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## **Conference**

### **Art of communication and communication through art in Asia and Africa 1, 2 December 2022**

Organisers: Research Centre of Culture and Art of Asia and Africa, Faculty of Oriental Studies,  
University of Warsaw, Polish Institute of World Art Studies

#### **Organizing Committee of the Conference:**

Prof. Jerzy Malinowski (Polish Institute of World Art Studies)

Prof. Hanna Rubinkowska-Anioł (Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw & Polish Institute of World Art Studies) – head

Dr. Marta Widy-Behiesse (Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)

Dr. Jakub Wilanowski-Hilchen (Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw) – scientific secretary

#### **Keynote speakers:**

**Prof. Wolbert Smidt** (Friedrich Schiller University, Jena & Mekelle University)

**Discussing visibility in Ethiopian Orthodox churches. Art as an instrument shaping discourses on war, conflict and communality**

Arts in Ethiopian churches as in other world regions is an excellent and richly coded example for communication on society values and politics. Using visual material from different religions in the majoritarian Christian Orthodox highlands of Ethiopia, mainly from Tigray, the following three themes will be in the centre of analysis: (1) The politics of war in arts: Icons were used to strengthen war narratives and were accompanying war leaders into battles. Jesus appears as a key figure in war, virtually as a war leader. In short, religious art was (and is) a key element for Ethiopian warfare. Ethiopian clashes with neighbours were reframed in an imperial framework as a clash between Islam and Christianity and appear on the walls of churches, narrating the history of these wars, thus “sanctifying” them. The Italian colonial war was branded as a war won under the leadership of St George. (2) While arts therefore served purposes of external politics such as warfare, internally, communality was supported and strengthened by arts: Churches were protected enclosures keeping heritage objects. Among them are artful inscriptions as signifiers of identity, icons and illuminated manuscripts, which are kept in hidden spaces and only shown hesitantly or within ritual settings, which enforce their spiritual importance. Icons evoking the presence of the divine help creating a spiritual asylum outside the “worldly” affairs: Due to the presence of icons, church enclosures become absolute sacred spaces of protection. Churches create space for any group wishing to permanently or temporarily opt out of the “world”. Within the church, women close to the divine can demonstrate and celebrate their central role in society beyond patriarchal discourses, from St Mary to female donors. In the same time, art also serves for the creation of social boundaries, for example by the depiction of evil “blacks” or subaltern slaves - “othering” helps to enforce a closed society. (3) Beyond these two

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very productive roles of art, within new discourses and institutions of modernity, a new role of arts in created in conflict and internationality: There is a - totally new - musealisation of arts curated by modern experts, detaching them from their local, societal settings and contexts: Art objects which were a living part of a community are removed into museums. In addition, modern art history becomes a means to create the brand "Ethiopia", producing an image of uniqueness of the country within international discourses (in exhibitions, catalogues and popular books), which continues, in a new way, the societal and political role of arts. Politics finds new turns in the use of art. This also includes new, destructive turns: During the current Tigray war, attacks on ancient churches and their icons were analysed as a form of political communication addressing "disturbing" communities. In conclusion: Arts is a dynamic and highly productive means to fill community life with meaning and stabilise local populations, their fantasies about the world and political expectations, creating an internally peaceful system of bonding and communication, linked with the definition of enmity "outside" the community.

**Prof. Monika Zin** (The Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Leipzig & Polish Institute of World Art Studies)

#### **From the Artists' Toolbox: Techniques of Narrative Representations in South and Central Asia**

The distinction Lessing made between literature and art, i.e. between narrative and its illustration – certainly faultless for sculptures of Western antiquity – proves insufficient when applied to narrative art where artists attempt to depict what cannot actually be depicted, including the passage of time. Compared to other regions, the artists who created Buddhist art in South Asia were particularly inventive in this regard. Their success is based on the fact that they did not slavishly try to illustrate the word, but rather explored ways of conveying the content of a text to the viewer employing representable items. Of particular importance is also the use of the "economy of seeing", when an object or person is shown only once and the beholder has to "complete" the different episodes it features in. It was common usage to arrange episodes not according to their chronological sequence but by the locations they take place at. The paintings of Kucha on the Northern Silk Road take the Indian way of depicting the narratives further, and can even show what the Buddha is talking about. South and Central Asian art reveals new ways to represent a narrative; it is worthwhile to realise that there are other techniques to visualise a story than the one know from modern-day comics.

#### **Participants of the conference:**

**Yetmgeta Alemneh** (Department of History and Heritage Management, College of Social Science and the Humanities University of Gondar)

#### **Communicating with Material: History and Symbolism of the Musical Instruments of the EOTC and Its Relationship with Other Orthodox Churches**

Symbolism is the practice of representing things by symbol. Not only symbols, but objects and performing arts also have their own symbolic interpretation. Different religions gave great value for symbolism. The EOTC is one of the prominent churches that used symbolism as a means of preaching the religion to the broad mass. Symbols and objects in the EOTC describe various events in



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the religion. This study aims to analyze the historicism of musical instruments of the EOTC and its relation with other Orthodox churches found abroad. A qualitative historical research method and purposive (judgmental) sampling techniques were employed in conducting this research. Data was collected from different sources through employing various data collection methods. The data's were gathered through interview, observing different performing arts in the EOTC and from selected secondary sources that has relation with the research topic. The analysis was performed by using qualitative method of data analysis. The finding of the research describes about historicism of the symbolism of musical instruments of the EOTC also shows the absence of any kind of similarity between the EOTC and the EOC (specifically the Russian Orthodox Church) regarding the symbolism of the musical instruments of the two churches.

**Dr. Zuzanna Augustyniak** (Chair of African Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)

#### **“A true Ethiopian” – Abiy Ahmed Ali’s usage of Ethiopian cultural keywords**

In 2015 nobody expected that a young, more widely unknown member of an Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) party will three years later be chosen as fourth prime minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

One of the factors that helped Abiy Ahmed Ali gain power in Ethiopia in 2018 and maintain popularity despite the war in Tigray in 2020 was his cleverness in using terms that are deeply rooted in Ethiopian culture. By using them or – on some occasions – acting according to them the Prime Minister of Ethiopia refers to the times of Ethiopian Empire – a period of Ethiopian history that is now being mythologized, even by those groups who were discriminated by the imperial regime.

In the presentations four Ethiopian terms (f.e. *yilunta*, *medemir*, *sim ina werq*, *ach'berbari*) will be discussed, by using which Abiy creates himself as a model Ethiopian man and leader.

**Dr. Jolanta Czuczko, Karolina Komsta-Sławińska** (Department of Conservation and Restoration of Paper and Leather, Faculty of Fine Arts, Nicolaus Copernicus University)

#### **Chinese hanging scroll with a representation of a group portrait of ancestors (Qing Dynasty) - transformations of meaning and function versus conservation decisions**

The subject of the presentation is a Chinese hanging scroll on canvas with a depiction of a group portrait of ancestors (Qing Dynasty period: 1644-1911). The conservation-restoration project carried out provided an opportunity to learn more about its complexity in terms of meaning, chronology and technology. The painting was created in several stages, between which it underwent considerable damage. Initially, only the background of the representation, which was an architectural composition, was painted. In the second stage, the painting was withdrawn from use, as witnessed by a cross-out made with black paint. The potential reason for this was the poor state of preservation of the painting. In the third stage, numerous repairs of the substrate were made and painting the figures of ancestors directly on the original painting layer. It is likely that for some time the object was used for its intended purpose, that is, as a portrait of the ancestors hung above the altar. There is also the



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possibility that after 1911 its function changed, and the figures were painted solely for the purpose of selling the object to the West.

It was a challenge to plan and carry out the conservation and restoration of the painting due to its complexity and poor state of preservation. The key objectives were to structurally strengthen the painting, restoring its aesthetic and display qualities while taking into account the original form of the scroll and preserving the numerous layers that have a significant impact on the structure and meaning of the object.

**Dr. Maciej Czyż** (University of Wrocław)

### **The correspondence of the patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria, Agapios and Elijah**

Agapios was a late 10<sup>th</sup> century bishop of Aleppo who, in colourful and scandalous circumstances, managed to use the turmoil of the civil war in Byzantium to become the patriarch of Antioch. This was met with a violent protest of Elijah, the patriarch of Alexandria, to whom he sent the usual letter informing of his accession to the patriarchal throne and asking for mentioning him in prayers. The correspondence of the two patriarchs, and mostly the lengthy, refined and polite, yet crushing, rebuttal of the accusations of Elijah presented in the letter of Agapios quoted in the chronicle of Yaḥyà ʾāl-Anṭākī, its content, language and artistic form, will be the subject of analysis, with a strong emphasis on the metaphors used and various ways Agapios employed to influence the recipient's expected action. The letter is an interesting, and rare, example of art of epistolography from this region in the Middle Ages, and a testimony to the cultural exchange between the most important Eastern Orthodox sees of Africa (Alexandria) and Asia (Antioch).

**Lidia Gerc** (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Polish Institute of World Art Studies)

### **Tsunami Museum in Banda Aceh as memorial center**

On December 26, 2004, the Indian Ocean was hit by an underwater earthquake with a magnitude of 9.1, whose hypocenter was near the western coast of northern Sumatra. The earthquake resulted in the formation of tsunamis that first devastated the coast of Indonesia, and over the next few hours reached the coasts of several other Southeast Asian countries, and later also Africa. Aceh (a territory in Indonesia in northern Sumatra) was the region hardest hit by the tsunami at the time. A museum has been erected in Banda Aceh at Jl. Sultan Iskandar Muda - a memorial to commemorate the event and the victims of the tragedy. Designed with flair by an Indonesian architect, it is meant to bring people together to remember the victims of this disaster, show the scale of the destruction, but also remind people of the still looming danger. It was thought that the building would also become a refuge for the population in case the tsunami hits again. The building is visited by a large number of visitors every day, so that the event will not be forgotten and learn how to proceed in case of a second impact.



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**Krzysztof Gutowski** (Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Science)  
**What and to Whom Does the Vedic Ritual Speak. The Communication Potential of the Vedic Sacrifice in the Past and Today.**

The aim of the presentation is to present the performance of the Vedic sacrifice as an event carrying a message other than that related solely to the sphere of the sacred.

During the presentation, the history of the Vedic ritual and its social, political and cultural functions will be presented. In relation to the past, the ritual will be discussed as a space of cultural and ideological communication and mediation that took place during the Vedic period between the Aryan community and other communities of South Asia. The issues linked to the Vedic ritual in the 20th century and today will be included and discussed as well. First of all, the description of the public nature of Vedic ceremonies and the political, social and ideological messages that the organization of these rituals brings to the Indian ideological and social discourse is needed. Vedic offerings today are performed by specific brahmin communities, but they are also patronized by state authorities. The Vedic ritual is an important element of the dominant political ideology and is used to create a specific hindu civilization-related space accepted by the authorities in India.

The presentation will attempt to identify the senders and recipients of the message expressed through the organization of Vedic rituals (large, public ceremonies, and the promotion of private home rituals as well) and to characterize the content of this message.

**Dr. Stanisław Jaśkowski** (Department of Iranian Studies, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)

**The Art of the Persian Document as the Means of Communication**

The Persian official document was as much a product of the complex bureaucratic system as a work of art. While this is obvious in case of more ceremonial or presentational documents, such as the royal *hokms* or *farmans*, even simpler, less ornamental documents had to follow certain artistic conventions. These conventions regulated both the textual part of the document, and the visual one. The art encompassing all the skills a secretary or a chancery worker needed – *ensha* – is often reduced to the art of skillfully drafting letters and documents; yet – although some elements of the visual side of the document were prepared by people other than the secretaries – the manuals on *ensha*, known as *monsha'at* – also included information on the visual aspect of the document, meaning that this aspect was also a part of *ensha*. The purpose of the present paper is to look into both textual and visual aspects of an early modern Persian document and to see how they were conveying similar or even identical meaning using different methods. This will be achieved through the analysis of sample documents, and the careful reading of a number of *monsha'at* from different periods: beginning with the twelfth-century *Dastur-e Dabiri* up to the seventeenth-century *Monsha't-e Soleymani*. Safavid government manuals (*Tazkerat al-Moluk* and *Dastur al-Moluk*), as well as certain historiographical works, will also be of use.



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**Prof. Joanna Jurewicz** (Chair of South Asia, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)  
**Art, mysticism and conceptual blending**

In the paper I would like to discuss how the content of mystic experience can be expressed in art with the example of the early Hindu vision of God. I will also show how cognitive analysis (conceptual blending) of the work of art allows us for better understanding of some aspects of this experience.

**Dr. Aleksandra Kajdańska** (Polish Institute of World Art Studies)

**The transcultural significance of *costume books* on the example of the Spanish *Boxer Codex* in Renaissance Europe.**

*The Boxer Codex* is a Spanish manuscript dating from around 1590, which was created in the Philippines at the request of the Spanish governor of Manila, Gomez Pérez Desmariñas. The document is named after the last private owner of the *codex*, Charles R. Boxer - a historian and specialist in the history of colonialism in Asia.

The work contains illustrations depicting figures in costume representing peoples living in areas colonised by the Spanish in Asia (the Philippines) and representing neighbouring countries such as China, Japan, Moluccas (Spice Islands), Brunei, Java, Siam (Thailand), Capuchy (North Vietnam), Canglan (Central Vietnam) and others. Alongside the illustrations are texts describing the geography and customs of the inhabiting minorities, which research has shown may have been copies from works by Martin de Rada, Miguel Rojo de Brito and other anonymous authors.

I would like to offer another look at this manuscript in terms of the *costume books* popular in Europe at the time (Cesare Vecellio), which, depending on the purpose for which they were produced, were intended to have different functions in the circulation of communication. According to historian and specialist of Early Modern Global History Giorgio Riello, *costume books* were intended to represent the shape of the world, where Europe was at its centre, but at the same time this *European world* was open to exploring new unknown places and their local connections. *Costume books*, therefore, inform readers about global relationships (in the case of *Boxer Codex* learning about a country such as the Philippines) and local relationships (descriptions or illustrations depicting unknown minorities living in the area). Similar works (describing costumes characteristic of various minorities living in the area) were not just a phenomenon known only in Europe but also in China, where they were primarily of political significance. Some of them known as *zhigong tu* became the inspiration for the artists who created the *Boxer Codex*, which is worth mentioning when considering this mysterious manuscript in the context of *costume books* and their transcultural significance for Europeans of the time.

**Dr. Nagmeldin Karamalla-Gaiballa** (Research Centre of Culture and Art of Asia and Africa, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)

**The role of enthusiasm songs and poetry in Sudanese conflicts, wars and revolutions**

This research highlights the role of the songs of enthusiasm and poetry during the Sudanese conflicts, wars and revolutions. The songs of enthusiasm in Sudan (Al-Hamasa), which are called the songs of the procession (arab. Serra) or (Dalukah), are a type of ancient folk lyrical poetry associated with



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people or tribal groups, and in most cases, heroic situations that occurred during the conflicts and wars that prevailed in the past centuries. It glorifies virtuous morals, good values, and the tolerant character of generosity, kindness, courage, sacrifice and altruism.

These poems significantly stimulate and inflame the fighting spirit, galvanizing their determination, urging men to be steadfast in battles, fighting enemies, and bringing enthusiasm into their hearts. According to most Sudanese societies, these kinds of enthusiastic songs expel cowardice from stubborn hearts, remove fear, and instill in their enthusiasm, honor, and courage, which makes the one who is praised perform well in times of adversity and distress.

Sometimes (the ruler- arab. Hakama) accompany the fighters, chanting their enthusiastic poems, which means that these poems have an inciting message urging people to fight and be steadfast in the face of the enemy.

It should be noted that most of the poets of these songs were women in the history of Sudan because the man, according to the Sudanese tradition, seeks to be favored by the common women, gaining the admiration of girls for his masculinity, strength, patience over adversity, the endurance of pain, severity and steadfastness, and some men are still working to show Their strength, courage, and perseverance through whipping during wedding ceremonies, a tradition spread in many parts of Sudan.

**Krzysztof Karwowski** (SGH Warsaw School of Economics; SGH Doctoral School )

**China. Art in propaganda. Propaganda in art. Abstract: Modern art is an obvious field for promoting** information, values and messages on which the authorities care. The same mechanisms have been working in China for centuries, but the recent artistic offensive of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) bodies has taken these efforts to a new level. The People's Republic of China – especially since the "Reform and Opening" in the late 1970s has seen a spectacular economic growth, lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, sent a man and a number of scientific missions into space, and is expanding its economic and military potential around Asia. This series of achievements made up the propaganda of success, especially visible in the art of posters, commercials movies and cinematography, also published for widely-understood international audience as a target group. This presentation aims to analyze selected pieces of Chinese propaganda art in the last five years in terms of their artistic quality, language and symbols. The comparison and technical progress of these works in relation to the works of Soviet and Maoist propaganda in the 20th century will be also marked. The author looks with particular interest at the illustrations of Chinese progress in the technological, space and military race that he is studying. These areas have gained special importance as a priority for Chinese rulers, their importance is emphasized in national economic strategies, public policies and visual messages.

**Dr. Karolina Kłoszewska** (Chair of South Asia, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)

**Mariyamman's true colours: What images of a Tamil goddess tell us about her**

Mariyamman (t. Māriyamman) – generally known as a capricious Tamil 'Goddess of Rain' – plays an important role in a reach Tamil pantheon. She is considered to be both a vicious and blood thirsty deity and a mild caring goddess. Despite Mariyamman's local, South Indian origin, which technically should limit her cult to this area, the faith in her strongly grows in power. It is possible due to the changes



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recently occurring in Tamil beliefs (the Little Tradition of Hinduism). This process is known as a Sanskritization and it allows Mariyamman to enter the mainstream Great Tradition of Hinduism. This reflects in Mariyamman's attitude – like many goddesses of The Great Tradition she becomes more benign, submissive and benevolent. This is a big promotion for the goddess that is actually converted into money. Therefore, priests in service of Mariyamman tirelessly endeavour to make her to be respected not only by Tamil people but by all strata of Indian society. Both incarnations of Mariyamman – the one of the angry local goddess and the other of the benevolent pan-Indian goddess are equivalently observed. It is believed that Mariyamman's appearance reveals her attitude towards the world. It leads to the observation that art is one of the channels used for communication with her followers. Hence, a pan-Indian goddess idols show fertility she bestows (symbolized by a green parrot, a sugar cane and/or the colour of the saree) and her beauty (ornaments). When it comes to the images of a local goddess, strength and anger are mostly shown (different weapons/bloody fangs protruding from mouth). This paper analyzes how communing with an art and the way of depicting Mariyamman are used to produce a particular feeling or behaviour based, in a sense, on the Indian rasa theory (s. rasa). How fear, anger and a total submission (typical reaction to the aggressive image) and admiration, love and peace being a result of viewing a gracious version of the goddess are obtained.

**Paulina Koniuch** (Department of Turkish Studies and Inner Asian Peoples, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)

### **Visual arts as means of expressing identity among the youngest generation of Tibetans**

Contemporary art in Tibetan communities was a particularly small artistic movement, that started in the 1980s, however in recent years it began to thrive, especially among the youngest generation. With the rise of social media, young Tibetans found a platform for circulating their works, which function predominantly as a medium of communicating their thoughts and feelings, usually based on their everyday life in the diaspora or modern Lhasa. The preeminent topics include the loss of Tibetan identity due to life in exile or Sinicized Tibet, and political statements about self-immolations or imprisonment and killings of Tibetans, but also a representation of day-to-day life. Oftentimes we find works that deal with the juxtaposition of Tibetan elements in western or Chinese environments, in which the artists reside. Adolescent monks playing football, Tibetans in traditional garments taking selfies or playing an electric guitar form small vignettes of everyday life of contemporary Tibetans. In this paper I'd like to present a selection of artworks that showcase how young Tibetans perceive their identity in their globalized communities.

**Dr. Magdalena Maciudzińska-Kamczycka** (Chair of Art History and Culture, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Polish Institute of World Art Studies)

### **Painting in colour: The Ethiopian pride and Israeli receptiveness to African art.**

My paper will focus on the cultural, political, and social relationships which brought about the environmental problems in the Israel. Ethiopian Jews have had a difficult history in both Ethiopia and Israel. Oppressed and discriminated against in Ethiopia, their transition to life in Israel has not been easy, where their community continues to experience discrimination.





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The Ethiopian pride in the title is a paraphrase of „Black pride” - a movement which encourages black people to celebrate black culture and embrace their African heritage. For the last several years In Israel we can observe the Israeli-Ethiopian creativity that has been flourishing in music, theater, dance and visual art. For example in Beersheva exists The House of Ethiopian Jewish Arts where Ethiopian Israeli artists can work in traditional pottery, weaving and basket-making. The works in the exhibit represent an infusion of Sub-Saharan African art that roils the waters of an Israeli art world struggling with whether it's European, Middle Eastern or de novo. It changes the immigrants' social environments produce and gives the impact of social change on gender roles in the communities.

The Tel Aviv Museum of Art, the Israel Museum, and various galleries have scooped up the award-winning works of Nirit Takele. She is an Ethiopian-Israeli artist who came from a small village, Kunzila, in northwest Ethiopia. She left the country when the airlift (known as Operation Solomon) began: It was the third Aliyah mission from Ethiopia to Israel in 1991. At art school in Israel, she was the only dark-skinned person in her year – because of her experience - she gave more attention to skin colors in her paintings. In her recent series, she has focused on black women and men. Their specific facial features are not as important as the composition, the movement, and the bodies. Takele paints from her imagination, telling her own story or stories that have been passed down from generation to generation. She does emotional, vivid paintings that serve as a medium to communicate what it is like for her community lives in Israel today.

**Urszula Sōu Mach-Bryson** (Chair of Japanese Studies, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)

### **Cross-cultural communication in the art of the Japanese Way of Tea: a few cases from the practitioner perspective.**

The practitioners of chanoyu do have their own language. Within Japan the art of tea might come across as distant or elitist for members of tea practicing groups have their specific way or comportment and code of conduct, which makes an unaccustomed viewer feel lost in the net of symbolic meanings. With the postwar era spread of chanoyu beyond Japan the communication system present in the art of tea gained an international perspective. The foreign practitioners of chanoyu got involved in cross-cultural exchange of gestures and meanings in an elaborate system of visual communication. The message of tea, not always heard clearly in Japan itself, is taken into the interaction between cultures. There is place for new perception (or maybe misperception?) of this cultural construct as a whole, and of its elements. In my paper I would like to present a few such real life cases of the two-way cross-cultural communication involving Japan and Poland, from an active practitioner perspective. Is kimono—an official outfit for practicing the art of tea—helping to carry out the message of tea in Polish environment? Or is it a hindrance and an element that causes confusion? Does a Polish practitioner bring new meanings to the art of tea, and if so, what is the possible Japanese perspective on this development?



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**Dr. Magdalena Łaptaś** (Institute of Art History, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw)  
**Communications through Wall Paintings in Medieval Nubia**

Medieval Nubian paintings adorned the walls of numerous medieval buildings. It had a religious character, subordinated to Christian ideas and an iconographic program. The viewers of these paintings were both the faithful and God, to whom the entire heavenly and earthly hierarchy was subordinated. Unfortunately, not as many descriptions of paintings from the Nubian area have survived as from the area of Byzantium. Therefore, the starting point for research are the paintings themselves, which, in combination with inscriptions, graffiti, biblical and apocryphal texts, encomia, etc., allow us to understand the intentions of the creators of these paintings. The aim of my presentation will be to show how the creators of the paintings communicated through the ideas contained in the paintings with both the faithful and with God, basing the iconographic program on a strictly established hierarchy.

**Prof. Hanna Rubinkowska-Anioł** (Chair of African Languages and Cultures & Research Centre of Culture and Art of Asia and Africa, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw & Polish Institute of World Art Studies)

**Dressing up the Ethiopian diaspora in traditional clothes**

The decision about what clothes we wear is very significant. It reveals our attitude to different aspects of life, can relate to one's religion, attitude towards lifestyle, wish to stress his/her personality or belonging to a certain group. Clothes are among central tools to indicate one's attitude towards tradition. However, the question of what we perceive as tradition is difficult, not only because tradition is vulnerable to changes but also because "invented tradition" plays an important role in constructing messages which we mean to convey, also through the way we dress.

The aim of the presentation is to analyse a choice of examples of why and how members of Ethiopian diaspora in the West wear clothes which are supposed to be perceived as traditional.

I will search for the answer on how tradition is presented through clothes and what tradition is this.

**Aleksandra Rutkowska** (Research Centre of Culture and Art of Asia and Africa, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)

**Palestinian rappers challenge sexism in Southwest Asia**

Rap as a musical genre, closely related to poetry, has gained importance for generations of Palestinian artists. The more so that it went beyond geographical boundaries and reached a global audience. The songs, focused on the fight against oppression, Israeli occupation, racism, poverty, drugs, over time began to pay more attention to women's rights. What is significant, the booming market was heavily dominated by men. At the same time, Palestinian female rappers worked hard to become a visible presence on the scene.



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**Dariusz Skonieczko** (The National Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw & University of Lodz Doctoral School of Humanities)

**The problem of conducting an interview using instant messaging programs, for example the Batonga callers from Zimbabwe.**

The situation in a world where the free movement of scientific research was restricted by the Covid 19 epidemic meant that non-standardised instruments had to be used for research.

Dariusz Skonieczko, the curator of The National Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw, who studied the culture and aesthetics of the Batonga people from Zimbabwe, encountered this situation. Traditional in situ examinations were not possible and due to the advanced age of some callers, they had to be continued as soon as possible. In this context, the curator used instant messaging and developed a communication system with the interlocutors in Zimbabwe. This led to an interview with Nganga of the Batonga people, which was published in the *New Ethnography* in 2021.

This paper will be a reflection on research in a changing world and an attempt to compare traditional methods with those that require an extraordinary amount of time.

**Agnieszka Staszczuk** (Jagiellonian University & Polish Institute of World Art Studies)

**Western viewers – eastern art objects. Reading the message, understanding the content, expanding knowledge about the world and the human species**

In my studies of Indian artworks, I focused on their potential as the media communicating universal human needs. Thus, while researching the stone cult sculptures dated to the first centuries of our era, created in North India, I tried to find their key, cross-cultural elements. Then, such analyses were important, as well as the researchers' views on objects of worship, and of practices, in which the attention was paid to symbolism and ways of communicating certain content, so that the viewer-user could "read" images without any doubts. On the one hand, there is this question of the coding processes, on the other, comprehension of the decryption processes, especially in the case of images used in religious practices.

In my presentation, I would like to refer to interdisciplinary methods of researching artworks (based on the tools proposed by Boehm, Freedberg, Sperber, or Timalina), and to discern which symbols, content, and at the same time the needs of people behind them, can be considered atemporal, and/or cross-cultural. The purpose of identifying such elements is to address the hesitations of many researchers - to what extent can the meaning of an artwork be perceived outside the context, i.e., by someone not being a representative of a given culture, and what is the role of the so-called cultural filter in encoding information in an image. I will use the example of representations of auspicious or protective deities whose responsibility was to take care of fertility and prosperity, and to protect children.

For contemporary viewers, the objects of art under discussion can therefore become a source of knowledge about ancient societies, their customs, and values. Artworks are also tangible evidence of the role of man in creating reality, in line with Timalina's statement (*Language of Images*): "To read images (...) is to explore human creativity." In his opinion, the cult of images gives the opportunity to look at human imagination and ingenuity to illustrate divinity. In my opinion, it also offers the possibility



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to focus on quite common discussions: which should be placed first or credited more important in cultural studies - language or image? In arts and rituals, verbal language can play an auxiliary role when juxtaposed with metaphorical and symbolic communication. The pictorial-symbolic language is basic in the interaction of art and religion with the psyche, especially in response to human needs to visualise deities that offer protection and reduction of the emotion of fear. These needs, to some extent, may be understood as natural and therefore cross-cultural.

**Prof. Tomasz Torbus** (Institute of Art History, Gdańsk University & Polish Institute of World Art Studies)

### **Remarks on supposed artistic relations between thirteenth- and fourteenth- century Prussia and the Islamic and Byzantine cultures in the Middle East**

Founded at Acre, Palestine, the Teutonic Order governed an independent Prussian state on the southern Baltic coast, the important region for Hanseatic League. During this session we shall explore in what degree the architecture of the Teutonic Order differs from the typical Hanseatic architecture, more or less similar from Lubeck to the nowadays Baltic States. Can we trace some connections to the Palestinian Islamic or Byzantine architecture, as researches stress it for more than 100 years. Do we really have evidence for such a remote artistic contacts or shall we deal with this theory as only a mythos.

**Dawit Tsadik** (Mekelle University)

### **Strategies for sustainable management and conservation church paintings**

Assessment and restoration of painting determines how reliably an existing painting is able to carry current and future major problems for a given time period. When there are noticeable water marks, scratches, defects, damage and decay in a painting, such as visible cracks damaging the material property and other elements of the building due to environmental conditions and human impact, studies have to be carried out to determine the present condition and status of the painting. A study and restoration was conducted in Abrha we Atsbiha, Abune Yem'ata, Debre Tsiyon and the Sillasé Cheleqot Monastery paintings. Primary and secondary data were collected to evaluate the safety and current condition of painting in order to suggestions and provide possible restoration solutions. Primary data were collected by employing methods such as visual assessment, visual observation, inspection, sketching, measuring, photographing, painting identification and material used etc. Besides, primary data were also collected through interviews, questionnaires and observation to generate both qualitative and quantitative data. The study shows that Abrha we Atsbiha, Abune Yem'ata, Debre Tsiyon and the Sillasé Cheleqot paintings have a great aesthetic, economical, historical, socio-political value and it is one of the most significant cultural assets for the local community, the region and the country as well. However, the painting is facing degradation, defect and damages because of natural (biological, plant leaf, termite attack and decay due to fungus etc.) and manmade (water leakages, poor plastering, pollution, manifested in the form of unstable foundation and cracks). In order to increase the life cycle of the paintings, they need a proper and periodic restoration, preservation and conservation using appropriate materials and techniques. To do



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so, every stakeholder should contribute substantially to save this magnificent painting. As part of personal contribution more than 11 paintings were restored from all mentioned monasteries and churches.

**Kinga Turkowska** (Chair of African Languages and Cultures & Archeo-Oriental Studies Research Group, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)

**Communication through art - the case of Oromo Cultural Center in Addis Ababa. The role of art in empowering the Oromo identity.**

In recent years Ethiopia has seen a growing interest in Oromo culture, history and art. This is related to the political changes taking place in Ethiopia and the growing significance of ethnic identity, within the various groups living in Ethiopia. The Oromo themselves believe that they were a discriminated majority in Ethiopia.

The Oromo Cultural Center in Addis Ababa plays an important role in reshaping and empowering the national and ethnic identity among Oromos. The Center includes a library, archive, theater, research centre and exhibition. Besides the ethnographic collection the art is broadly presented in the exhibition.

The presentation will show and discuss the art (painting, sculpture and others) which are located at the Center. It will discuss representations of elements of Oromo culture that were important to the creators of the exhibition and the artists who exhibit there. It will be presented how through art, and the elements of the exhibition, the creators communicate their message about Oromo identity and history.

The paper is based on research conducted in Addis Ababa in October 2022.

**Dr. Lidia Tuwalska-Napiórkowska** (Department of Hebrew Studies, Faculty of Oriental Studies University of Warsaw)

**The folktale of Rustam in Neo-Aramaic: the art of storytelling**

The folktale of Rustam in Neo-Aramaic: the art of storytelling Oral literature may sound like an oxymoron to some; however it constitutes a legitimate part of the heritage of the cultures and communities with little or no written literature or language standard. The Neo-Aramaic communities from northern Kurdistan are a case in point, where folktales, historical anecdotes, description of traditional husbandry and farming, as well as proverbs and sayings survive but solely as oral legacy (cf. Aloni 2015; 2022). In this talk, I wish to explore one of the folktales which I recorded in the town of Diyana (north of Erbil, Kurdish autonomous region) told in the Neo-Aramaic dialect of Diyana-Zariyaw and featuring Rustam, the hero widely popular in the area. First, I will refer to some common motifs found in the Neo-Aramaic version of the story with its classical rendition in Ferdousi's Shahname (Robinson 2015), as well as with the Kurdish version as told in the surrounding communities (Socin and Prym 1890; Arakelova 1998). Nonetheless, my talk will largely concentrate on the linguistics means of enlivening the folktale, or, in other words, the artistic measures of delivering the performance available to the narrator. Combined with presenting the audiovisual material, I wish to illustrate some techniques from the rich repertoire of the speaker to narrate the story, such as introducing questions and dialogues, using mirative modality, exclamations and gestures. All these constitute, I will claim,



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the strategies of building structure of the oral communication, equivalent to division into chapters, paragraphs and punctuation in the written texts. At the same time, I will argue that they belong to the unique means of oral literature, supporting the claim that “folklore is a special form of creation” (Jacobson and Bogatyrev 1929).

**Olgierd Uziembło** (Department of Sinology, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)

### **Visual communication as identity expression**

In my work with Endangered Alphabets (foundation working on preserving writing systems) I came across numerous ways of expressing identity of a given endangered culture that cannot be expressly called a writing system (script), and yet may both – convey meaning and make a permanent record of such a message, therefore act similar to a writing system. On the other hand they often lack complication, are limited in their expression, and are therefore usually not considered writing system. Some of those (weaving, knots, fabric patterns) are often considered a vestige of long lost scripts, and are definitely a way of controlling and presenting identity of their users. From endangered culture point of view it is important to understand the way the identity is constructed, but also how should we support such visual communication systems in a melting pot of globalization. I am going to discuss those issues based upon such material as from South America (Tokapu) through Africa (Adinkra symbolics, Nsibidi, Kanga Cloth) and all the way to China (Miao-Hmong fabric traditions). There are also other performative and meaning making traditions, from talisman making to sand drawing, also popular among many cultures, that will be presented in this paper. The conclusion will be - I hope - a discussion of the place of visual communication in culture preservation across the world.

**Dr. Marta Widy-Behiesse** (Department for European Islam Studies & Research Centre of Culture and Art of Asia and Africa, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)

### **European stand ups by Muslim performers in the context of postcolonial discourse**

Muslims have been living in the so-called Western world for generations, shaping their identity among different societies and their place in the public space. Their activity and works are becoming an important element of contemporary western culture and, at the same time, a means to express their views, identities and difficulties they are facing. One of the contemporary and increasingly popular phenomenon is the -stand-up comedy. Muslim comedians are performing on stages in Western Europe and the US, entertaining the audience with thought-provoking, bitter irony. Using the methodology of qualitative research employed in cultural studies, this paper attempts to answer the question what content, traditions and stereotypes Muslim comedians draw on, whether they use self-irony and exoticisation, as well as whether their works fit into the post-colonial discourse.

**Dr. Anna Zalewska** (Chair of Japanese Studies, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw)

### **Contemporary Japanese calligraphy as seen through the categories on major calligraphy exhibitions**

*Kanji* ideograms have been used in Japan as a means of written communication since at least 1500 years ago. Later they were joined by two *kana* syllabaries, created by the Japanese on the basis of



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*kanji*, and the three writing systems have been used together since. Very soon they started also to be used with artistic intent and calligraphy (called *shodō*, the way of writing) became one of the leading art forms in Japan. Complex and beautiful form of *kanji* and *kana*, number of strokes ranging from 1 to more than 30, combining meaning with form and variant readings, not to mention variety of inks, papers and brushes – all these traits give to Japanese writing system infinite possibilities of artistic expression.

Today calligraphy to many Japanese is as important art, skill or hobby as it has been for many centuries. It is practiced by children as young as 4 years, adults and seniors throughout the country. Both amateurs and professionals take part in countless calligraphy exhibitions organized locally (in schools, temples, local museums or culture centers etc.) and nationwide (in museums and art galleries). Following these exhibitions, large and small, can give a good understanding of what is Japanese calligraphy today.

Several large scale exhibitions are organized annually and Mainichi Calligraphy Exhibition is one of the most important. The exhibits in it are organized in seven categories (*kanji*, *kana*, modern poetry and prose, large *kanji*, avant-garde, wood engraving, seal engraving). In this paper I want to present major calligraphy exhibitions in Japan and examples of works representing categories mentioned above, as a way of examining possibilities of artistic expression of contemporary Japanese calligraphy.

## **ROUND TABLES:**

### **1. Cross-cultural communication in contemporary chanoyu practice**

Moderation:

**Urszula Mach-Bryson** (Chair of Japanese Studies in the Department of Oriental Studies at the University of Warsaw, president of the Urasenke Tankokai Association in Warsaw, certified chanoyu instructor)

With the participation of:

**Sara Klingenstein** (PhD candidate in the Committee on the Study of Religion at Harvard University, active chanoyu practitioner)

**Ahmad Saqfalhait** (Associate Chair and Associate Professor of Practice at the Department of the Arts, The American University in Cairo, active designer and chanoyu practitioner)

**Michael Ricci** (Raku Potter and Mixed Media Sculptor, studied traditional Japanese Raku pottery in Kanazawa within the Ohi household, certified chanoyu instructor)

Is the Japanese Way of Tea as a cultural construct intelligible to a wider audience than just tea practitioners? And how does it change, when the tea practice finds its way to cultures outside Japan? How restricting or how universal can its language be? Exploring the means of expression fused into the characteristics of the tradition of the Japanese Way of Tea, the round table members will look into some possibilities of cross-cultural dialog and inspiration.



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## **2. Challenges of Presenting Asian Art in Polish Museums**

With the participation of:

Joanna Bojarska-Cieřlik (National Museum in Warsaw)

Dr. Magdalena Pinker (Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, National Museum in Warsaw)

Joanna Popkowska (National Museum in Warsaw)

Justyna Ząłeska (National Museum in Warsaw)

There are almost 1000 museums in Poland. Despite this significant sum, the number of exhibitions presenting Asian artistic heritage is relatively low. Although Korean and Japanese culture – or rather pop culture – has become popular in recent years, especially among the younger generation, it does not influence the quantity of “Oriental” shows. Perhaps one of the reasons for this situation are challenges that arise when presenting Asian art to a Polish audience. Art is considered to be a form of communication that might overcome linguistic, cultural and social barriers. Nevertheless, displaying it in the museum context requires special tools and carefully thought out ways of presentation.

The debate between museum curators specialized in Asian art (both East and West Asian) is aimed to present the difficulties of exhibiting this kind of art and discuss the potential solutions. Is it possible to explain all the complicated contexts of Asian art to a general audience without over-simplifications and sweeping generalizations? How to objectively present art of a foreign nation despite the political circumstances? How decolonial discourse influences the way of exhibiting non-European art in Poland? What are the specific needs of Polish viewers and how can we meet them?

Basing on their broad experience the curators of Islamic, Chinese and Japanese art from the National Museum in Warsaw will discuss the issues that play an important role in the creation and shaping of an exhibition for viewers with different cultural backgrounds.