

A talk given by **Gita Dharampal-Frick**, Head and Professor of History, South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg Visiting Max Kade Professor

“Early Modern Transcultural Narratives: German Empirical Discourse on India (1500-1750)”



(Hans Burgkmaier, 1508, Woodcut illustration of the Raja of Cochin in triumphal procession)

German empirical narratives on India dating from the early modern period, as will be under-scored in this talk, provide a paradigmatic case-study for unravelling the hermeneutics of pre-colonial transcultural encounters. The presentation, accompanied by historical illustrations, will discuss how the exotic fascination for this distant land in the outgoing Middle Ages gradually became enhanced at the beginning of 16th century by informative reportage which developed into detailed proto-ethnography by the early 18th century. These historical descriptions of Indian society, its polity and its religious practices, as will be highlighted, testify to the implicit acknowledgement of a relationship of relative coevalness existing between pre-industrial Germany and late pre-colonial India – a stance which stands in stark contrast to later 19th century hegemonic conceptions of the Asian subcontinent. Consequently, this talk proposes that early modern German empirical discourse on India can serve as a counterfoil to elucidate categorical shifts, normative disruptions and possible conceptual alternatives to European or Western interpretations of the Asian subcontinent.

Monday, October 7th, 2013
Penn State University
102 Weaver Building 4:00-5:00 p.m.

Sponsored by the Max Kade German-American Research Institute, History, German and Germanic Languages and Literatures and The Committee for Early Modern Studies (CEMS)

This publication is available in alternative media on request. Penn State encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please consult Mary Jo Schillings, mjs9@psu.edu, in advance of your participation or visit. Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce. U.Ed. LBA