



Istanbul, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025

## **Workshop**

### **Emotions and the Body. Entangled Concepts in the Bengal to Balkans Complex**

Organised in cooperation between the Orient Institut Istanbul, Orient Institut Beirut, Freie Universität Berlin, Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies in Delhi, and the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul.

Time and venue: September 25-26, 2025, Orient-Institut Istanbul.

In the last generation, the investigation of the history and contemporary relevance of concepts has spread beyond the region for which it had been developed. We now have strong centers for the history of concepts not only for the different European languages, but also for Latin America and for East Asia. Building upon these developments, this workshop will both identify historical evolutions and entanglements of concepts within the Bengal-to-Balkans-complex and critically discuss the theoretical implications and potentials of conceptual history in the region.

Therefore, we are inviting contributions which address both the theoretical and the empirical challenges of the field:

To a very large extent, the theory and methodology underlying the history of concepts has until now been developed on the basis of European empirical material. We challenge this by investigating what history of concepts would look like, if we start from our regional focus and incorporate the ways the historical actors have reflected upon questions of creation of knowledge and interpretation and their representation in language and other signs. We are further interested in what the exploration of new archives (music and its ephemerality, performances, the visual ...) implies for the further theorization of concepts. With this we aim at contributing to the literature of decolonizing epistemes through a focus on the global South.

Emotions and bodies play an important and still largely underestimated role in the generation of concepts. Challenging the assumption that concepts are in the first place generated by a rational debate, in which the validity of arguments plays a central role, we look at how emotions and bodies contribute to the creation of knowledge and to its plausibility and its validation. This leads to a questioning of the dichotomy between rationality and emotions at the theoretical level but also provides a line of enquiry into the historical reflections, which negotiated this dichotomy in varying ways.

At the empirical level, we look at concepts of emotions as an umbrella category and explore their boundaries. This includes the exploration of what authors tell us that an emotion is, how emotions arise and how they can be controlled, what can be done through emotions, or what emotions prevent people from doing, and

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finally what the other of emotion is. Therefore, we both invite contributions on concepts of emotions, but also on individual emotions.

The body is closely linked to the emotions as their carrier. It contributes to the generation of concepts, knowledge, and interpretation, and in turn is brought forth by them. Concepts of gender are the most discussed instance, but of course not the only one. Again, we aim at a dialogue with the theories produced by the historical and present-day actors. Hence we are inviting contributions on body concepts (importance of the humors, the link between bodies and emotions, the role of bodies for a virtuous life, as the centre of identity or its loss); as well as on the need and possibility of an education of the body (discipline, but also the training of the ability to be moved to tears by the beauty of a verse, or to enter *hal* or *vecd* at the sound of spiritual songs).

Our time frame extends from the early modern to the present. We aim at establishing a dialogue between scholars working on different periods, but also on different regions and languages within the Bengal to Balkan complex.

The workshop will be the concluding part of the second bi-annual meeting Summer Meeting on the Entangled Histories of Concepts in the Bengal to Balkans Complex (B2B). The workshop will be preceded by a three-day seminar for doctoral students and early post-docs who will also form an audience of our workshop that otherwise is planned to be organized as a closed meeting.

Participants are expected to contribute to the publication of the papers. Currently the organizers are exploring possibilities to publish a special issue in a pertinent journal.

**The organizing committee:**

Jens Hanssen (Orient Institut Beirut/Toronto University)  
 Elke Hartmann (Freie Universität Berlin)  
 Bilge Karbi (Orient Institut Istanbul)  
 Christoph K. Neumann (Orient Institut Istanbul)  
 Margrit Pernau (Max Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung; Freie Universität Berlin)  
 Sebastian Schwecke (Max Weber Forum, Delhi)  
 Alp Eren Topal (Ibn Haldun University)  
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 Einar Wigen (University of Oslo)  
 Florian Zemmin (Freie Universität Berlin)

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