Historisches Seminar

Tagung – Conference

Den Quellen (neu) begegnen – (Re)encountering the Sources

150+

GRÜNDUNGSJUBILÄUM HISTORISCHES SEMINAR

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Droysen praktisch: Quellen mobilisieren, Quellen verstehen

Johann Gustav Droysen is generally regarded as the father of historical source criticism. But how did he get hold of his sources? Access to sequestered historical material was an exclusive social privilege in the mid-19th century and not a general and equal social right. While so far scholarship has focused on Droysen's concepts and reflections, my analysis reveals a "historische Verstehen" that was pragmatic, conceptually multifaceted and decisively guided by the practice of collecting. By examining Droysen's work on his biographical study "Das Leben des Feldmarschalls Grafen York von Wartenburg", a little-noticed social component of historical research comes to light. Droysen's acquisition of material was reliant upon favours, support and/or gifts of sources. This was not without effect for his representation of the past and the criticism and analysis of the source material: Droysen expressed his gratitude in his historical study with thanks and discretion, with truth and reverence – not without successfully demonstrating his own credibility and authority as a source-savvy historian of the modern era.

Sven Günther, Changchun

Johann Gustav Droyens *Historik*: Noch immer der Leitfaden für historische Quellenanalyse und -interpretation im 21. Jahrhundert?

J.G. Droysen's *Historik*, spread mainly via his *Grundriss der Historik* ([3]1882; English trans. 1897) remains one of the basic readings for historians. At his time in the second half of the 19th century, Droysen attempted to establish and place History as a distinct academic discipline in between Theology/Philosophy and Natural Sciences, and he found History's particularity and distinctiveness in adding "understanding" to "speculating/finding out" (Philosophy/Theology, in terms of Logic) and "explaining" (Natural Sciences). This "ethical" perspective Droysen applies to the critical analysis (outer and inner critique) and interpretation of any source material, combining observations on pragmatics, conditions, underlying acts of wills, and the partaking of the individual in the "moral potencies". Particularly, his notion that one has to situate the perspective of a specific source against the perspective of other sources relating to the respective topic, and to think about the own perspective, both enabling "understanding" of the past but also bringing it to one's own time with the same tension between the "individual" and "society" (see Spieler 1970), is noteworthy since it mirrors current discussions and underlying discourses among the so-called post-structuralist scientific community.

The paper will approach the question of the usefulness of Droysen's *Historik* for nowadays source-based research in the field of History by linking it with methods deriving from frames and framing, affordance, and multimodality theories (cf. S. Günther forthcoming; E. Günther 2021). I shall show to what degree Droysen was already integrating aspects of neuro- and social sciences as well as communication studies into his historiology, and to what extent his approach had limits in regard to the basis of all our studies, sources, and the stance of historians in and to their own time (cf. Nippel 2012).

Günther, E. 2021: "Mehrdeutigkeiten antiker Bilder als Deutungspotenzial. Zu den Interdependenzen von Affordanzen und *frames* im Rezeptionsprozess." In: ead. and J. Fabricius (eds.), *Mehrdeutigkeiten. Rahmentheorien und Affordanzkonzepte in der archäologischen Bildwissenschaft*. Philippika 147. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1–40.

Günther, S. forthcoming 2022: "Frames and Framing Theory *avant la lettre?* Johann Gustav Droysen's *Historik* and the Future of Ancient Studies." In: E. Günther and S. Günther (eds.), *Frames and Framing in Antiquity I. Selected Papers of the First Conference.* Supplements to the Journal of Ancient Civilizations 9. Changchun: The Institute for the History of Ancient Civilizations.

Nippel, W. 2012: "Das forschende Verstehen, die Objektivität des Historikers und die Funktion der Archive. Zum Kontext von Droysens Geschichtstheorie." In: St. Rebenich and H.-U. Wiemer (eds.), *Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–1884), Philosophie und Politik. Historie und Philologie*. Campus Historische Studien 61. Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 337–391.

Spieler, K.-H. 1970: *Untersuchungen zu Johann Gustav Droysens „Historik"*. Historische Forschungen 3. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

Birgit Tremml-Werner, Växjö

Performance and Authenticity: Japanese Diplomatics (*komonjogaku*) in the Making

For a few decades in the early 1600s, Japanese merchants and sailors crossed the oceans to Southeast Asia and the Philippines, while Japanese ports welcomed European travellers. These short but intense contacts play an unproportionally large role in Japanese political, cultural, and economic history. However, Japanese sources to study these events are scarce. These circumstances challenge the position of Japanese diplomatics. Known as *komonjogaku* (sometimes also translated as paleography) it is often performed with two techniques: *kaidoku* (a Japanese term for 'reading and solving') and *yomikudashi* 読み下し, which originally referred to the process of crafting a Japanese transcription of a text written in classical Chinese. Until today these techniques are responsible for the hierarchy between historical sources and the academic study of history in and about Japan. But what if the available sources, as in the case of the selected example, are not cut out for these practices? In that case, the translation of foreign language primary sources into Japanese needs to be explored. Until today entire source editions based on literal translations add to multi-layered historical knowledge production. In my presentation I will juxtapose the performative practices of professional academic historians with the narration of Tokugawa Japanese global connections in popular/public history projects, to discuss the tension of authenticity on the one hand, and myth-building and heroization on the other.

John-Paul Ghobrial, Oxford

When Imagination Misleads Us? Fiction, Magazine Journalism, and the Moving Stories of Middle Eastern Sectarianism in Early Twentieth-Century America

The emergence of sectarianism forms a key element of the impact of modernization and globalization on Middle Eastern history. Yet we still lack a full picture of how new forms of sectarianism developed within the region, and in exile, and how these sectarianisms became such a powerful force in the volatile history of a decolonizing Middle East. This paper will explore what I call the 'moving stories', or emotive forms of storytelling, used by individuals to describe, explain, and represent sectarianism as much to themselves as to multiple publics in local, national, and international contexts. However, writing this type of history immediately opens up a deeper set of challenges because it requires us to study the lives of mobile individuals whose histories often lay hidden in the cracks between multiple archival regimes of record-keeping. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges facing our understanding of sectarianism in the early twentieth century relates to what one scholar has called the 'vexed archives' of the Middle East and the problematic of a 'history without documents'.

Faced with these challenges, this paper experiments with the opportunities and pitfalls of using a particular set of sources: works of fiction, magazine journalism, and popular autobiographies, written by Middle Eastern migrants but also by those writers who encountered them in twentieth-century America. In particular, this paper will offer a close study of the activities and publications of a little-known Canadian writer, Norman Duncan (1871-1916), whose brief career across America, Newfoundland, and the Middle East offers an intriguing window into the ways in which literature, journalism, and oral history interacted to produce a distinct picture of Middle Eastern sectarianism in this period. In doing so, this paper reflects on how historians might use storytelling in its multiple forms as a window into the past, even when the sources appear themselves to be little more than the product of imagination, invention, and improvisation.

Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, New York

From Historical Sources to Past Resources: (Re)Tracing the Agency of Documentary Practices in Medieval Culture

The term long favored by scholars to designate the records of past societies, 'source,' makes strong semantic claims. In 1627, Gabriel Naudé, librarian to Cardinal Mazarin, insisted that one ought to privilege the first authors of each discipline 'because it is with human doctrine as with water, which is never more beautiful and clearer than when at its source.' A poetic axiom should not substitute for method and yet this one has prevailed in crediting the implicit assumption that materials from the past, as sources or more recently as data, were produced, indeed given to serve as original documentation for future historians. Recent scholarship has returned historicity to sources by considering their materiality, the strategies for their preservation, the forms of their archival arrangements, and their modes of communication. Focusing on the manuscript culture of the medieval West, I propose to analyze the making, agency, and operations of written artefacts, sealed charters, within the communities that produced and used them. These artefacts were resources that permitted groups and individuals to act in their society, to partner with each other. I will aim to capture the ways in which the reach of hand-writing extended well beyond the textual to mobilize the senses, touch in particular, in order to translate situated chains of practices into a meta-temporal symbiosis between human actors and their actions recorded in written *acta*. Made of skin and wax, charters and seals were in and of themselves received as non-propositional instruments, as haptic traces of human participation and commitment whose sensorial and material dimensions had pre-reflective immediacy. I contend that, though meta-textual, such operations were, and are fully part of the informative dimension of our 'sources.'

The Effect of the Real

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Ho Chi Tim, Singapur

From Browsing to Blinkers: The Narrowing Effect of Digitization on Archival Research

In 2014, historians of late colonial Singapore were excited by the online publication of a digital copy of a previously classified translated transcript of a rally speech. Originally rendered in 1956, the speech was supposedly deemed incendiary then to detain the speech-giver without trial. The online sharing of the transcript was accompanied by a trained historian's commentary, which argued the transcript vindicates the speech-giver of any wrongdoing. However, a closer examination of the file, from which the transcript originated, indicates that it is likely the transcript has been presented extremely narrowly and likely out of context of the purpose of the original file.

Using this issue as the example, my paper discusses some of the implications of the digital archival record on historical research and related matters, particularly on perceptions of knowledge and authority, and on public history. The "effect of the real" does not merely affect public perceptions of the past or give a false sense of knowledge and authority. It also reinforces the need to be continuously aware of, and perhaps also, to educate the public on the historical method when using archival records. Just as archivists have to keep pace with evolving demands of digital archives and research, historians have also to ensure a disciplined approach to the sources, even as we get excited over a new discovery or the declassification of a previously secret source.

This is especially important in this digital age as increased availability and access to historical sources brings historians into closer contact with the public and its varied expectations. It becomes even more critical that the historian's approach and presentation of the archival source stays true to the basic tenets of scholarship, i.e. to ensure they are represented accurately and in context, to ensure public expectations of the trained historian's integrity are met.

Hugo Silveira Pereira, Lissabon

Counteracting Colonial Storylines through Photography: Challenging the Portuguese Colonial Past

Throughout the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, investment in science, technology, and medicine was included in the agendas of European and non-European nations, directed to both the mainland territories and the overseas domains. The implementation of technoscientific infrastructure, and the agency of practitioners and users was recorded by thousands of photographs. For many years, photographs were used as auxiliary tools to illustrate one's argument. Contrariwise, I claim that photography is a key primary source to understand the historical construction of technoscientific systems and their engagement with society. To sustain this argument, I argue that photography was subjectively influenced by the photographers, their commissioners, and those who disseminated it (Ryan, 1997); but by being presented and accepted as a completely objective product, it became a powerful tool to produce ideology (Kelsey 2016). In this sense, photography was crucial to create technological landscapes and promote narratives of progress. I draw from the understanding of landscape, not as a natural phenomenon, but as a man-made socio-cultural construction (Jackson 1984). In this vein, landscapes where technology, science, and medicine are distinguishing elements may be transmogrified into technological and scientific landscapes (Nye 1999). To overcome photography's deceptive appearance of objectivity, I use a methodology that combines semiotics (Barthes 1972) with the analysis of historical contexts of photography (Daniels & Cosgrove 1988), which I apply to the case of Portugal between the 1870s and the 1920s.

Barthes, R. (1972). Mythologies. NY: Noonday
Daniels, S. and Cosgrove, D. (1988). The Iconography of Landscape. Cambridge, Cambridge U. Press
Jackson, A. B. (1984). Discovering the Vernacular Landscape. New Haven: Yale U. Press
Kelsey, R. (2016). Is Landscape Photography. In Is Landscape…? Essays on the Identity of Landscape, eds. G. Doherty and C. Waldheim, 71-92. London: Routledge
Nye, D. E. (1999). American Technological Sublime. Cambridge: MIT Press
Ryan, J. R. (1997) Picturing Empire. Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire. Chicago: U. Chicago Press

Eva Brugger, Zürich

Knowledge in the Making: Practical Approaches and Material Culture in Early Modern Crafting History

Practical approaches have played an increasingly important role in craft history in recent years. The approaches generate new forms of knowledge and new impulses for historical scholarship in general. Influenced by Science and Technology Studies, research and teaching projects integrate practical laboratories such as production processes. Successful implementation of the laboratories requires new interdisciplinary collaborations and new ways of presenting results.

In my presentation, I will focus on a teaching project on the history of sustainability and use the example of Swiss textile history to ask how historical work can be fruitfully linked with practical laboratories and digital skills.

Anne Kolb, Jens Bartels, Zürich

Von der Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung zur digitalen EDCS: Sammlung, Präsentation und Auswertung epigraphischer Quellen

Since the Middle Ages, ancient inscriptions have been a medium through which people of later eras have sought access to classical antiquity. The way inscriptions were dealt with varied greatly. The spectrum ranges from mere collecting to the preparation of inscriptions for other users, to the annotation of single or multiple inscriptions, and to the use of inscriptions as sources for historical narratives. The lecture offers a brief historical overview and presents the latest developments.

Kathrin Kininger, Wien

Das historische Archiv im 21. Jahrhundert: Moderner Dienstleister oder Elfenbeinturm?

Today, access to the archive is easier than ever before. Archivists have shed their reputation as grim gatekeepers, the archive increasingly sees itself as a service provider for authorities and citizens, and countless sources are digitally available online ubiquitously.

The *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* in Vienna, founded by Maria Theresa in 1749, was already in the 19th century, in addition to its main function as a public authority archive, an institution available for scholarly research. Not least among the archivists themselves are many famous representatives of the historians' guild. Today, the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* is a purely historical archive whose holdings end grosso modo with the year 1918. The main task of the archivists is therefore to make the stored sources accessible. In the lecture it will be explained in more detail how today's methods and limits of source use are perceived from the archivists' point of view. Is the increasingly overflowing offer of digitally available sources being used? What is the state of the user's skills? How is research guided by digitization? What *archival silences* are created as a result? And what increase in significance does the analog object experience in the age of digital availability?

These questions will be addressed from the perspective of the archivist working in the historical archive, and thus the perspective of the source-custodian institution will be presented.

Maria Benauer, Wien

Digitale Quellenkritik im Spiegel archivischer (Ohn)macht? E-Mails als komplexe quellenkundliche Objekte

Emails are the most frequently used electronic communication medium worldwide. Due to their convenient and economical functionality, they have become an integral component of almost any sphere of human interaction in the digital age. As a historical source, they therefore allow insights into individual realities and organisational processes which previously have lacked a written manifestation. The preservation of emails for future usage, however, challenges archivists in practical as well as conceptual ways. Thus, current practices in email archiving must be considered a product of both archival power and powerlessness.

Along the archival process, archivists wield power over the construction of historical narratives on multiple levels, while being exposed to power mechanisms of upstream recordkeeping systems themselves. They not only determine the scope of emails that are captured for preservation, but also moderate their form and context of preservation. By doing so, archivists significantly limit the interpretability and scope of future use of email records. As a result, emails may be classified and interpreted as different genres of sources depending on the respective archival strategy. To assess emails as a historical source, it therefore is of crucial importance that historians hold knowledge of the processes emails have undergone from their creation to their archival acquisition. Thus, the documentation of power mechanisms that affect chance and coincidence of archival transmission (Arnold Esch) poses a prerequisite for source criticism in the digital age.

This paper examines the impact of archival power mechanisms on the historical scholarship. By discussing internationally established concepts for the appraisal of government emails with regard to their implications for historical source studies, it provides an interdisciplinary perspective on the source genre(s) "email". It does so by employing a postmodern archival approach and therefore explores new perspectives for digital source studies.

Tobias Hodel, Bern

Digital turn ↔ Quellen? Ein kritischer Blick auf Aufbereitungs- und Auswertungspraktiken im Zeitalter der Digitalisierung

The digital turn promises new, faster, and/or more accurate preparation and evaluation methods in the historical sciences. Ten years after Peter Haber's groundbreaking "Digital Past," it is time to contrast past promises with current practices, standards, and digital possibilities in dealing with sources. In doing so, we discover not only a multitude of methods and applications that have found their way into the methodological apparatus of historians in recent years due to machine learning processes but also a gap in the communication and critical perspective of the methods.

The concept of "source" is a central starting point in these considerations since, on the one hand, much effort is put into the preparation and standardization of documents, especially in digital editions. On the other hand, the closely related source criticism must keep pace with the digital forms to classify and constructively use the obtained statements/forms of knowledge.

Starting from the concept of the source, epistemological assumptions, which are reflected in the form, manner, and method of source preparation, must be brought into line with the applied forms of interpretation and with the technologies linked to them. Such an approach counteracts trends that focus only on parts of the process and hand over responsibility to algorithms.

Using automated text recognition and forms of analysis, in particular, Topic Modeling and Named Entity Recognition, the paper shows that we should not only apply machine learning-based methods. Furthermore, we need to understand them to increase the size of source collections and match them with pertinent questions.

Ultimately, historical scholarship is at a neuralgic point that entails the negotiation of methods on several levels: In addition to the (classical) methodologies, technical procedures that use forms of artificial intelligence are coming into focus. The levels of practices and methods are not necessarily in conflict but can often be thought of and used in parallel.

In short, we need to consider how collections of source material can be meaningfully addressed, considering which questions should be brought up and which methods and technologies are used. This set of perspectives is accompanied by the question of the skills and forms of knowledge that future historians must bring.