

# Zukunftsp philologie Summer Academy

## Call for applications

4–14 September 2015, Cape Town

In the framework of the research program **ZUKUNFTSPHILOLOGIE: Revisiting the Canons of Textual Scholarship**, the Forum Transregionale Studien and the Max Weber Stiftung – German Humanities Institutes Abroad in cooperation with the University of Cape Town and the French Institute South Africa invite applications for an international Summer Academy to take place at the University of Cape Town, September 4–14, 2015, entitled **World Scripts: Concepts and Practices of Writing from a Comparative Perspective**.

Forum  
Transregionale  
Studien

Max Weber  
Stiftung  
Deutsche  
Geisteswissenschaftliche  
Institute im Ausland

  
Institut Français  
d'Afrique du Sud  
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Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique

 *Tombouctou*  
MANUSCRIPTS PROJECT  
مشروع مخطوطات تومبكتو

  
University of Cape Town

## World Scripts: Concepts and Practices of Writing from a Comparative Perspective

The Summer Academy is conceptualized and steered by members of the ZUKUNFTSPHILOLOGIE collegium. It builds on two previous ZUKUNFTSPHILOLOGIE Winter Schools: **Textual Practices Beyond Europe, 1500-1900** (Cairo, 2010), and **Philologies Across the Asias: The Translation, Transmission and Transformation of Knowledge in the Early Modern World** (Delhi, 2012).

This Summer Academy will explore, from a comparative and global perspective, the vocabularies and typologies of writing in various philological traditions and the role of script as a technology in the production, diffusion, archiving and exchange of knowledge. Hosted at the University of Cape Town, the Summer Academy will focus on the experience of writing and the technologies of script on the African continent, and will especially explore comparative cases and entangled histories that connect Africa to the Arabophone world, the Mediterranean region and through the Indian Ocean to South and Southeast Asia.

In recent decades, the notion of script has been at the centre of philosophical analysis (e.g., Derrida's *De la grammatologie*), while continuing to underpin such "classical" textual disciplines specialising in written traditions such as textual criticism, palaeography, epigraphy and codicology. Indeed, the multiplicity of meanings attached to the term 'script', both in theory and in practice, raises numerous questions about the concrete function, the material conditions and the political cultures in which this technology comes to exist. The instantiations of *al-khatt* (Arabic) or *scriptūra* (Latin) could refer to a broad family of meanings from leaving a mark, a form of written expression, a mode of representation in transcribing a language, or in a broader sense, written culture in all of its dimensions. While recent developments of book history and critical bibliography have managed to augment our knowledge of the past through renewed consideration of the materiality of texts, the Summer Academy aims to direct attention to manuscript cultures towards a better understanding of their contexts.

What can the study of the actual form and style of script tell us about its wider context, and the broader political and cultural aspects that it reflects? For a scribe or a copyist, a script is a model to be imitated, an ideal and a reference. As a mode of representation, it has *aesthetic* dimensions, as highlighted by the practice of calligraphy, as well as *social* and *political* functions. The encounter and competition between scripts as bearers of culture also generates powerful affective impacts ranging from nostalgia and melancholia to aspiration and exhilaration.

What kind of history can a consideration of the notion of script lead us to write? The Summer Academy will consider cases of *script circulation*. What is it that circulates exactly? Texts? Practices? Writing tools? Models? Emotions and values? Sanctity? Traditions? Epistemes? Irrespective of what a script conveys (or what conveys a script), it is an exceptional marker in establishing not only the circulation of texts, but also that of ideas and people – circulations made visible by all the intermediaries and facets involved in the circulation of scripts: scribes, tools, techniques, practices and reading communities.

The Summer Academy will also explore the concept of *global script* so as to encompass phenomena such as the spread of Arabic and its script across diverse regions as either the representation of Arabic language or distinct other languages – or even hybridizations such as the representation of Melayu or Bangla or Sindhi in Arabic script. How do we characterise histories entangled through script? What relationships connect scriptural spread to political or ideological or economic relationships among communities? How do appropriation processes complicate our view of scriptural hegemony? Related to this issue of scriptural hegemony, we also seek to consider *local scripts* and *minor practices* of writing. The Summer Academy will encourage examination of the politics of script transformation and implementation. Why do some scripts travel far and are completely adopted while others are confronted with resistance and rejection? Why were and are certain scripts viewed as markers of cultural progress while others are considered decadent and un-modern? How and why have script forms become the site on which ideological debates about progress, reform and modernity have been fought? What are the consequences of the replacement of one script by another? Can the invention of new script forms or the adoption of foreign forms contribute to cultural loss or political emancipation and progress? The Summer Academy encourages contributions that look at the political, social, and deeper affective aspects of such philological debates.

While the disciplines dedicated thus far to textual and linguistic knowledge have tended artificially to compartmentalise scripts and remain blind to their interactions, we find numerous situations of *scripts in contact*. How can we characterise this coexistence? Are there competing and conflicting spaces? Or are we looking at cases of syncretism and hybridization? Finally, the Summer Academy will seek to rethink approaches to non-European manuscript traditions, which have been at best understudied and at worst neglected for too long since the invention of the printing press.

## Application

The International Summer Academy is open to postdoctoral researchers (within 7 years of completion) and advanced doctoral students from the fields of language studies, history and cultural studies, whose philological work promotes a comparative and global perspective. Particular preference will be given to applicants whose proposals exemplify a conscious dovetailing of comparative methodology and historiographical reflection. Before submitting an application, interested applicants are strongly advised to visit the ZUKUNFTSPHILOLOGIE website for a description of the research program and a list of previous events, including reports of the previous Cairo and Delhi Winter Schools.

Participants receive a stipend covering travel and accommodation. They will be expected to give at least one presentation of their research, actively participate in discussion groups and seminars, and assist in chairing sessions. In order to create common intellectual ground and to ensure fruitful conversations, participants will receive a collection of preparatory essential readings in the form of an online reader, which they will be required to read carefully prior to their arrival in Cape Town. These readings will be discussed extensively during the Summer Academy. Unlike similar events where the burden is on a team of tutors, the ultimate success of the Cape Town Summer Academy depends to a great extent on the engagement and contribution of all its participating members.

## Requirements

- A curriculum vitae, including a short biography (max. 100 words).
- A research expose of no more than 5 pages, which includes an outline of your project, and states clearly why you think the Cape Town Summer Academy is pertinent to your research, with a brief summary thereof (max. 200 words).
- ‘Relevant readings’: please name one or two academic articles or works you find relevant to the overall themes and objectives of the Summer Academy, which you would propose discussing at the Summer Academy.
- The names of two university faculty members who can serve as referees (no letters of recommendation required)

While we do not require official proof of English fluency, applicants whose native tongue is not English are expected to have a strong command of the language.

Applications should be submitted in English by **January 31, 2015** and must be **sent by email** as **one PDF file** to: **[zukunftsphilologie@trafo-berlin.de](mailto:zukunftsphilologie@trafo-berlin.de)**

All queries relating to the aims of the Summer Academy as well as questions relating to eligibility can be addressed to

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## Institutional Framework

The Summer Academy is conducted within the framework of **ZUKUNFTSPHILOLOGIE**, a research program at the Forum Transregionale Studien. **ZUKUNFTSPHILOLOGIE** supports research in marginalized and undocumented textual practices and literary cultures with the aim of integrating texts and scholarly traditions from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East as well as from Europe itself, by way of a critical recuperation of the practice of philology.

The Summer Academy is part of the strategic cooperation between the Forum Transregionale Studien and the Max Weber Foundation – German Humanities Institutes Abroad. It is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF).

The Berlin-based **Forum Transregionale Studien** is a research organization that promotes the internationalization of research in the humanities and social sciences. The Forum provides scope for collaboration among researchers with different regional and disciplinary perspectives and appoints researchers from all over the world as Fellows.

The **Max Weber Foundation** promotes global research, concentrated around the areas of social sciences, cultural studies, and the humanities. Research is conducted at ten institutes in various countries worldwide with distinctive and independent focal points. Through its globally operating institutes, the Foundation is able to contribute to the communication and networking between Germany and the host countries or regions of its establishments.

**IFAS-Research** is a French Research Institute Overseas (IFRE) under the supervision of the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the CNRS. Its regional mandate over Southern Africa is bringing IFAS-Research to develop cross-projects on the countries of the region. Its mission is to promote the creation of mixed research teams through calls for proposals as per annual programmes. IFAS-Research hosts students and researchers from all over the world during their field trips in Southern Africa and assists Southern African researchers doing research work in Europe.

The **Tombouctou Manuscripts Project** at the University of Cape Town is dedicated to researching various aspects of writing and reading the handwritten works of Timbuktu and beyond. Training young researchers is an integral part of its work. However, the scope of the project is broadening, to encompass writing cultures from other parts of the African continent.

For more information please visit:  
[www.zukunftphilologie.de](http://www.zukunftphilologie.de)  
[www.forum-transregionale-studien.de](http://www.forum-transregionale-studien.de)  
[www.maxweberstiftung.de](http://www.maxweberstiftung.de)  
[www.ifas.org.za/research](http://www.ifas.org.za/research)  
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