

International Graduate School
Resonant Self–World Relations
in Ancient and Modern
Socio-Religious Practices



Summary of the research program and aims of the IGS “Resonant Self-World Relations”

The IGS “Resonant Self—World Relations in Ancient and Modern Socio-Religious Practices” focuses on the question of how ritualised socio-religious practices establish self—world relations in historical and contemporary societies, and how processes of sacralisation stabilise such forms of ‘resonance’. This approach is meant to provide a key to understanding differences in cultural systems and social orders. Shifting the focus to experiences of ritual action leads to a different mapping of ritual practices and the production of self—world relations. The resonance concept is used to analyse different constellations and levels of agency, communication, social and material others, and transformation processes. Ritualised practices allow for the generation, habitualisation and conceptualisation of different kinds and qualities of self—world relations. They serve as tools to enable, interpret and produce meaningful relations and co-constitute resonant relations beyond the religious sphere: culturally shaped sensibilities are linked with experiences of resonance that have become religiously significant through such practices.

Research in the second phase will focus on four topics: repetition, taking a more nuanced look at temporal sequencing, modification of rituals and the consequences of replays; second-order resonance, characterised by references to or memory of such experiences; power, agency and resonance; and the role of objects in establishing lasting relations. The historical and empirical analysis demands a descriptive and interpretative language that catches nuances and differences in practice, experience and habitualisation, as provided by both qualitative research and critical source reading, material culture and gender studies, and exegesis. Our relational approach of the IGS allows for the analysis of self—world relations beyond the level of worldviews to adequately take into account the corporeality of experience and material objects beyond cognitive interpretations.

Our set of questions allows for mutual cross-fertilisation of sociological and historical-religious approaches, based on the common understanding of cultures and religions and their entanglement as continuous processes which conceive of the self and the ability to tolerate the ‘Other’ in ancient and modern societies. Its combination of micro-studies of practices and experiences with large-scale inter-cultural comparison promises to continue to provide highly novel insights into historical and contemporary

practices and cultural change.