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## Liebe Leserinnen, liebe Leser,

es ist uns eine große Freude, dass Sie gerade auch in diesen ungewöhnlichen Zeiten eine neue Ausgabe des *Blick in die Wissenschaft* in Ihren Händen halten können.

Die Corona-Pandemie stellt auch die Universität Regensburg und alle ihre Mitglieder vor große Herausforderungen, Belastungen und Planungsunwägbarkeiten. Im Mittelpunkt steht für uns seit Beginn der gegenwärtigen Krisensituation der unabdingbare Schutz der Gesundheit aller Universitätsangehörigen und unser Beitrag zur Eindämmung der Verbreitung des Coronavirus.

Die Universität Regensburg ging im März in einen bisher unbekanntem Zustand des minimalen Präsenzbetriebs und weitgehender Homeoffice-Regelungen. Die Präsenzlehre wurde eingestellt und das Sommersemester 2020 startete digital. Für nicht digital durchführbare Praxisveranstaltungen und Prüfungen wurden Regelungen zur Einhaltung der Hygiene- und Sicherheitsvorgaben erarbeitet. Wir können in diesem Sommersemester nicht – so wie wir es alle an unserer weltoffenen und lebendigen Universität gewohnt sind und lieben – mit mehr als

25 000 Menschen aus mehr als 100 Ländern gemeinsam hier vor Ort auf dem Campus zusammenkommen.

Auch die Forschungsaktivitäten an der Universität Regensburg werden von der anhaltenden Pandemie tangiert. Naturgemäß können nicht alle Forschungen unseres vielfältigen Fächerspektrums ins Homeoffice verlagert werden, und die Notwendigkeit zu räumlicher und sozialer Distanzierung beeinträchtigt den wissenschaftlichen Austausch in unterschiedlicher Art. Es ist bewundernswert, wie die Wissenschaftler\*innen auch mit diesen enormen Herausforderungen umgehen.

Die große Nachfrage nach unseren qualitätsgesicherten Studiengängen sowie die national wie international hoch renommierten Forschungsaktivitäten unserer Wissenschaftler\*innen demonstrieren den großen Erfolg aller Mitglieder in den unterschiedlichsten Bereichen und Tätigkeitsfeldern der Universität Regensburg, gemeinsam diese außergewöhnliche und in der Geschichte unserer Alma Mater einzigartige Situation zu meistern.

Den Studierenden und Lehrenden sowie allen weiteren Mitarbeiter\*innen der Universität Regensburg in den unterschied-

lichsten Tätigkeitsbereichen gebührt großer Dank für ihr außerordentliches Engagement, ihre hohe Motivation und vor allem auch für ihre Innovationsbereitschaft und ihre Planungs Offenheit in diesen Wochen.

In vielem hat uns diese gegenwärtige Krisensituation auch ein Stück weit näher zusammenrücken lassen – viele gute und vertrauensvolle Gespräche wurden geführt – wir alle erfahren viel gegenseitiges Verständnis und viel gegenseitigen Respekt. Die vor uns liegenden Wochen und Monate können und sollten wir nicht als Zeit der Perfektionierung sehen – sondern als Raum zum Nachdenken über Neues und als Zeit zum Experimentieren mit Innovativem. Vor allen Dingen aber sollten wir diese Periode als eine besondere Zeit des gegenseitigen Zuhörens und des Miteinanders nutzen. In diesem Sinne freuen wir uns alle auf eine persönliche und gesunde Rückkehr auf den Campus der Universität Regensburg – auf seine lebendige Vielfalt und auf die Begegnungen seiner Menschen.

Und unser Dank ist ebenso an den Redaktionsbeirat, das Redaktionsbüro und alle Autor\*innen der Ihnen nun vorliegenden Ausgabe des *Blick in die Wissenschaft*

zu richten: Ungeachtet der vielen in Zusammenhang mit der Corona-Pandemie aufgetretenen Herausforderungen erhalten Sie auf den folgenden Seiten in bewährter Weise einen Einblick in das breite Spektrum der Forschung unserer Universität.

Besonderes Augenmerk widmet diese Ausgabe dem deutschlandweit ersten »Centre for Advanced Studies« an einer Theologischen Fakultät – einem Format, das die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) 2007 speziell für die Geisteswissenschaften aufgelegt hat: Unter der Überschrift *Jenseits des Kanons* erforschen und erörtern seit der Eröffnung des Zentrums im Oktober 2018 ortsansässige Wissenschaftler\*innen gemeinsam mit über 70 Gelehrten aus aller Welt Texte zu Riten und Dingen, die mit apokryphen Traditionen in Verbindung stehen und eine besondere Wirksamkeit im kirchli-

chen Leben entfaltet haben. Ausgewählte Beiträge aus dem Forschungsverbund gewähren Einblicke in das religiöse Leben jenseits kirchlicher und theologischer Normen und geben zugleich Aufschluss über die tatsächliche Bedeutung des biblischen Kanons.

Weitere Beiträge aus unterschiedlichen Fakultäten spiegeln die Vielfalt der Forschungsaktivitäten an unserer Universität in schon gewohnter Weise wider – von Tocquevilles Mutmaßungen über die Zukunft der Demokratie über die Frage, ob wir ein Grundrecht auf Bundesligafußball haben, bis hin zu Rezepten für gesundes Altern.

Bei der Fertigstellung dieser Ausgabe haben wir mit einigem Erstaunen festgestellt, wie die durch CoVID19 ausgelöste Krise auch die Wahrnehmung von und Auseinandersetzung mit den Inhalten einiger der hier präsentierten Arbeiten verän-

dert wird. Ebenso, wie CoVID 19 unseren privaten und beruflichen Alltag und das gesellschaftliche Miteinander in den vergangenen Wochen auf unterschiedlichsten Ebenen beeinflusst und sicherlich oft auch beeinträchtigt hat, so sehr regt die aktuelle Situation zur Reflexion über viele in der Vergangenheit als selbstverständlich wahrgenommene Lebensumstände und Werte und damit einhergehend den Umgang mit den Herausforderungen dieser Tage an. Mit Ihnen gemeinsam werden wir diese meistern.

Genießen Sie die Lektüre dieser Ausgabe und bleiben Sie gesund.

Prof. Dr. Udo Hebel  
Präsident der Universität Regensburg  
Prof. Dr. Ralf Wagner  
Vorsitzender Redaktionsbeirat

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Prof. Dr. Udo Hebel  
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**Redaktionsleitung**

Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Ralf Wagner

**Redaktionsbeirat**

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Universität Regensburg  
93040 Regensburg  
Telefon (09 41) 9 43-23 00  
Telefax (09 41) 9 43-33 10

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**Abonnementervice**

Andrea Winkelmayer  
bestellung@schnell-und-steiner.de

**Anzeigenleitung**

Larissa Nevecny  
MME-Marquardt  
info@mme-marquardt.de

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## Interview

# »Thinking in a broader context«

## Strange stories, cultural awareness and social interaction

Dr. Mari Mamyan and Prof. em. Dr. Jan Bremmer are participating in the *Beyond Canon\_* project as research fellows. Both of them are working on apocryphal texts – early Christian writings that were not included in the New Testament when it was canonized in the fourth century, but nevertheless played an important role in forming Early Christianity. As a Junior Fellow and a Senior Fellow, a female and a male researcher, with their Armenian and Dutch origins, Dr. Mamyan and Prof. Dr. Bremmer illustrate the diversity of the *Beyond Canon\_* group – and thus form an ideal duo for an interview. Stephanie Hallinger is the academic coordinator of the Centre for Advanced Studies *Beyond Canon\_* and spoke with them about their research projects.



Foto © UR/Stephanie Hallinger

Prof. em. Dr. **Jan Bremmer** held the Chair of Religious Studies at the University of Groningen from 1990 to 2009. He participated in numerous research groups as a fellow throughout Europe, the USA, and New Zealand, is on the Editorial Board of twelve journals and book series and holds numerous academic awards. Jan Bremmer (co-)edited more than 40 books on Greek, Roman, Early Christian, and Contemporary Religion, Social History, and History of Scholarship. His works »The Early Greek Concept of the Soul« (1983) and »Greek Religion« (1994) have been translated into various languages; »The World of Greek Religion and Mythology: Collected Essays II« has just appeared.

**Standing outside the New Testament canon, apocryphal stories never attracted the same attention as the Gospels. The Centre for Advanced Studies Beyond Canon\_ is designed to fill this gap and to concentrate on the joint exploration of these texts, the rituals and material culture emerging from them. What aroused your interest in this field of research?**

**Mari Mamyan:** Studying for my master's degree, I was interested in the image of Jesus – not in biblical writings, but in non-canonical writings. I read many of those texts concerning Jesus, and in the end, I came to Armenian material and particularly Armenian material depicting Jesus' nativity and childhood. I made my final decision to work on the *Armenian Infancy Gospel*, which is one of the fullest descriptions of his image as a child and (what is not less important) how people imagined the Lord being a child. The Gospels say almost nothing on his childhood, so I was wondering how people imagined their saviour as a child – and so I grew interested in discovering Jesus' image at all his ages, starting from his childhood.

**Jan Bremmer:** I have been interested in so-called »apocryphal literature« for a very long time actually. When I was still professor in Groningen, we had a cooperation with the Calvinists of Budapest and every year we had a conference on one of the major *Apocryphal Acts* [editor's note: *Apokryphe Apostelgeschichten*]. As you may not know, in the second half of the second century, there were four major *Apocryphal Acts*: those of John, Andrew, Peter, and Paul. We are still quite in the beginning of Christianity. In the later New Testament, we have the book of the so-called *canonical Acts of the Apostles*, which mainly concentrates on Paul. But the early Christians also wanted to know what happened to the other apostles, and so

we have a number of writings telling their missions, often their martyrdom. They are still a little bit modelled on the Greek novel, so there is often a bit of a love story and interesting details in there.

Later, as Christianity became more widespread in the Roman Empire, all kinds of churches wanted to have a connection with the apostles. It is this later ideological expansion of the apostles over the whole of the eastern Mediterranean that interested me and was one of the incitements to come to Regensburg. The other one is that, in my opinion, the Faculty of Theology in Regensburg is one of the best in Germany with first class professors – and that was an additional motive for me to come here.

**You already mentioned what formed your decision to come to Regensburg. Our research group brings together scholars from different origins, different career stages and fields of research such as religious studies, classics, history, archaeology and art history. Can you please briefly describe your personal project within Beyond Canon\_?**

**Jan Bremmer:** I think I could say I am an ancient historian in many ways: An ancient historian who has a great interest in ancient religion, or a religious historian interested in ancient history. I'm not so much interested in the theological messages of the various apocryphal writings, but I usually concentrate on questions such as when were they written, where were they written. Because for that, you really need knowledge of inscriptions and ancient institutions – and that usually is not the specialization of professors in New Testament studies. Then I am also interested in the social aspects of these writings. I have often written on the role of women (in a way, I grew up with the second feminist wave). But also magic, for example, has been an area of lasting interest to me. In



these apocryphal writings, you often have a kind of confrontation between the apostle on the one hand and the magician on the other hand, because, as we know from the New Testament, Jesus himself and the apostles perform miracles – but magicians also perform miracles, so there is a kind of »competition«. In these apocryphal writings, we sometimes can see that kind of competition (in which of course the apostle wins in the end).

**Your approach to research is a bit different, Dr. Mamyan.**

**Mari Mamyan:** Yes, my research period is not as ancient as Professor Bremmer's. It starts only from the fifth century because I am dealing with Armenian material and alphabet – and Armenian literature started from the beginning of the fifth century, 406 A.D. It is a kind of expansion and rewriting of the ancient material that came to Armenia. Armenian tradition preserved a considerable number of ancient texts translated into Armenian; nevertheless, I am mainly interested in how those writings were changed in the course of time, how these ancient sources were transmitted throughout the centuries in local areas and how they were transmitted through generations: they were translated, changed and amended by the Armenians' own traditions and histories.

**Jan Bremmer:** Maybe you should add that Armenia was one of the first countries that converted to Christianity. So we have very early translations also of early Christian writings of which the originals sometimes have disappeared – the reason why Armenia plays a very important role in this project.

**Why is the research programme of Beyond Canon\_ widening the perspective of the involved fields of research beyond the New Testament canon? How**

**can theologians and historians profit from what we are working on here?**

**Jan Bremmer:** It is important to see that the apocryphal writings in a way fell in between two areas: They are often too late for the real New Testament scholars, and, on the other hand, they are too theological for ancient historians. Church historians usually concentrate more on institutions, councils, struggles against heretics and so on, but they do not usually focus on the apocryphal texts themselves. The program has a very important function in connecting different fields, but also by not only concentrating on texts (although that is my own area). Art history is important, too: Christian art started relatively late; there is virtually no Christian art before the third century – and even after that, it grows slowly. But from the fourth and fifth century onwards, it becomes important and then we also gradually get stories about the apostles, which were sometimes even read during the liturgy in the church.

**Why are these topics interesting for, let us say: natural scientists as well?**

**Jan Bremmer:** I do not think they have a specific interest for natural scientists, only in so far as culture in general is of interest for them. And from the ancient literature, a mathematician might be interested in Euclides and a physicist, perhaps, in Archimedes, but I think it's very important that – especially in Germany, where you have this tradition of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, that we're all interested in culture, what has made us what we are today.

**Mari Mamyan:** We always should consider one's culture or, in the case of Armenia, one nation's Christian culture in a broader context. All Christian countries are connected to each other and it is not possible to describe or to imagine one's religion, history, and tradition isolated from others, as a part of the whole. *Beyond*

*Canon\_* offers a great opportunity to realize how these connections are happening or how we can give or take what we have in common as Christians, to tell the differences as well as the similarities. We have so many things to share and so much to know about each other, so these topics get interesting for natural scientists, too: When they visit a museum or a church, seeing the material culture and rites, they are wondering where they come from and are interested in why these paintings or rites are as they are. Scholars in this research group give some explanation to these questions.

**Learning from each other is something both of you mentioned in your previous answers. Of course, it is not unusual to explore a specific topic with different scholars at conferences, workshops, or on edited volumes. How is this concentrated work affecting your research?**

**Jan Bremmer:** Badly, as it costs time editing those volumes of the conferences (*laughs*). I think it is very important to meet in these conferences, because they are very important for networking. I think the aim of a conference should always also be to bring experienced scholars into contact with younger, starting scholars. If one plans for a conference, one really has to think about who to invite, and also to have a decent gender balance.

**At a conference, you usually spend a few days together and part afterwards, but in this group you have an ongoing »work relationship« with other researchers. To what extent is this different for your work as a young scholar especially?**

**Mari Mamyan:** Of course, conferences are very important for building a network and getting in touch with different scholars personally. But it is even more important to develop rather continuous relationships or contacts with other scholars, because you might meet someone during a conference and then lose this connection or not have any other chance to meet and to discuss important issues. Within this Centre, all sorts of great scholars are around and, for example, if I want to ask Professor Bremmer a specific question, I can just knock on the door and ask for advice.

**And maybe there's a more intense social interaction between scholars in a Centre like this here as well.**

**Jan Bremmer:** Yes, because it is relatively small and people are working closer



Foto © UR/Stephanie Hallinger

Dr. **Mari Mamyan** studied Theology at the Yerevan State University in Armenia. From 2013 to 2019 she worked as a researcher at the Institute of Ancient Manuscripts Mashtots' Matenadaran in Yerevan. In June 2018, she defended her PhD thesis on »The Armenian Gospel of the Infancy (Historical-Explorative Analyses)«. In January 2019, she joined the *Beyond Canon\_* project as a postdoc researcher and is currently working on an English edition of the Armenian Infancy Gospel (handed down in more than 30 manuscripts), of which she just recently discovered a second version.



Foto © Ulfrike Linder-Windbichler

Dr. **Stephanie Hallinger** studied History of Art and German Philology in Regensburg. She taught medieval high German literature at the Universität Regensburg from 2008 to 2014 and wrote her PhD thesis on »Text und Bild in der *Elsässischen Legenda aurea*: Der Cgm 6 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München) und der Cpg 144 (Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg)«. In October 2018, she started working as academic coordinator of the DFG-Centre for Advanced Studies *Beyond Canon\_* (DFG-Kollegforschungsgruppe *Jenseits des Kanons* – FOR 2770).

together with all the rooms on one floor. In the *Max Weber Kolleg* in Erfurt, for example, you have several floors where people sit, which makes intensive contacts less easy. But what is also very important in our Centre is that we have a coffee machine, because that's a point where you meet people and you have to wait for the coffee so you chat. Personally, I find social interaction extremely important. My wife is also very active in that respect. Usually we invite people to come for dinner, so we have an evening when you can talk quietly about all kinds of things. Here especially, it is a comparatively smallish group where you are much closer together. That is the nice thing of *Beyond Canon\_*.

**In what way are you, as a Junior Fellow, benefiting from your work in Regensburg with regard to your career in academia as well as personally, Dr. Mamyán?**

**Mari Mamyán:** As I already mentioned before, I am surrounded by the greatest scholars while I am working on »my« manuscripts and in contact with many other scholars who come to the Centre as visitors. It is a great opportunity as a Junior Fellow to be here amongst these renowned scholars, to learn all the time, to get to know something new all the time. Apart from that, we have different possibilities to learn languages as well – I was in a Coptic course today, for example, as it is very useful to learn a new language that might be helpful in the future for studying a particular area.

**As a Senior Fellow, you have been part of many renowned research groups, such as the Max Weber Kolleg you just mentioned. Do you have any recommendations for the further development of *Beyond Canon\_*?**

**Jan Bremmer:** The *Max Weber Kolleg* is much bigger, with completely different groups: a group on ancient religion, a group on Indian religion, a group on modern philosophy. When it was smaller,

there was more interaction. Another important point is that Fellows also have to have some social skills. There is no point in attracting someone who is only working at home or whom you will never see at the Centre. That is why I recommend that the *Beyond Canon\_* Centre does not grow much bigger, to keep up the social interaction between people. It is difficult of course, because to the outside world it looks much better if the group is bigger. But I think for efficiency and social interaction – which means intellectual interaction – a limited number of scholars is better.

Nevertheless, the Centre would need some extra rooms on the same floor. It is not very convenient that sometimes four junior scholars or two senior scholars have to work in one room.

Moreover, in the *Max Weber Kolleg* and other *Centres for Advanced Studies* I learnt how important it is to strengthen the administrative staff as the backbone of the Centre. Here in the Regensburg Centre, the coordinator and secretary are doing an admirable job in keeping everything together, organising everything from the sometimes tricky negotiations with the home universities to the everyday life and the weekly colloquia of a group of ten to 15 fellows and some associated graduates who work here at the same time. The staff really is essential not only for the success of the present project but also for proposals for further third party funding.

**A somewhat personal question at the end of the interview: Which is your favourite apocryphal story – and why?**

**Mari Mamyán:** I think you know my answer already – it is of course the Armenian Infancy Gospel. Actually, it starts becoming my least favourite one right now: The text I am dealing with causes a lot of technical work with manuscripts [*Mari Mamyán is working on a text edition and English translation; she has closely examined more than 30 manuscripts and dis-*

*covered several new ones*]. On the other hand, when I find something interesting in one manuscript that we do not have in another, and other new traditions, new text passages, new miracles of infant Jesus and so on, it is extremely fascinating. Well, in general, yes. After several years of work, it is still my favourite story.

**Jan Bremmer:** There is a necrophiliac story in the *Acts of John* of a young man who falls in love with a married woman. And because he can't get her, he falls ill, becomes melancholic. The woman, strangely enough, finds that so worrisome that she dies and she is being put to rest. And then the suitor says, »You know, I couldn't get her while she was alive, but I'll get her when she's dead.« So he bribes the stewards of her husband for access to the grave. They enter the grave and they start to undress her. At the very last minute, before she is totally without any clothes on, there appears a snake. The snake lets the suitor freeze to the ground. This is kind of a case of »you want to eat your cake and keep it«, because it builds up the suspense and at the very last moment, the story remains fairly decent.

My other favourite story is really the confrontation between the Apostle Peter and Simon Magus, because it is a kind of competition with really spectacular events: Simon Magus is challenged to resurrect a dead person, and he manages to let it move a little bit, whereas the Apostle Peter really resurrects someone. But then – what I also find very intriguing – Simon Magus announces that he will fly above Rome. I see it as a kind of shootout (like in a real Western, there is the duel between the two). Then Simon starts to fly and one wonders whether this was a kind of ancient illusion. I once saw on TV the famous illusionist David Copperfield actually rise into the air. It is fake, you know, but still you wonder how do they do it? It is always the big question. We know of course it is a story because Simon Magus is a fictitious person, but the models for this story might have been contemporary magicians, illusionists. In the end, the Apostle Peter really shoots him out of the air by appealing to God and then Simon falls down and after a few days he dies. Moreover, the conversation is located at the centre of Rome – the heart of the Roman Empire. There is the confrontation between God and the devil, between the apostle and the magician. That is what makes it a really, really good story, I find.