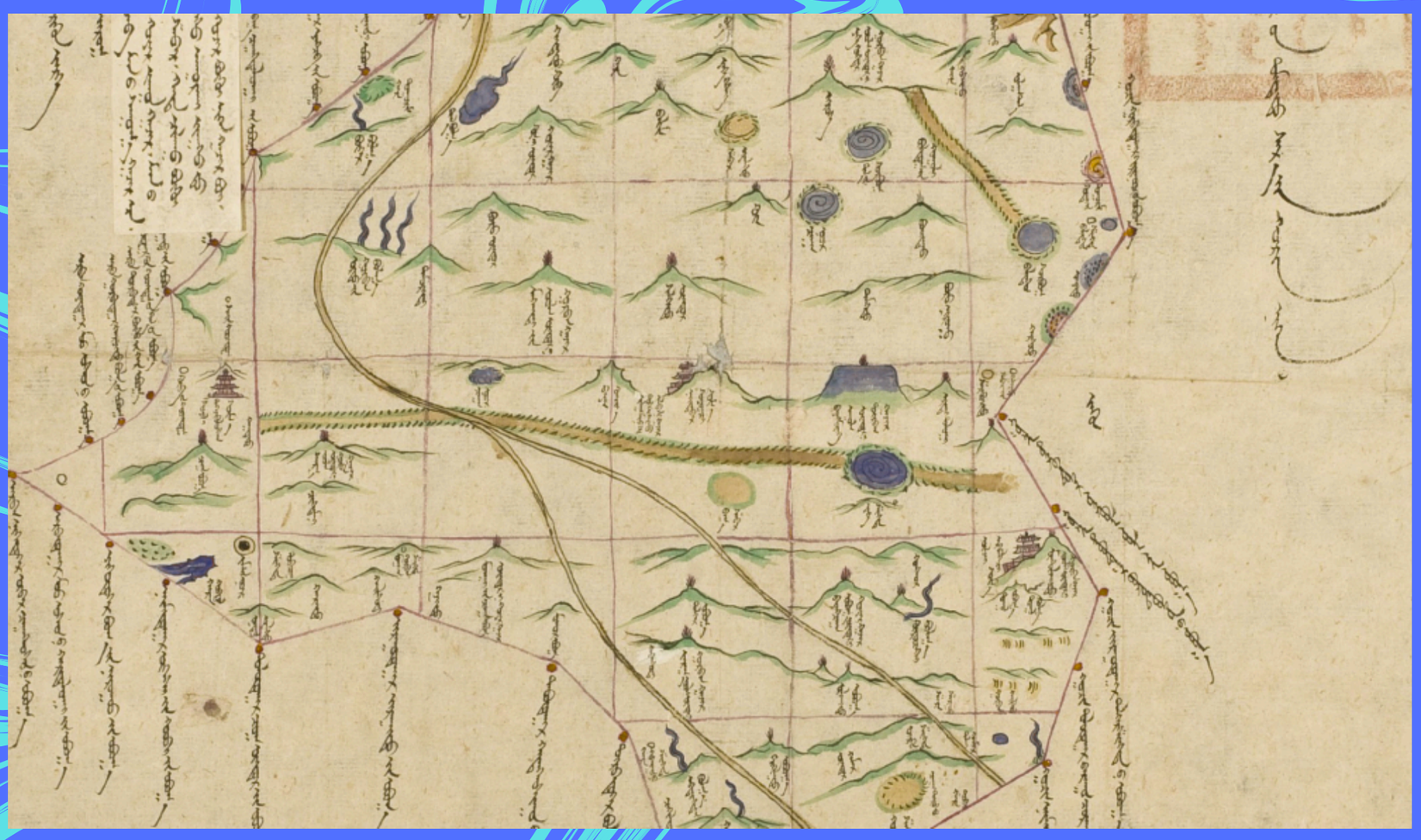
international conference

Reframing Tibetan and Mongol Mapmaking Practices

26-28 November 2026



The international conference "Reframing Tibetan and Mongol Mapmaking Practices (pre-20th century)" will bring together researchers from the fields of history, area studies, art history, anthropology, geography, museology and linguistics in Berlin from 26 November to 28 November 2026 to conduct a comparative study of Mongolian and Tibetan cartographic practices prior to the 20th century.

It is jointly organised by Prof. Diana Lange (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin), Prof. Anne-Sophie Pratte (Georgetown University in Qatar) and Antje Ziemer (Berlin State Library), in partnership with the Berlin State Library, in particular its Orient Department and Map Department. The lectures on Thursday and Friday are open to the public upon registration. The programme of lectures will be published online in due course.

Keynote lecture:

Isabelle Charleux

(CNRS, Paris)

Representing the Sino-Mongol Frontier in the Late Qing Period

26 November 2026

6pm

Fontane Saal der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Unter den Linden 8)

The production of geographical information about Inner Asia constituted a fundamental component of the process of incorporating such regions into the Qing Empire. In the first decade of the 20th century, as part of the reforms known as the New Policies—an ultimate effort to modernize the imperial state—the Qing government commissioned Mongol princes to produce new maps designed to make frontier territories knowable and, consequently, their natural resources more readily exploitable. This talk examines the case of a Mongol banner located in the Josoto League of eastern Inner Mongolia, a frontier zone historically contested between Chinese imperial authority and Inner Asian pastoral polities. Despite the presence of the Willow Palisade, the colonization of the banner by Chinese migrants accelerated in the context of the New Policies. The banner was gradually integrated into the Chinese provincial and prefectural administrative system, while maintaining separate administrative structures for Mongols and Chinese. This talk compares different visual representations of the same banner, each employing distinct "cartographic languages." A Mongol map, likely produced in the Mongol banner compared and later annotated in Chinese (with misunderstandings of orientation), and its more abstract copy probably made in the capital—are with Qing/Chinese maps of the same territory. Although commissioned by the central Qing government, these different maps reflect divergent political interests. None of them captures the banner's dual identity; rather, each tends to render the presence of the "other" invisible. The paper argues that the Mongol map depicts an idealized or earlier situation, constructing an "auspicious visual narrative" that does not align with contemporary political and ethnic realities, whereas the Qing/Chinese interpretations seek to "domesticate" the territory by inscribing it within a Chinese administrative and conceptual framework.

Histories and Cultures of Central Asia

To attend as a member of the audience or for further enquiries regarding the conference, please contact:
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