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Einladung zum Vortrag

Dr. habil.

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A Paper Journey: Exploring Local Knowledge of Papermaking in the Himalayas

Dr habil. Agnieszka Helman-Ważny (Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg, Germany and Department of Books and Media History at the University of Warsaw, Poland) is a paper historian, conservator and manuscriptologist. Her specialty is the early history of paper, Tibetan and Central Asian books and development of new methods for examining, identifying, and conserving ancient books and other paper objects from Asia. She holds an M.A. in Paper and Book Conservation from the Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art at the Fine Arts Academy in Warsaw, Poland, and a Ph.D. in Conservation Science from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. In 2017 she was awarded a degree of habilitated doctor in Humanities/Bibliology and Information Science from the Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies, University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland, and in 2018 a PD title in Archaeometry from the Fakultät für Geisteswissenschaften, Fachbereich Kulturwissenschaften, Universität Hamburg.

This lecture presents a wider view of the history of the Tibetan papermaking technology adopted in Nepal together with the innovation and transmission of papermaking knowledge in the Himalayas. It aims to integrate an understanding of technologies with the historical development and transmission of social and cultural practices, and the possibilities of mapping the papermaking workshops and areas known for paper production in Tibet and Nepal. The high altitude of the Himalayas together with their climatic extremes make the local vegetation distinctive from all other areas of Asia. The specificity of Tibetan papermaking lies in the properties of these native plants, the living conditions of peoples dwelling on the world's highest plateau, and aspects of their culture that together create a distinctive craft. The talk explores history, trade, modes of production, and the transfer of papermaking technologies across the Himalayas, and how tradition interacts with natural recourses, climate conditions and the ways in which the spread of paper is connected to trade in the region.