



# ABENDVERANSTALTUNG

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## **Chronologies. Why China did not have a “Renaissance” and why that matters. An interdisciplinary dialogue**

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*Welcome: Nikolas Jaspert (Heidelberg)*

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Concepts of historical progress or decline and the idea of anakyklosis (Kreislauf) have existed for centuries in many civilizations. European attempts at a periodization of the History are a rather recent phenomenon, however, and correspond to a particular world view engendered in the 18th century, the European Enlightenment. Such periodizations, in spite of claims to be transnational or even universalist, reveal clear cultural, social, and national leanings and predispositions.

The aim of this dialogue is to understand and question processes of historical periodization, including a discussion of the elements of suppression and exclusion it involves, as well as that of the dynamics behind the transcultural adaptations of periodizations as concepts for ordering the past. It will suggest that it may not only be appropriate but indeed important to say that China did not have a “Renaissance.”

Our discussion takes periodization as a historical phenomenon in itself and takes up the case of the “Renaissance” the way it has been understood in the tradition of Jacob Burckhardt in the 19th century, who himself referred back to the ideas once voiced by the humanists of the 14th and 15th century. Focussing on the particularities of the humanist dialogue which informed the making of the “Renaissance” as a historical period, our discussion will highlight elements that distinguish the Italian and then, more broadly, the “occidental” Renaissance from other rediscoveries of neglected elements from the past elsewhere (i.e. in China). We end with the rather far-reaching question of whether and when a period such as “Renaissance” (or baroque, romanticism et al.) which stems from a concrete socio-historical situation, can fruitfully be applied to describe other cultural experiences, too.