into Arabic. Since al-Yānawī was fluent in Latin and Averroes’ commentaries were not available to him in the original Arabic, he claims to have used a Latin translation of Averroes’ works and other Latin commentators on the Aristotelian corpus, among them Thomas Aquinas, cf. Soheil M. Afnan, Philosophical Terminology in Arabic and Persian (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964), pp. 4f.


Large detail from Gozzoli, *The Triumph of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, c. 1470–1475 (Musée du Louvre)
Some Conclusions

As this volume shows, the modes of representing transfers are numerous and diverse, and much further work is needed. In his foreword, Hartmut Kaelble has already laid out many important points to be taken into account by future research on representations of transfers. Nonetheless some preliminary conclusions may already be drawn at this stage:

Representations of transfers are often heavily loaded with ideas about cultural hierarchies. This is quite obvious in the concept of the cultural »debt« caused by transfer of a positively valued idea from another culture, but also when foreign influence is blamed for the transfer of a negatively valued idea or practice. Some representations of past transfers were only created to serve presentist purposes of stabilising or fighting hierarchies between cultures; many others have been instrumentalised in this sense. And while it has often been stated that transfer analysis has an inherent bias towards finding common ground between cultures, as opposed to comparative history which stresses differences, some of the cases discussed in this volume however put us in severe doubt as to whether representations of transfer are always so appropriate for promoting unity and peace among cultures. For example when it comes to allegations that forms of violence or totalitarian ideology or hostility to images have been transferred from one culture to another, it is evident that the picture is more sombre. We must remember that while statements on transfer can blur boundaries, they can equally serve to separate and divide.65

Representations of transfers are created with open agendas and more hidden ones, even unconscious ones. The way a text works does not necessarily correspond to the values of the scholar who wrote it.66 Some representations of transfers even contradict the true intentions of those who create and support them. Also, many representations of transfers have a very long history. Scholars


should give a critical look at this history before concerning themselves with the study of the transfer itself.

How past transfers are represented depends also on where the boundaries between the cultures are drawn. Yet past boundaries do not necessarily follow the logic of present concepts. They may lie elsewhere, or not be there at all.

While sometimes cultural »debts« incurred by transfers are denied because they imply a hierarchy between cultures, in other instances a supposed openness to transfer may itself be employed to affirm the superiority of a culture, and a supposed adversity to transfer to affirm the inferiority of another culture. This too should be analysed as a representation of transfer.67

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67 Cf. McNeill, *The Rise of the West*, op. cit. (note 10), p. 578: McNeill emphasises Europeans’ »lively curiosity, insatiable greed, and a reckless spirit of adventure that contrasted sharply with the smug conservatism of Chinese, Moslem, and Hindu cultural leaders« as a decisive factor that provided them »a clear margin of superiority over the other great civilizations of the world« for the first time between 1500 and 1650. Cf. Helmrath, »Christliches Europa?«, op. cit. (note 5), esp. pp. 60–63, on the concept of Europe as the continent of »secondarité« (Rémi Brague), as a transformative culture whose true identity lies in its ability to creatively integrate outside influences. The self-fashioning as an open culture is not the privilege of Europe alone: At the 61st annual Frankfurt Book Fair (2009), where China was the official guest of honour, Wu Shulin, Deputy Director of the State Press and Publication Administration of the People’s Republic of China, stated: »We want to show that we are open to the culture of the world.« (Mark Siemons, »Wir handeln nicht nach westlichen Regeln«, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 19.10.2009).