

## Media contact

Alexandra Heidle, M.A.  
Managing Director SFB 619  
Tel.: +49(0)6221-54 88 47  
Fax: +49(0)6221-54 87 99  
E-Mail: [heidle@uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:heidle@uni-heidelberg.de)



SFB 619 | Südasiens-Institut | Im Neuenheimer Feld 330 | D-69120 Heidelberg

Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Sonderforschungsbereich 619

Heidelberg Ritualdynamik

Speaker: Prof. Dr. Axel Michaels

Media information:

Heidelberg, 10 January 2008

## ***International Conference: "Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual"***

*(Heidelberg, 29 September to 2 October 2008)*

**Collaborative Research Centre 619 highlights the fascinating relationship between ritual studies and ritual dynamics and breaks new ground in the research.**

The Collaborative Research Centre 619 "Dynamics of Ritual" (SFB 619) at Heidelberg University is holding an international conference "Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual" from 29 September till 2 October 2008. Experts from around the world have been invited to Heidelberg to discuss their current findings and present them to a wider audience. With this conference, SFB 619 aims to consolidate and expand its interdisciplinary approach.

As an interdisciplinary facility founded in 2002, SFB 619 is the largest research centre worldwide dedicated solely to the subject of rituals, the ways they change and their inner dynamics. The centre performs pure research with the aim of developing theories with cross-cultural validity, and presenting explanatory models for the socio-cultural significance of ritual action, as for instance in the legitimisation of power or creation of identity, crisis therapy, or the maintenance of order. At present, nineteen projects are being conducted by over 90 researchers from the fields of Anthropology of South Asia, Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern History, Assyriology, Classical and Modern Indology, Comparative Religion, Egyptology, the History of East Asian Art, the History of South Asia, Islamic Studies, Medical Psychology, Musicology, and Theology.

Renowned specialists from the world of ritual research, such as Professors Ronald Grimes (Canada), Bruce Kapferer (Norway), Frits Staal (USA), Alexis Sanderson, and James Laidlaw (UK), have agreed to participate in the conference. The interdisciplinary teamwork will first be focused on twenty one panels lasting in some cases several days. Around 250 experts will give brief talks in these panels on their findings and put them up for discussion. New research approaches such as "ritual economics", "ritual design" and "scientific rituals" will be presented and new topic areas such as inter-cultural ritual transfer, "ritual agency", and the links between rituals and the New Media will be discussed. New for many of the participating disciplines will be the insight that sometimes quite familiar procedures or actions, or even performative artworks can be viewed as rituals. Important new impulses will be sought here from those who straddle the sciences and ritual practice. Set breaks and evening activities present the opportunity for informal discussions. In order to underscore the social relevance of ritual research and heed its educational remit from the university, SFB 619 also wishes to communicate the topics of its research over and beyond the academic framework, particularly through its accompanying programme.

The official period for registration begins on 15 February 2008. All those interested can find the relevant information at [www.rituals-2008.com](http://www.rituals-2008.com) and sign up for the conference newsletter.

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HEIDELBERG



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Geschäftsstelle SFB 619 | Südasiens-Institut | Im Neuenheimer Feld 330 | D-69120 Heidelberg/Germany  
Fon: ++49 (0) 6221-54 88 47 | Fax: ++49 (0) 6221-54 87 99 | E-mail: [sfb619@uni-hd.de](mailto:sfb619@uni-hd.de) | [www.ritualdynamik.uni-hd.de](http://www.ritualdynamik.uni-hd.de)