



GENEALOGIES OF KNOWLEDGE

Genealogies of Knowledge I
Translating Political and Scientific Thought across Time and Space
7-9 December 2017

Call for Panel Papers

The Magic of 'Classical' Languages Script, Sound and Sense in the Translation of Sacred Concepts

Convenor: Hephzibah Israel
University of Edinburgh

What is the nature of a 'sacred' language? When we examine the translation of key concepts and texts across the spectrum of the so-called 'World Religions' we find that much of the nature of their transfer or circulation depends on certain conceptions of languages as sign systems. A minority of key languages are ascribed both 'classical' and 'sacred' status, while the majority are mostly assigned neither. The most obvious that come to mind are Arabic, Greek, Latin and Sanskrit, which at different historical points and to different degrees have been associated both with classical literature and sacred texts. This twinning of the classical and sacred informs the ontologies of these languages, elevating them to a status far above those designated mundane languages. And yet through human history, translations have continuously been undertaken from such 'languages of the gods' (Pollock 2006) into the languages of mortals. How can we study the transfer of sacred concepts between linguistic sign systems that have been conceptualised and deliberately maintained as immensely disparate systems? How does such a classical-sacred ontological make-up of these languages help to construct, diminish, expand, or transform sacred concepts in translation?

This panel seeks to explore the specific links between translation, knowledge construction and modes of signalling the sacred. Contributions to the panel are invited to address translations of concepts from any religious tradition and in any historical period but must focus on translations in the Arabic, Greek, Latin and Sanskrit contexts. Papers should examine the interface between script, sound, orality and textuality in the conception and the reception of the sacred in translation: to what extent do translators rely on the ocular, the aural, the textual and oral to reconstruct key sacred concepts in new contexts? A list of sub themes below is given as a starting point to stimulate discussion on this topic but contributors are invited to explore further:

1. The relationship between 'classical' and 'sacred' in the conception of one of the four languages of the panel and its function in translation
2. Does translation between two classical languages work differently to translation between a 'classical' and a 'vernacular' in conveying the sacred?

3. Genealogies of classical usage and translations of key sacred concepts: *religion, scripture, faith, conversion, worship* etc.
4. Translating the 'sounds' of the sacred
5. The role of sacred scripts in sacralising translations
6. Translating the magic and mantra of sacred words
7. Ideas of aesthetics in the translation of sacred concepts: practices of art and practices of the sacred
8. Communities of interpreters: speakers, listeners, translators and readers
9. Challenging translations: power, authority and questioning

Submission of Paper Proposals

Abstracts of 300-500 words should be sent by **31 May 2017** to:

Dr Hepzibah Israel, H.Israel@ed.ac.uk

Notification of acceptance will be given by **15 June 2017**.

Useful Links

[Genealogies of Knowledge Project Website](#)

[1st General Call for Papers](#) for Genealogies of Knowledge I Conference