



Beyond Comparison: Towards a Connected Philology

Call for papers

International conference hosted by IDK Philology: Practices of premodern cultures, global perspectives and future concepts, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

June 14–16, 2023

Much of the recent work on global philology has focused on pointing out parallels between philological methods and traditions in various cultures; that is, on straightforward comparison. This conference is focused rather on identifying and examining the actual connections that create or lie behind such parallels. As scholars in transcultural studies have pointed out, global connectivity and migration are not only features of modernity, but are in fact an essential part of the formation of culture. Considering the temporal depth and geographical breadth of philological tradition(s), it is limiting to assume that the philological traditions of a specific culture have remained untouched by these connections, no matter the enthusiasm with which a state may employ their manuscripts and philological history in service of their respective “unique” nationalist identities.

This conference topic encourages a practice of philology in full view of the extended contacts and relationships between cultures, against the “methodological nationalism” of our existing disciplinary frameworks. Such contacts can include, but are not limited to:

- Textual connections: Citations and allusions in texts and manuscripts to texts from another textual tradition/culture, or wholesale borrowing of content
- Human connections: Meetings between historical philological agents (authors, scribes, etc.), or influence from individual cultural brokers (e.g., missionaries, Jesuits, pilgrims, etc.)
- Cultural connections: Connections between large cultural groups, such as nation-states, religious traditions, etc., resulting in extended religious, narrative, political, or philosophical communications
- Linguistic connections: Developments of language through translation projects
- History of the field: Asymmetrical collaborations between modern philologists

We suggest that a focus on connections is a much-needed piece in the reinvention of philology. While this approach stands on the shoulders of global philology, and compliments other kindred attempts to revitalize philology, it departs from these positions by adopting the critique of a bounded notion of culture, placing focus on the processes of transformation behind textual sources and the networks that have created and transmitted practices of textual interpretation. Such a focus aims toward an eventual connected history of philology, constructed through scrupulous and varied microhistories.

What additionally concerns us is how philological connections or their results have been obscured by entrenched power-dynamics. We therefore encourage submissions from scholars of various disciplines and theoretical backgrounds, such as intellectual history, gender studies, post-colonial studies, etc., as the cultural theories of the past decades may equip us with new sets of terms and concepts with which to address this concern. However, submissions should challenge the biases and presumptions of the field with substantial philological work, not on the basis of theoretical reflection alone.

To apply, please send a title, an abstract of 300–500 words, and a CV to beycom@lrz.uni-muenchen.de by **November 30, 2022**.

The conference will take place at the Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung in Munich, Germany. All associated costs, including accommodation, travel expenses, and meals during the conference, will be covered by the conference organizers.

Contextual readings

Dayeh, Islam. “The Potential of World Philology.” *Philological Encounters* 1 (2016): 396–418.

Juneja, Monica, and Christian Kravagna. “Understanding Transculturalism.” *Model House Research Group (Hg.) Transcultural Modernisms: Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien. Berlin: Sternberg* (2013): 22–33.

Most, Glenn W. “Philology as a Social Practice.” In *Bibliotechnica: Humanist Practice in Digital Times*, edited by John Tresh, 61–85. Venice: Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 2018.

Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. *Connected History: Essays and Arguments*. London: Verso Books, 2022.