



Universität Hamburg

DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG



CENTRE FOR THE
STUDY OF
MANUSCRIPT
CULTURES

SCHRIFTBILDlichkeit: SCRIPTS AND THEIR FRAMING

Workshop

Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures

Warbugstraße 26, Hamburg

7–8 December 2018

PROGRAMME

Friday, 7 December 2018

- 12.30 p.m. Registration & Welcome coffee
- 1.00 p.m. Introduction
HANNA WIMMER & ANDREAS JANKE (Hamburg)

SUSAN RANKIN (Cambridge)
Mapping Sound on the Page: Early Medieval Models
- 2.15 p.m. Coffee Break
- 2.30 p.m. SILVIA FERRARA (Bologna)
Jot that Down: Iconicity and the Birth of Writing

JOACHIM FRIEDRICH QUACK (Heidelberg)
From Pop-up to Mark-up? Some Phenomena of Schriftbildlichkeit in Ancient Egyptian Manuscripts
- 4.00 p.m. Coffee Break
- 4.15 p.m. ANNA BOROFFKA (Hamburg)
Images as Text: The Reception of Egyptian Hieroglyphs in 16th-Century Mexico

GORDON WHITTAKER (Göttingen)
Aztec Writing: A Dynamic Interweft of Three Graphic Recording Systems
- 5.45 p.m. Coffee Break
- 6.15 p.m. BRUNO REUDENBACH (Hamburg)
*Invisible Script, Illegible Letters.
Decorated Pages in Early Medieval Liturgical Books*
- 8.00 p.m. Dinner

Saturday, 8 December 2018

- 9.00 p.m. PHILIPPA SISIS (Berlin)
Between Artefact and Product – Humanistic SchriftBild in Copies by Poggio Bracciolini
- MARGARET SHORTLE (Berlin)
‘My Love for Pretty Faces and Heart Bewitching Hair’: Persian Calligraphy and Its Poetic Frame
- 10.30 p.m. Coffee Break
- 10.45 p.m. BIDUR BHATTARAI (Hamburg)
Kūṭākṣara: Visual Organisation of (Esoteric) Knowledge in (Mantra) Manuscripts
- BERENICE MÖLLER (Hamburg)
Manuscripts for “Women and Children”? Questioning Scholarly Preconceptions about 17th-Century Japanese Illustrated Manuscripts
- 12.15 p.m. Lunch Break
- 12.45 p.m. WOLFGANG BEHR (Zurich)
How to Kill a Blocking Bird – On Two Types of Zoomorphic Writing in Early China
- MICHAEL KOHS (Hamburg)
Between Script and Image - Hebrew Characters in Jewish Manuscripts of Magic
- 14.15 p.m. Final discussion



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Abstracts (DRAFT)

BIDUR BHATTARAI (Hamburg)

Kūṭākṣara: Visual Organisation of (Esoteric) Knowledge in (Mantra) Manuscripts

The Sanskrit term *kūṭākṣara*, sometimes understood as ‘monogram’, literally means, among others, ‘heap syllable(s)’. Such a label indicates special sets of visual configurations, in which syllables and syllable-like characters used in mantras or mantra-like elements are written underneath one another in manuscripts (as well as in other media), making them all look closely intertwined. Focusing on some Nepalese and North Indian manuscripts, in this talk, I will present and discuss some aspects of the visual organisation of this complex calligraphic form and show what we can learn from it with regard to scribal practice, the visual arrangement of mantras and texts in general, and their use.

WOLFGANG BEHR (Zurich)

How to Kill a Blocking Bird – On Two Types of Zoomorphic Writing in Early China

While the systemic importance, cognitive and conceptual repercussions of notational iconicity (“Schriftbildlichkeit”) in ancient logographic writing systems is typically overrated (Türcke 2005, Stetter 1997, Krämer et al. 2012), especially if harnessed as an anti-Eurocentric argumentation prop in the footsteps of Derrida (1967), Lacan (1968/69, 1980) and Barthes (1973) or if mirrored in cryptonationalist discourses by everyday users of such writing systems in East Asia, it is remarkable how much investment several ancient societies have allocated to the production of complex non-alphabetic scripts which remain largely invisible for the reader. This can take various forms, such as placement of inscriptions in locations outside the physically possible viewing space, blending of language-representing scripts with non-linguistic iconographic contexts, or even manipulation of logograms for aesthetic, ludic or cryptographic purposes with the explicit aim of making them unreadable. Moreover, enhanced figurative density and higher visual resolution in non-alphabetic writing systems do paradoxically not always support readability or lexical retrieval (Stauder, *forthc.*, Behr 2018), nor does all iconicity arise from script-external objects.

My talk will present two examples from first millennium BCE China, where script is intimately connected to elaborate zoomorphic iconography. In the so-called “bird and worm-script” (niaochong shu) associated with the ancient peripheral fiefdoms of Wu and Yue, animal shapes are inserted in various positions into logographic graphs, resulting in a systematic impediment or complete thwarting of the reading process. This will be contrasted with examples of over-expressive, “auto-performative” inscriptions on animal-shaped bronze figures or animal products (bones, deer antlers etc.), which undermine Krämer’s “flattening” (dimensional reduction) in writing by cleverly invoking a particular type of three-dimensional-materiality.

ANNA BOROFFKA (Hamburg)

Images as Text: The Reception of Egyptian Hieroglyphs in 16th-Century Mexico

The paper analyses the visual organization of early colonial Mexican manuscripts (1521–ca. 1600), which transcribe and translate indigenous drawings into alphabetic texts. The examination is set against the background of a Humanistic 16th-century debate on how to interpret and classify the pictorial recording system that was used by the native inhabitants of New Spain before the introduction of alphabetic writing by the Spaniards. The 16th-century scholarly dispute about the meaning and functions of indigenous drawings and whether they must be classified as images or script was stimulated by a contemporary reception of Egyptian hieroglyphs, which was based upon a group of late antique and Renaissance texts on the subject. The paper not only discusses to what degree the circulation of popular manuals like Horapollon’s Hieroglyphica might have influenced the reception and classification of native drawings in New Spain, but also to what extent this influence might have been reflected on a material level and becomes visible in the layout of early colonial Mexican manuscripts.

SILVIA FERRARA (Bologna)

Jot that Down: Iconicity and the Birth of Writing

All first scripts are strongly implicated with images that often have recognizable references in objects present in the natural world (we call these ‘iconic’). When it comes to the invention of writing from a global perspective, studying sign-shape selection and understanding its underlying principles is crucial: for instance: why is *pars pro toto* a common feature in Egyptian as well as Mesopotamian (and appears in virtually every first writing)? Why does the Maya script favour signs in the shape of faces? Grasping the iconographic principles at work and studying them systematically to build a theoretical framework is still a grave desideratum in the field, that has the potential to offer insight into human cognition, to ultimately answer: what is the connection between marks, emblems, symbols, icons and true writing?

The way in which different writing systems have developed indicates some of the constraints governing visual processing in reading, and we can now claim that the configurations of letter shapes in scripts have evolved to correspond to the configurations of the contours of objects present in the natural world, so writing systems over human history match nature as we perceive it. If letters have evolved to be easier on the eye to naturally aid the reading process, how about when they were first conceived? What parameters were used synchronically, when ‘things in nature’ were first picked to shape inventions of writing?

The goal of this contribution is to answer these questions by adopting a novel method aimed at reconstructing the phases *before* the earliest available inceptions of writing, in the pre-existing iconographic substratum in several case-studies around the world (proto-cuneiform, Egyptian, Mesoamerican, Chinese, Eastern Island), to explain how the invention of writing came to be. The earliest available scripts *may not* be the first attestations, because organic material is only rarely preserved,

but trajectories towards writing need to be reconstructed, by paying attention to patterns in the way emblems, icons, symbols (devoid of phonographic nature) were inserted into coherent, recognizable narratives and reiterations that may have served as triggers for sound deployment and paved the way to phoneticisation.

MICHAEL KOHS (Hamburg)

Between Script and Image – Hebrew Characters in Jewish Manuscripts of Magic

The Hebrew script is considered sacred per se in Judaism. Myth tells about the premundane existence of the Hebrew letters and how they were God's instruments in creating the world. Not least because of this, the use of the Hebrew script in Jewish manuscripts of magic often goes beyond mere representation of language. Rather, various means of visual enhancement and arrangement may give manuscripts of magic sometimes a quite peculiar or idiosyncratic appearance. This includes, for example, the highlighting of words or the figurative arrangement of text and holds for amulets and multiple-text manuscripts with instructions for the practice of magic alike. In my paper I will discuss some of these phenomena and their relations to the concept of *Schriftbildlichkeit*. I will also discuss to what extent magical efficacy of manuscripts can be related to this concept.

BERENICE MÖLLER (Hamburg)

Manuscripts for "Women and Children"? Questioning Scholarly Preconceptions about 17th-Century Japanese Illustrated Manuscripts

Japanese manuscripts offer a kaleidoscope of possibilities for exploring the means and possibilities of the visual aspects of script. After introducing some of the many pictorial forms Japanese script can assume, I will focus on the visual aspects of a seemingly unexceptional script. Already at first sight the illustrated *nō* theatre play manuscript *Sumidagawa* (New York Public Library, MS 54) differs from other manuscripts and prints of this play. This concerns the pictures, as well as the missing notation and good legibility. Its colophon tells us that it was produced by a father for his daughter as a keepsake in 1614. While the detailed circumstances and the age of the daughter could not be brought to light yet, I will argue that it is possible to narrow down the age of the daughter to "child" by considering specific visual aspects of the script.

The aim of focusing on *Sumidagawa* is twofold: while shedding some more light on the manuscript itself, I also want to question the scholarly preconception that illustrated manuscripts of the 16th and 17th centuries in general were written "for women and children". This can be achieved by using the frame of *Sumidagawa* as an overlay for analysing other manuscripts, whose producers and recipients are largely unknown. While our conception of these under-researched manuscripts may still be obscured by traditional prejudices, taking into account visual aspects of script can help to advance our understanding of the recipients of illustrated manuscripts.

JOACHIM FRIEDRICH QUACK (Heidelberg)

From Pop-up to Mark-up? Some Phenomena of Schriftbildlichkeit in Ancient Egyptian Manuscripts

This lecture will present some quite divergent cases of *Schriftbildlichkeit*. On the one hand, there are extreme cases with a smooth transition between images and writing. On the other hand, manuscripts especially on papyri and ostraca can occasionally show additional signs which are added to convey information which otherwise gets flattened out in writing. Finally, the question of 'framing' will be taken up in an exploration of framing lines used in Egyptian manuscripts of different nature.

SUSAN RANKIN (Cambridge)

Mapping Sound on the Page : Early Medieval Models

Space on a flat surface onto which musical signs are written is not 'open', 'virgin' territory, but space which is being mapped and therefore understood in specific ways. Moreover, a musical reader needs to understand both the strategies for writing signs in that space, and the tonal system which underlies what is written on the page. In order to grasp ways in which early medieval musical notations function, the musical historian must therefore confront space, that is, not just signs written into space on a surface, but the space occupied by the signs.

In this paper I use examples from ninth-century notations of chant and from the *Musica and Scolica enchiriadis* treatises – thus from practical as well as theoretical sources – to explore early medieval ways of using the vertical dimension of space on a flat surface. This starting point allows an explanation of different models for writing out signs, something which modern scholars have found difficult to understand. Where the neumatic notations depend on models for writing developed in the first half of the ninth century and dependent on qualitative perceptions of musical sound, theoretical examples are shown to be influenced by the new turn towards quantitative knowledge.

BRUNO REUDENBACH (Hamburg)

Invisible Script, Illegible Letters. Decorated Pages in Early Medieval Liturgical Books

It is well known that books play an important role in Christian liturgy. This is especially true for Gospel Books in the liturgy of the mass. Containing the four gospels as the word of God they represent, like the Eucharist, Christ himself. This status becomes evident not only in liturgical actions. Often, this high rank of the book as Sacred Scripture is also expressed by precious material like gemstones or ivory on the cover and by an elaborate artistic appearance of the pages and the script. Widespread in early medieval liturgical books are highly decorated pages with initials or Incipits, pages that are so filled with ornament that the initial letter or the few words of the beginning of the text are difficult or impossible to read. Sometimes the gospels start with pages that show only fields of colour or ornament without any text. If we assume that reading and proclaiming the Word of God in the Mass is one of the most important liturgical functions of a gospel book, then the prominent place of highly decorated but illegible pages is astonishing. Art historians mostly refer to them as "decorated" or "ornamental pages", but beyond "decoration" these pages, which conceal script in colours and ornament, can also be understood as reflections on the status of writing and, in particular, of script, which is Holy Scripture.

MARGARET SHORTLE (Berlin)

'My Love for Pretty Faces and Heart Bewitching Hair': Persian Calligraphy and its Poetic Frame

Memorized, spoken, sung, uttered, and calligraphed in richly inked scripts, Persian *ghazal* poetry is a living tradition that impacts aural and visual culture alike. Although seemingly fixed, its form is especially flexible and encourages the creation of new poems and inspires calligraphy practice. Likewise and despite popular notions that Islamic calligraphy, and by extension Persian calligraphy, adheres to strict mathematical standards, Persian calligraphy practice is far from fixed in form and draws on poetry's aural juxtapositions, especially rhyme, to visually approach the temporal and dynamic elements of poetry. This phenomenon is eloquently expressed in Baba Shah Isfahani's late sixteenth-century treatise on calligraphy, *Adab al-Mashq (Manners and Practices)*. Isfahani employs a poetic verse by the poet Hafiz (d. ca. 1390) to illustrate the visual principles of good calligraphy. Interestingly, it is also Hafiz's poems that provide the textual content of numerous calligraphy samples in many sixteenth-century albums. This paper will examine *ghazal* poetry, especially the verses of Hafiz, as penned in

Persian albums and consider a sensory relationship between the aural and visual verses. This paper argues that Persian calligraphy in especially bound collections of poetry and calligraphy (*divans*, anthologies and albums) relies on the poetic performance tradition and visually captures notions of performance and creativity in calligraphic form.

PHILIPPA SISSIS (Berlin)

Between Artefact and Product - Humanistic SchriftBild in Copies by Poggio Bracciolini

SchriftBild – the fact that the graphic substance of writing oscillates between text and image is a potential which writing carries in itself from the very beginning. Every graphic trace on the manuscript page relates to the conventions of time in a way that is determined by the scribe. This becomes particularly tangible when the conventions are deliberately and systematically broken and replaced by new ones on the basis of a concrete concept. The humanistic minuscule, a script developed on the basis of the historical model of the Carolingian minuscule, was created around 1400 in Florence by a small circle of early humanists - in particular Coluccio Salutati, Niccolò Niccoli and Poggio Bracciolini, who executed the script. Together, they created philologically revised copies of the texts of classical authors in what they called *littera antiqua*, the old new script.

This paper will show how, in the manuscripts copied by Poggio Bracciolini, the conscious incorporation of elements of historical manuscripts and their transformation into a specifically humanistic product makes use of the graphical potential of script and *mise-en-page* in order to translate a humanistic discourse into SchriftBild.

GORDON WHITTAKER, Göttingen

Aztec Writing: A Dynamic Interweft of Three Graphic Recording Systems

The Aztec hieroglyphic system is perhaps the least understood of all writing systems. This does not mean that it is undeciphered, but rather that it has been inadequately (and often incorrectly) read and that it has never been properly analysed as a system. In particular, its intimate relationship to two other recording systems, iconography and notation, sets it apart from writing in other parts of the world. This dynamic relationship will be the subject of the presentation.

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Script, or more generally notational systems, are more than a means of storing, of fixing a series of ephemeral utterings or gestures. Temporal, three-dimensional, multi-sensorial acts are translated into systems of lines and strokes, dots and indentations. This “flattening”, as Sibylle Krämer called this process, results in a two-dimensional, visual, usually graphical configuration that allows repetition and re-enactment, but which also opens up a multitude of different approaches and types of scholarly analysis. Equally, the visual nature of notational systems offers opportunities to further explore the potential of script, both at the level of individual letters and other notational elements themselves, and at the level of layout of openings/surfaces (single or double pages, the unfurled stretch of a scroll, a clay tablet etc.).

While more than just words can be encoded in notational systems (for instance, melodies, rhythms or gestures), many aspects of vocal and gestural expression are not encoded by conventional writing systems (whether because the notational systems in question do not permit this or because a choice was made not to include such aspects). Written transmission is thus very closely intertwined with the practicalities of transmission, both oral and recorded, and, to the great chagrin of later scholars, a loss of orality may leave the written record highly incomplete. Awareness of the limits of written evidence was as vital for the original users as for later scholars.

Procedures for ‘flattening’ into notational systems, and the degree to which the hermeneutic, iconic, semantic, heuristic, and retentive potentials of such flattening are realised, as well as the way in which they interact with the practicalities of transmission, vary significantly between different manuscript cultures. Underlying them are complex systems of cultural framing and rules which may become apparent only when they are (accidentally or intentionally) broken.

In order to understand, analyse and compare phenomena of *Schriftbildlichkeit* across different sign systems (e.g. text scripts and musical notation(s)) across different writing cultures, it is vital to understand the cultural frames, rules and practices which shape and control them.

Furthermore, by focusing on the visual quality of hand-written notation in manuscripts, the concept of ‘flattening’ needs to be considered in relation to an ever-present physical aspect: notational systems are written, drawn, painted, scratched or engraved upon the surfaces of objects usually designed to provide a series of openings with a very specific format. While a single surface may be perceived as two-dimensional, the manuscript within which that surface has its place was not.