

**Zukunftsphilologie: Revisiting the Canons of Textual Practice**  
**Lecture-cum-Seminar**

**Thursday, February 10, 2 - 5 p.m.**

Freie Universität Berlin, Raum JK 24 / 122d, Habelschwerdter Allee 45

**Dr. Whitney Cox (SOAS, London)**

**Textual creation as philology in South India, 12th-14th C CE**

**Chair: Manan Ahmed (Freie Universität Berlin)**

**Abstract**

If we may tentatively gloss 'philology' as the making sense of a particular textual past or pasts, South Asia in the early centuries of the second millennium CE witnessed a series of philological revolutions that have yet to be adequately documented or theorized. In this presentation, I will give a preliminary sketch of these transformations at a very broad level before providing a more detailed series of short case studies situated in a particular place in far southern peninsular India and over a period of around two hundred years. After briefly reviewing the pan-Subcontinental picture, my main focus, however, will be on documenting the creation of new, philologically engaged textual corpora in the far South from the early twelfth century. These largely consist of pseudepigraphical works in Sanskrit, which described themselves as the creation of mythical authors or divinities. I then turn a survey of two works of creative philological scholarship produced in the fourteenth century, by authors working within of *Vedantadesika*, the first chapter of whose *Pancaratraraksa* ("An Amulet for the Vaishnava religion") attempts to negotiate the disputable status of certain of his religion's recently confected scriptures, and part of whose *Satadusani* ("Hundred Refutations"), in a complementary fashion, critiques an intellectual rival for reliance on interpolated or invented sources. This contrasts strongly with the sole surviving work of Mahesvarananda, the *Maharthamanjari* ("Flower-Cluster of the Great Purpose"). Here, we see a bold attempt to wed the compositional techniques of the anonymous author-compilers of the pseudepigrapha with a highly idiosyncratic authorial voice. This culminates in a bravura effort at reinterpreting that civilizational lynchpin of classical India, the *Bhagavadgita*, as a text instructing the essentials of Mahesvarananda's own Tantric goddess-cult. I will conclude with some reflections on how the work of these fourteenth century scholars can reflect on our own philological practices.

**Whitney Cox** is Lecturer in Sanskrit in the Department of the Languages and Cultures of South Asia in the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. A student of classical and medieval Tamil as well as Sanskrit, Dr. Cox is one of the editors of *South Asian Texts in History: Critical Engagements* with Sheldon Pollock, due out later this year from the Association of Asian Studies. He is presently completing a monograph on the contested accession of the south Indian king Kulottunga I Cola (r. 1070-1120), entitled *Moonset on Sunrise Mountain*, as well as co-editing another collection of essays on the dynamics of Sanskrit and Tamil intellectual history.

### **Lecture-cum-Seminar**

The Lecture-cum-Seminar series is a central element of the scholarly program of the *Zukunftphilologie* project. It is conceived as a working seminar of 3 to 5 hours. The lecture (ca. 45-60 minutes) is meant to introduce the audience to the research problem and provide the general analytical and theoretical framework for the topic. This is followed by a practical seminar, wherein the speaker demonstrates his or her case by reference to texts in the original language and in English translation. It is hoped that this Lecture-cum-Seminar series, a combination of theory and a direct engagement with texts, will enable scholars to examine the comparative aspect of the problematic without neglect of the local and singular nature of the texts examined.

### **Zukunftphilologie: Revisiting the Canons of Textual Scholarship**

The project **Zukunftphilologie** endeavours to promote and emphasize primary textual scholarship beyond the classical humanistic canon. In an age of advanced communication, intellectual specialization, and unprecedented migration of knowledge and people, the discipline of philology assumes new relevance. *Zukunftphilologie* aspires to support research in neglected varieties of philology with the explicit aim to integrate texts and scholarly traditions from Asia, Africa, the Middle East as well as from Europe itself.

*Zukunftphilologie* refers to the polemic between the classicist Ulrich von Wilamowitz and Friedrich Nietzsche around the method and meaning of classical studies. As a project it sees itself as part of a growing trend towards a more global intellectual history. It is inspired in particular by the work of Edward Said and Sheldon Pollock.

In order to promote historically-conscious philology, *Zukunftphilologie* will foster research in the following areas: genealogies and transformations of philological practice, philology's place in the system of knowledge (e.g. its relation to science, theology and jurisprudence), and philology and the university. Furthermore, *Zukunftphilologie* aims to support critical reviews of historical and philological practice. In revisiting important "philological wars", the goal is not to merely evaluate the argumentative worth of these debates, but to reflect on the wider cultural and political context in which these "philological wars" emerged and how they have shaped our knowledge of the past.

The project Zukunftsphilologie is co-directed by Angelika Neuwirth, Manan Ahmed and Islam Dayeh (all Freie Universität Berlin) and is associated with and located at the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School for Literary Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. Zukunftsphilologie is a project at the Forum Transregionale Studien.

### **Forum Transregionale Studien**

The **Forum Transregionale Studien** is a new research platform of the Land of Berlin designed to promote research that connects systematic and region-specific questions in a perspective that addresses entanglements and interactions beyond national, cultural or regional frames. The Forum works in tandem with already existing institutions and networks engaged in transregional studies and is supported by an association of the directors and heads of universities, research institutes and networks mainly based in Berlin. It started its activities in 2010 by identifying and supporting three transregional research projects based in Berlin research institutions in the different fields of Law, Philology, and Urban Sociology. The Forum Transregionale Studien is funded by the Senate of Berlin.

For more information please see:

[www.forum-transregionale-studien.de](http://www.forum-transregionale-studien.de)

<http://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/friedrichschlegel/promotionsprogramm/kooperationen/Zukunftsphilologie/index.html>

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