

New Approaches to the
History of Political Thought:
Mirrors for Princes Reconsidered

Interdisciplinary Conference
Berlin, 2-3 November 2012

Sponsored by



Organized by

Prof Regula Forster
Seminar für Semitistik
und Arabistik, FU Berlin
forster@zedat.fu-berlin.de

Prof Neguin Yavari
Historical Studies
The New School, New York
yavarin@newschool.edu

Location

Freie Universität Berlin
Silberlaube, Room JK 27/103
Habelschwerdter Allee 45
14195 Berlin



Freie Universität Berlin, Main Building
„Silberlaube“. Access from Habelschwerdter
Allee 45 or Fabeckstraße 25



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Conference Program

The history of political thought is often conceived as a genealogy of modern political concepts, debates, and institutions. This approach, however, neglects a substantial portion of medieval and early modern political writing, one subset of which is the genre commonly known as “mirrors for princes” or “advice for rulers.” Reconsidering this literature could address important questions in the field of political thought through engagement with non-western traditions, as well as those European strands of thought that have not been recognized by modern historians as necessarily influential in shaping modern European political thought.

The papers presented at this conference will conduct a close reading of some fundamental aspects of the mirrors for princes genre in the medieval and early modern periods, as well as address connections (or discontinuities) with recent methodological innovations in the historical study of political thought.



Friday, November 2, 2012

9:00-9:30 REGULA FORSTER (Freie Universität Berlin) and NEGUIN YAVARI (The New School, New York), Introduction

Session 1: Sovereignty and the Common Good

9:30-10:15 STEFAN LEDER (Orient-Institut Beirut), Sovereignty, Law and Community

10:15-11:00 HANS-JOACHIM SCHMIDT (Université de Fribourg), Ethic or Opportunity? Answers to a Dilemma by Medieval Mirrors for Princes

Coffee break

11:30-12:15 JENS EIKE SCHNALL (Universität Freiburg), From the Body of the State to the Footprints of an Elderly Statesman: Political and Social Thought in the Old Norwegian *Speech against the Bishops* and the *King's Mirror*

12:15-13:00 CHARLES F. BRIGGS (University of Vermont), Scholarly and Intellectual Authority in Late Medieval European Mirrors

Lunch break

Session 2: Borders and Classifications

14:15-15:00 LOUISE MARLOW (Wellesley College), Mirrors for Princes and Encyclopaedias in the Samanid-Ghaznavid East

15:00-15:45 HINRICH BIESTERFELDT (Ruhr-Universität Bochum), Ibn Farighun's *Jawâmi' al-'ulûm* – at the Border between Classification of Sciences and Mirror for Princes

Coffee break

Session 3: Mirrors in Late Antiquity

16:15-17:00 PETER SCHWAGMEIER (Universität Zürich), Rulers and Rule: Jewish Perspectives

17:00-17:45 MATTHIAS HAAKE (Universität Münster), Speaking to the Ruler: Historical Contexts and Communicative Functions of Literary Texts Addressed to Monocrats in Antiquity

Saturday, November 3, 2012

Section 4: Travelling Mirrors

9:00-9:45 OLGA M. DAVIDSON (Boston University), Aetiologies of *Kalîla and Dimna* as a Mirror for Princes

9:45-10:30 JOHANNES NIEHOFF-PANAGIOTIDIS (Freie Universität Berlin), A Foreign Tree in Isocrates' Garden – the Reception of Indian and Islamic Political Narration in Byzantium

Coffee break

11:00-11:45 MOHSEN ZAKERI (Universität Göttingen), Yet Another Neglected Source of Political Wisdom: Persian Popular Romances

11:45-12:30 CHRISTINE VAN RUYMBEKE (University of Cambridge), Cat and Mouse: Manipulating the King in the *Anvar-e Sohayli*

12:30-13:15 SEYED SADEGH HAGHIGHAT (Mofid University, Qom), Persian Mirrors for Princes: Pre-Islamic and Islamic Mirrors Compared

Lunch break

Section 5: Mirrors Modernized

14:30-15:15 VASILEIOS SYROS (Universities of Jyväskylä and Helsinki), Behind Every Great Reformer there is a “Machiavelli”: Al-Maghîlî, Machiavelli, and the Micro-Politics of an Early Modern African and an Italian City-State

15:15-16:00 EDWIN WIERINGA (Universität Köln), Violence in the “Garden of Kings”: The Book on War in Nûruddîn ar-Rânîrî's 17th-Century Malay Mirror for Princes

Coffee break

16:30-17:15 TOBIAS HEINZELMANN (Universität Zürich), Ibrahim Müteferrika's *Usul el-Hikem fi nizam el-ümem*

17:15-17:45 Final Discussion (chair: REGULA FORSTER and NEGUIN YAVARI)