



MWI GASTVORTRAG

PREMODERN EMPIRES AND RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

PROF. DR. YANFEI SUN (ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY)

29. MAI 2024, 14:15 – 15:45, CAMPUS BERGHEIM, 0.024

Abstract Recent scholarship on pre-modern empires often presents them as tolerant of diversities and differences. However, this portrayal overlooks the significant differences in the religious policies of pre-modern empires. While some empires allowed the coexistence and flourishing of various religions, others engaged in the persecution of heretics and non-believers, resorting to forced conversions. This presentation explores how over 30 pre-modern empires dealt with religions outside their state religion and categorizes these empires into different tiers based on their level of religious toleration. Additionally, it provides an explanation for the observed variations.

Yanfei Sun is Associate Professor of Sociology at Zhejiang University, China, and currently Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. She graduated from the University of Chicago with a PhD in sociology in 2010. She was a Mellon Research Fellow of Columbia University Society of Fellows (2010–2013), a visiting professor at Harvard University, and a lecturer at the University of Chicago. Her fields of interest include sociology of religion, political sociology and historical-comparative sociology. Her award-winning publications on religious changes, religious movements, religious toleration, religious nationalism, and ethno-religious violence in the history of empires and nation-states has appeared in prominent journals such as *American Journal of Sociology*, *Theory and Society*, *Modern China*, *Social Compass*.