

University of Bonn  
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## **Embodied Dependencies and Freedoms: Artistic Communities and Patronage in Asia**

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### **Abstracts of Participants' Papers**

#### Table of Contents

The Iconography of Power: Patterns of Subjugation and Dependency in the Buddhist Tantric Iconography of Nepal.....	3
Dependence and Freedom in the Practice and Theory of Indian Temple Architecture .....	4
<b>Prof. Dr Julia A. B. Hegewald</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Temple Architecture in Coastal Karnataka: An Interplay of Climatic Dependencies and Artistic Freedoms .....	5
<b>Dr Amy Heller</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>and Dr Chiara Bellini</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Artists' and Conservators' Dependencies in Tibet and the Himalayas .....	6
<b>Dr Jennifer Howes</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Female Performance Artists from Tipu Sultan's Court under East India Company Rule .....	7
<b>Prof. Deepak Kannal</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>and Kanika Gupta</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Countering Cerebral Invasions: Sculptors Against Dependencies .....	8
<b>Dr Tiziana Leucci</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Usages and Instrumentalisations of the Sanskrit Term 'Dāsī' in Pre-Colonial and Colonial South India: The Case of Devadāsīs and Rājadāsīs .....	9
'Slaves of God': Extreme Religious Dependency in South Medieval India (800 – 1100 AD) .....	10
<b>Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali</b> .....	<b>11</b>

The Dance of Subaltern Gods: Caste Ideology, and Dependency in the Liminal Structure of ‘Theyyams’ on the Malabar Coast, South India .....	11
<b>Dr Elisabeth Scherer .....</b>	<b>12</b>
The Haunting of the Female Body in Japanese Culture .....	12
Bound by Tradition? An Investigation of the Extreme Dependency of Artists on Un-Written Artistic Conventions for Dance Imagery in Sculpture and Painting .....	13
Climate and Resources Dependencies in the Buddhist Art and Architecture Along the Northern Silk Road .....	14
<b>Prof. Dr Pratyush Shankar .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Snigdha Srivastava .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Indigenous Modernity’s in Dependent Princely States: Design of Public Places in Baroda .....	15
Xu Wei and the Ghostwriter’s Talent .....	17
From New Spain to Jingdezhen: Chinese Export Porcelain and its Dependence on Colonial Silver.....	18

## The Iconography of Power: Patterns of Subjugation and Dependency in the Buddhist Tantric Iconography of Nepal

### Abstract

There are no depictions of slaves nor any indications of direct slavery in the premodern art of Nepal. However, we come across allegorical representations which illustrate acts of subjugation and resulting states of dependency and inequality due to sectarian animosity between two competing religious traditions. They show, for example, a Buddhist figure treading on one or more major deities of the Hindu pantheon who are their adversaries. Like victorious warriors, they pose in a militant stance, with one leg stretched out and the other bent. The subdued display hand gestures expressing supplication. Their body position indicates defeat and helplessness.

In this talk I will introduce three major types of artistic representations which illustrate subjugation and dependency in the context of religious rivalry. The first pattern, already known from the Buddhist art of India, shows the subdued deities crushed under the feet of the Buddhist figures. The act of treading on and crushing underfoot is a clear demonstration of the dominant figure's power. Indeed, it indicates the defeat of the god who is crushed under the other's soles. The second pattern shows Buddhist figures riding Hindu gods as their mounts and reducing their status to that of mere servants. The third pattern, which became popular in Nepal in the 18th century, establishes the superiority of the Buddhist figure by depicting him as the creator of the Hindu gods whom he emanates from the different parts of his body and who are dependent on him. All three patterns express a clear distinction between ruler and ruled and an inequality of power.

Prof. Dr Adam Hardy

Emeritus Professor of Asian Architecture, Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University, UK

## Dependence and Freedom in the Practice and Theory of Indian Temple Architecture

### Abstract

The canonical Sanskrit texts on Indian architecture have a long history. Vastushastras, texts devoted specifically to architecture, were well-established by the 10th century CE and contain substantial sections on temple design. They propound elaborate classifications, giving detailed instructions for temple types and stressing both the benefits, material and spiritual, of following these prescriptions, and the dire consequences of not doing so. Given the prescriptive tone of these treatises, reinforced by their proclaimed divine origin and coupled with a prevalence of more standard temple designs corresponding to their heyday, it is hardly surprising that they are generally seen inflexible and a straightjacket to creativity.

With knowledge of the relevant architectural traditions it is possible to draw temple designs contained in the texts, and to compare their forms and proportions with appropriate built examples. This is the only sound basis on which to know whether such texts are indeed rigid and restrictive, and whether they were even used in practice. We find a very nuanced picture, with some texts close to practice and others purely theoretical or merely classificatory. The texts are not a changeless corpus, but evolve alongside practice, reflecting recent developments as well as exploring untried architectural possibilities. Occasionally they imagine extraordinary concepts which challenge designers create something of which they might never have dreamed. Even the most detailed verbal instructions can only provide a framework for design, demanding interpretation, improvisation and invention.

Prof. Dr Julia A. B. Hegewald

Professor of Oriental Art History and Head of Department of Asian and Islamic Art History (AIK), Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies (IOA), The University of Bonn, Germany

## Temple Architecture in Coastal Karnataka: An Interplay of Climatic Dependencies and Artistic Freedoms

### Abstract

Architecture along the west coast of India is heavily exposed to the monsoon, which gathers humidity when approaching the coastline from the sea. Due to this extreme climatic situation, buildings had to be adapted to withstand a condition of prolonged and often heavy rains. On the other side, the ready availability of water resulted in the formation of large forested areas and the easy accessibility of wood as building material.

This paper explores the interplay between climate and resource dependency in the region of coastal Karnataka and the freedoms which master architects and artisans, especially working for the local Jaina community, still found within these strongly predetermined circumstances.

Based on the presence of substantial wooded expanses along the coastline, timber was traditionally the building material chosen for the construction of domestic as well as religious structures throughout the region. In order to protect the planks against dampness, strongly projecting, sloping tiled roofs were applied to timber-laced substructures, made largely of a combination of wood and mud.

With time, and probably as a reaction to stone-built temple traditions of the dry uplands of central Karnataka, stone was introduced to the coastal belt as well, however, as a rarer, highly treasured and more expensive building material for sacred structures only. While builders, when provided with the necessary funds, could take liberties with regards to the material, the climate is non-negotiable. As such, stone temples too, had to be provided with sloping roofs, which, when covered with large stone slates, substantially gained in weight. As a consequence the heavy stone roofs had to be supported on large numbers of supporting pillars below. This led to the creation of a distinct regional aesthetic, which has also been reflected in more recent temple reconstructions in concrete.

Dr Amy Heller  
University of Bern, Switzerland

and Dr Chiara Bellini  
University of Northumbria, UK

## **Artists' and Conservators' Dependencies in Tibet and the Himalayas**

### Abstract

The issues of dependencies as voluntary or involuntary constraints, as well as restrictions in artistic freedom have been little studied in relation to Tibetan Buddhist practices in Tibet and the Himalayas. We propose here several distinct case studies, all of which pertain to strategies in the context of the concepts of dependency and re-use.

There are two main topics of our inquiry:

the dependencies of traditional artists to adhere to the traditional rules (iconometry, iconography, etc.) which, in any case, are not always so strict, as we can see from the profound artistic /aesthetic metamorphosis which has occurred over the centuries;

the dependencies of artists and restorers/conservators from the western hegemony in determining what is or not appropriate in terms of conservation and restoration strategies versus local inhabitants' perspective of what is crucial to observe in conservation in order to reflect the preservation of the integrity of the sanctuary/architectural structure. Likewise, the perspective of valorisation of traditional local materials (such as kaolin rock conglomerate) in conservation strategies versus imported material (silicone) which potentially have longer duration.

As a tangent stemming from these two principle axes, we examine contemporary artists and artisans in Nepal, Tibet and in the Tibetan diaspora whose paintings, sculptures, installations and, videos are extremely heterogeneous, reflecting great variation in the degree of constraints imposed by Buddhist concepts and iconographic/iconometric rules, specific technical requirements due to media (cast alloys, copper repoussé, cement from early moulds) as well as conceptual context of what defines art in the 21st century.

Dr Jennifer Howes  
Independent Scholar, London, UK

## Female Performance Artists from Tipu Sultan's Court under East India Company Rule

### Abstract

After the Fourth Mysore War, when the British were dismantling Tipu Sultan's establishment, the East India Company unexpectedly took custody of 601 women who resided permanently inside the deceased king's palace at Srirangapatnam. Nearly half of these women were from communities of professional dancers, singers and musicians whose role at court was to entertain the king and his household, and to perform at life cycle events and festivals. In 1802 they were moved from Srirangapatnam to Vellore Fort, where they were held under house arrest for the rest of their lives. The East India Company viewed these women as the powerless victims of a cruel tyrant, however, colonial documentation from the early nineteenth century indicates that under East India Company rule, they were not voiceless victims. Their actions, as described in these colonial sources, have been overlooked by historians and show that the women used the performance traditions they upheld under Tipu Sultan's establishment as a source of domestic power. This paper places these accounts of their actions alongside Company paintings of female musicians and dancers made at Vellore in the early nineteenth century. It also looks at the architectural remains of the "mahals" where they lived inside Vellore Fort, and the tombs that were erected in their memory. I hope to expose how this community, which shifted from life under a pre-colonial court to dependency upon a foreign trading company, adapted to their new lives under East India Company rule.

Prof. Deepak Kannal  
Art Historian, Former Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University of Baroda, India

and Kanika Gupta  
Art Historian, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, India

## Countering Cerebral Invasions: Sculptors Against Dependencies

### Abstract

The study of power politics through the ages reveals that the hegemons relentlessly discover, devise and deploy various tools of dominance and governance. Art has been eyed as one of the possible tools for this purpose and the makers of art as the potential slaves, controlled through force or finance to handle this tool for their masters. The polity and the religion have used it collectively or against each other in every civilization. In the Indian context, one more controlling device is exploited to handle this tool right since the ancient times and that is the cerebral hegemony.

Indian art tradition, though one of the greatest in the world, has not given the legitimate status to the artist community; sculptors in particular are in the purview of this presentation. In every phase of Indian art history, we come across various agencies that deny the supreme position to the creator in the aesthetic activity and assign it either to the patron, the religious leaders, the theoreticians or to the god himself who is considered to be the originator of that art. It is strange and disgraceful that the creators of the most exceptional masterpieces of Indian sculpture are not known to the world.

But it is most heartening that the nonconformists from the sculptors' community averted this cerebral invasion for generations. Though the system tried to impose religious demands or a strictly codified grammar of sculpture on the practicing artists, these masters evaded the conspired dogma through their creative genius and personal parole.

We intend to substantiate this thesis with the case studies of Barhut (2<sup>nd</sup> C. BCE), Early Ellora (6<sup>th</sup> c. CE), Cola (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> C CE) and Khajuraho (11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> C. CE) sculpture.



Dr Tiziana Leucci

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud (CEIAS, EHESS/CNRS), Paris; Conservatoire de Musique et Danse 'Gabriel Fauré', Les Lilas, France

## Usages and Instrumentalisations of the Sanskrit Term '*Dāsī*' in Pre-Colonial and Colonial South India: The Case of *Devadāsīs* and *Rājadāsīs*

### Abstract

In my presentation I'll focus on the polysemic Sanskrit terms '*dāsī/dāsa*' and their usages, interpretations and instrumentalizations in Pre-Colonial and Colonial South India, by taking as a case study the controversial issue of the female temple and court artists, better known as *devadāsīs* and *rājadāsīs*. My arguments are based on the historiographic researches and ethnographic data collected during the years of my fieldwork and training in South Indian dances (*Bharatanāṭyam* and *Oṛiśī*) under the guidance of hereditary performing artists. I'll then analyse how temple and court women have been defined in the ancient Tamil literature and medieval epigraphic inscriptions, not only as the 'Gods/Kings slaves and servants', but also as their 'devotees, children, artists, concubines and courtezans', according to the complex *Bhakti* cults' symbolism and terminology. By underlining their particular links with the local socio-religious systems and the royal forms of patronage, I'll try to tackle here their specific labour and the modalities of affiliation into their artistic communities, as well as their duties and privileges within the past Indian society. Thus, despite their 'dependency' from the temple and court authorities and from their rich patrons, their professionalism, literary knowledge, personal freedom, auto determination, sexual and economic self-reliance were indeed remarkable features of their roles, functions and agency, compared to the rest of the female population at that time. By reporting the opinions of those ladies/artists interviewed, that have been morally judged and socially despised, I'll deal with the changes of their perception and status in Colonial India. Finally, I'll conclude with the instrumentalization of the feminine term '*dāsī*' operated, particularly from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, by the European and North American Christian missionaries, religious preachers and Indian social reformers. By narrowing its various semantic meanings to the exclusively reduced form of 'female slavery', along with the 'victimization' of the artists' work, those abolitionist militants though animated by good intentions, they shrank, simplified and banalized the highly articulated courtesans' culture, by associating it to the most objectable forms of 'bounded labour' and 'prostitution exploitation'. The presentation will be illustrated by images on a PowerPoint.

Dr Tiziana Lorenzetti  
International Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), Rome, Italy

## ‘Slaves of God’: Extreme Religious Dependency in South Medieval India (800 – 1100 AD)

### Abstract

The forms of slavery and dependence that have been amply researched so far have mostly dealt with the contraposition of two agent forces: on one hand, he who is in a dominant position (such as rulers, masters, winners), on the other, those who are in a condition of dependency (such as captives, slaves, subjugated people).

However, in the culture of Medieval South India, existed certain peculiar forms of dependency which cannot be classified under the above-mentioned opposition of two categories. They have to do with a state of absolute submission to ones own chosen deity, especially to Lord Shiva, so much so that the devotee, referring to himself as the ‘slave of god’, is even willing to undergo acts of self-sacrifice in honour of the divine, including oblation of parts of his own body or even his own life.

This paper aims to explore innovative angles of this peculiar concept of self-imposed ‘slavery’ where, instead of the helpless slave, we have a ‘heroic’ slave who has willingly given up his own life to his god. A subject which deserves an in-depth study, especially from the point of view of its influence on the artistic patrimony that has come down to us.

Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali

PhD candidate, Asian and Islamic Art History (AIK), Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies (IOA), The University of Bonn and Cluster of Excellence Beyond Slavery and Freedom, Bonn, Germany

## The Dance of Subaltern Gods: Caste Ideology, and Dependency in the Liminal Structure of '*Theyyams*' on the Malabar Coast, South India

### Abstract

This paper is concerned with the ritual performance called *Theyyam* (literally the 'dance of god') seen among the Hindu communities of Malabar Coast in South India. The performance is conducted with the cooperation of a number of the upper ('pure') and lower caste ('impure'), the performers ('god') are from specific lower castes in the region. *Theyyam* performance is a liminal meta-structure as the normative practices and ethos of caste are temporarily annulled. This paper is limited to specific '*Theyyams*' and the related oral songs, their structure of the performance, and the costumes and other material paraphernalia related to these 'subaltern' performers who possess the spirits of their ancestral figures. Sometime the performance includes dangerous acts such as jumping to fire and rarely the route of the *Theyyams* procession takes unusual turn such as mosques/sufi shrines takes/gives salutations. These ancestors as the songs behind *Theyyams* had challenged the practice of caste and for their rebellion were killed by the upper castes. They were, however, later divinized as gods who were then to be propitiated by certain castes of the region. Once the liminal order ends, the ethos of caste is reinstated as the normal. Hence, theoretically, the dissent against caste ideology and related dependency is domesticated, deified, and finally dramatized through the liminal order of *Theyyam*. This ritualized interface of caste communities in the region constitutes the artistic tradition of subaltern Hindus of the region (They were historically appropriated into the fold of Hinduism. Hence the ritual transference of Brahmanic '*Sakti*' (sacred power) in many *Theyyams* is brought into the body of performance from a high caste Hindu temple mediated by a Hindu priest. In the neatly ordered postcolonial narratives, *Theyyams* are relegated to the 'folk' traditions, however, underneath this sanitized and polished retelling of tradition, this study indicates the violent subjugation of local communities of the region and their long struggle against oppression and freedom complicit in the every-day of caste system.

Dr Elisabeth Scherer  
Project Coordinator ORCA / Japanese Studies Avenger, Spectral Mother, Femme Fatale, Heinrich Heine  
University Duesseldorf, Germany

## The Haunting of the Female Body in Japanese Culture

### Abstract

The uncanny is female: a great many of the stories about ghosts that circulate in Japan are about women who return after their death and haunt the living because of a thirst for revenge or unfulfilled passion. Contemporary examples can be found in horror cinema, which experienced its peak in Japan in the 1950s and around the turn of the millennium. Female ghosts have been popular in Japan since pre-modern times, where they appeared in the Kabuki plays of the Edo period (1603-1868), in literature and in woodblock prints.

Japanese female ghosts are characterized by an immediate physical presence: They are bloodstained, have disfigured faces and open tangled hair. The appearance of the ghosts corresponds to the condition of the corpse shortly after death, and is a reference to the usually terrible circumstances of death that brought about the haunting. The female ghosts are thus on the one hand a materialized accusation of social conditions that turn women into easy victims, but on the other hand they are also an expression of the demonization of female sexuality.

In Buddhism and Confucianism, which were central to social life in Japan during the Edo period, women are sometimes portrayed as instinctive, irrational beings determined by jealousy and greed. Such ideas speak of a strong distrust of the female body and its ability to reproduce. This connection between the status of women as “childbearing sex” and their appearance as ghosts can be seen in the figure of the *ubume*, the spirit of a woman who died in childbirth. A further manifestation of the demonization of female physicality is found in ghosts that return to this world to enter into a love relationship with a living man. Here, the spirits serve to present female desire – which is usually taboo – in a fictional setting, removed from earthly life.

Sandra Jasmin Schlage

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## Bound by Tradition?

### An Investigation of the Extreme Dependency of Artists on Un-Written Artistic Conventions for Dance Imagery in Sculpture and Painting

#### Abstract

Dance is omnipresent in India and especially Hindu temples are richly decorated with depictions of dancing deities (*nṛtta mūrtis*), as well as human dancers. While there are detailed iconographic prescriptions for the former group, the *Śilpaśāstras* (manuals on the creation of images) give no hints of the latter category. Highly specialised series of dance reliefs visualise the definitions of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* (a treatise on performing arts), especially the description of 108 movement-units, called *karaṇas*. However, a closer look at other dance reliefs reveals that most of those images are rather constructed by following artistic conventions for symbolic dance depictions. The striking uniformity of those relief series, which was mirrored also in earlier dance murals, suggests that the artists became extremely dependent of those orally transmitted visual markers.

This paper traces the development of those conventions from the emergence of visual markers for dance imagery during the early centuries CE to newly created dance sculptures from the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century in the Tamil region between Chennai and Madurai. A comparison of representative dance depictions in temple reliefs and paintings provides valuable insights into the question of artistic freedom. In this regard, the existence of un-written stylistic conventions for the visual representation of dance shall be discussed. A crucial question is whether those rules were restricted to one medium or applicable for both, sculptures and paintings. A detailed study of dance imagery may provide some answers to the debate on the significance of authoritative conventions versus artistic freedom. Did sculptors or painters also introduce innovative solutions for dance imagery or were they bound by tradition?

Birgit Angelika Schmidt

Graduate Conservator and Research Fellow at the Museum for Asian Art, Berlin and doctoral candidate at the Institute for Near Eastern Archaeology at the Freie Universität, Berlin, Germany

## Climate and Resources Dependencies in the Buddhist Art and Architecture Along the Northern Silk Road

### Abstract

Surrounded by high mountains, situated on the northern edge of the Tarim Basin, the archaeological remains of the rock-cut and structural monastic settlements bear witness to the once flourishing Buddhist culture along the northern Silk Road. It was the preferred trade route after the oases of the southern route had dried up between the end of the 3rd and the 5th century AD, probably due to a change in climate. The fact that prosperous civilizations formed preferentially in the oases, which were fed with abundant meltwater from the mountain rivers and were blessed with mineral resources, demonstrates the extreme dependence on the climate and the resulting availability of resources.

This contribution will discuss the extent to which the extreme arid climate and the lack of vegetation influenced the architecture and construction methods and thus, also the development of arts and crafts production in these regions. Based on the archaeological traces and material remains, the preferred construction methods and the local building materials will be identified and illustrated.

The rock-cut and structural architecture of three selected find regions, namely *Kucha*, *Shorchuk* and *Turfan*, as well as their artistic decorations in the form of wall paintings and sculptures, will be examined under the aspect of climate and resource dependency, but also possible artistic freedoms within these dependencies will be revealed, if possible.

Which decisive influence the extreme summer heat and the extreme cold, brought by the icy desert winds, in winter had on the choice of location and the type of construction will be illustrated with various examples. Under the aspect of "Embodied Dependencies and Freedoms", a contribution and an approach to the hitherto largely unexplored artistic communities in the Buddhist kingdoms along the northern Silk Road is hereby to be made.

Prof. Dr Pratyush Shankar  
Dean, School of Environmental Design and Architecture, Navrachana University, Vadodara, India

Snigdha Srivastava  
Conservation Architect, India

## Indigenous Modernity's in Dependent Princely States: Design of Public Places in Baroda

### Abstract

The company rule in India, which began around the 18<sup>th</sup> century dominated the majority of the Indian sub-continent was also marked by complex arrangement of power and administration. After the mutiny of 1857 the British crown took direct control over the affairs of the country. However, the British managed to rule a vast country such as India due to a sophisticated arrangement of indirect rule; wherein certain long-standing princely state were allowed to manage their affairs, as long as they could swear their allegiance to the British crown. This also meant that the Princely states were dependent on the British crown for protection, financial and other major policy matters. This extreme dependency of the Princely state on the British crown for their existence, sometimes created an environment of mistrust or defiance and at other times was marked by constant negotiation and even co-operation.

The princely state of Baroda not only defied the British crown during many a moment but also through its own initiatives managed to create a counter colonial narrative. But more interestingly the State of Baroda under the leadership of its king Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III undertook massive social and education reforms apart from commissioning civic architecture and public places that completely transformed the nature of the city of Baroda between 1880 to 1910.

This form of indigenous modernity was managed and executed through a combination of negotiation or at times outright defiance of the British colonial masters and quite often using freelance European designers thereby totally bypassing the British empire. This paper wishes to explore the nature and form of these transformation in the city as related to design of botanical gardens and museum as public places. The paper will try and articulate the unique formation and design of these public spaces (gardens and museums) and how it was a result of complex negotiation with, and at times defiance of the British colonial rulers. The dependencies of the princely state with the British colonial rulers on fundamental matters of security and economy was an overarching condition that influenced the nature and formation of these public place design.





Prof. Dr Peter Sturman  
Professor, Department of History of Art and Architecture, Department of East Asian Languages and  
Cultural Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

## Xu Wei and the Ghostwriter's Talent

### Abstract

As the disconnect between talent and success became increasingly apparent in late imperial Chinese society, talent's very presence and mode of presentation emerged not only as matters of discussion and debate but also as meta-subjects of art. This phenomenon is particularly clear with the Ming Dynasty scholar-artist Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521-1593), whose immense talents in multiple and diverse fields jarred with his repeated failure to pass the provincial exams. Celebrated as one of the Ten Talents of Yue (Zhejiang Province) for his literary skills in particular, Xu found gainful employment as an aide-de-camp with military strongmen. Xu's worth was proven early when his composition accompanying the presentation of an auspicious white deer to the court in 1558 met with imperial appreciation. This marked the beginning of Xu Wei's career as a *daibi* 代筆, or ghostwriter, but unlike others who acted in this capacity, Xu later made a point of reclaiming ownership of his writings. He assembled one group into a small literary collection and wrote a short preface that comments frankly on the liminal status of the ghostwriter—a talent as unlucky as a horse plowing a field, situated between “not being known and not being hidden in reclusion.” Simply by collecting his *daibi* writings Xu was asserting agency, but an added and far more dramatic dimension to understanding the complexity of Xu's efforts to establish presence are calligraphic transcriptions of his ghostwritten pieces that Xu wrote late in his life. Particular attention is paid to two extant hanging scrolls of enormous scale that present Xu's short prose-poems “singing” of ink and sword in wild cursive script. Identified as *daibi* works by Xu's own inscription, these graphic presentations claim authorship with a raw freedom that Xu unleashed to forefront the inherent contradiction of hidden talent.

Dr Daniel Suebsman  
Research Associate, Museum of East Asian Art, Cologne, Germany

## From New Spain to Jingdezhen: Chinese Export Porcelain and its Dependence on Colonial Silver

### Abstract

The speaker traces the path of silver from Spanish America to China via the transatlantic and transpacific routes. With particular attention on the porcelain industry, he discusses the dependence of the late Ming and early Qing economy on silver imports and shows the role of Chinese export porcelain within the colonial trade.

In the sixteenth century, Spanish colonial silver caused a paradigm shift in global trade. The huge output of the mines of Potosí and Cerro de Pasco in the Viceroyalty of Peru and of Zacatecas in Mexico stimulated world economy and initiated new commodity flows around the globe. A bulk of Spanish silver ended up in China, estimations range between 34 to 111 tons per year. Lacking of own natural deposits, and since the Ming government introduced a fiscal and monetary policy mainly based on silver, the Middle Kingdom was craving for the metal. Its value was placed much higher in China than in Europe, making it extremely profitable for foreign merchants to exchange Spanish silver for Chinese goods and resell them in Europe, the Middle East and the New World. Besides the Chinese silk industry, the porcelain manufactories at Jingdezhen and Zhangzhou were big profiteers of the silver flow. Southern Chinese merchants who had gained wealth through the export trade reinvested profits in the porcelain industry, enlarged production capacities and created labour for thousands of families. Since the beginning of the trade relationship, decorations and shapes of the Export porcelain could be ordered according to the taste of the overseas consumers. In the eighteenth century, the city of Jingdezhen already had about one million inhabitants with a majority earning a living from the porcelain industry. In the target markets, Chinese porcelain was an expensive luxury item. The huge amounts of silver annually leaving for China led to mercantilist ideas among rulers and expedited the invention of European porcelain.