

Conference Announcement – Call for Papers

African-Asian Encounters (III)

Afrasian Transformations: Beyond Grand Narratives?

Goethe University Frankfurt, September 28-30, 2016

Across various disciplines, our understanding of African-Asian interactions and their transformative potential has been significantly shaped by grand narratives and theoretical frameworks. The Global South, postcolonialism, the Indian Ocean World or China's Scramble for Africa are routinely invoked to understand African-Asian encounters, as are different notions of development, area studies or transregionalism. These epistemological lenses have informed our perspectives and generated important insights, but they have also created significant blind spots. For instance, restricting the focus of attention to Chinese agency shifts attention away from other Asian (and African) actors. Many scholars working on the Indian Ocean emphasize connectivity but pay little attention to conflict and boundary making. Concepts such as the Global South or postcolonialism highlight a common past of oppression and resistance, but it is by no means certain whether that past can serve as secure orientation for the present and the future. The intricate small and large Afrasian stories of transformation that we encounter in our research often seem to strain against the limits imposed by the grand narratives we habitually come across in our fields of expertise. Coming to terms with Afrasian transformations in the social world may indeed involve a challenge to revise the theoretical frameworks that inform our own work.

This interdisciplinary conference is part of a series of international conferences on African-Asian Encounters that started with "New Cooperations – New Dependencies?" (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, March 2014) and continued with "Re-Thinking African-Asian Relationships: Changing Realities – New Concepts" (Cape Town, South Africa, March 2015). The Frankfurt Conference invites scholars to take stock of various grand narratives in their respective research work, to critically reconsider current theoretical and methodological frameworks employed in understanding African-Asian interactions, and to discuss how they navigate between empirical work and theory production. In what ways do their findings challenge existing grand narratives? Do we need to rethink or modify these narratives? Should we move beyond grand narratives altogether? Or can we come up with new narratives that capture present – and future – Afrasian realities in new ways?

We invite contributions that theorize African-Asian interactions and address grand narratives prevalent in/across various disciplines. We also welcome contributions that reflect on African-Asian interactions in various fields and connect their empirical findings to the overall conference theme.

Themes:

1. Redefining the Global South

What are the uses of the 'Global South' as an analytical category? How postcolonial are Afrasian interactions? South-South solidarity: a legacy of common struggles, an ideological smokescreen or a utopian vision? Do new multilateral fora, such as BRICS or IBSA change myths and realities of the Global South?

2. Reassessing the Indian Ocean

What are the benefits and limits of the 'Indian Ocean' as an analytical framework for African-Asian interactions? How far does the Indian Ocean World extend and how does its history and memory relate to contemporary realities? How African/Chinese is the Indian Ocean? How do old and new Asian diasporas in Africa relate to each other? Are new African diasporas in Asia part of an Indian Ocean world?

3. Afrasian Approaches to Development

Do African-Asian interactions make a difference to ideas of (world) development? Have they challenged 'western' notions of development? Do they translate into specific Asian (or African) policies and how do they relate to realities on the ground? Have they generated new models of – or counter-narratives to – development?

4. Afrasia in a Wider World

Afrasia: superfluous neologism or necessary transregional perspective? How do transnational and transregional approaches intersect, in which way do they differ? How do African-Asian interactions contribute to the emergence of a multipolar world? In what way do they transform the theory and practice of area studies more generally?

Abstract Submissions

Papers will be allocated 20 minutes for oral presentation. Please submit a 250 to 300-word abstract and a 200-word biographical note **by 15 March 2016**. The conference organizers also accept proposals for panels with three speakers; in this case, all required information on all of the presenters and their papers must be provided. The biographical note should mention the presenter's name and title, affiliation, country, email address, and provide information about disciplinary and professional background, research interests and relevant publications of the applicant. Please indicate to which theme you would like to contribute.

Please send your documents to: afrasia2016@afraso.org

Important Dates

- 15 March 2016: Deadline for Abstracts
- 10 May 2016: Notification of Acceptance / Opening of Registration
- 1 August 2016: Deadline for Presenter Registration
- 1 September 2016: Deadline for Participant Registration
- Conference: 28-30 September 2016

Registration fees will be 100 Euro (by bank transfer to Frankfurt University); further details will be provided upon registration). There is a reduced fee of 60 Euros for graduate students and PhD students (please send proof of your status). Local students and postdocs may attend sessions for free, space permitting. Limited funds are available to support emerging scholars from Africa and Asia.

For all general inquiries please write to: afrasia2016@afraso.org

For more information on the conference visit <http://www.afraso.org>