

Internationales Graduiertenkolleg "Politische Kommunikation" -
Exzellenzcluster "Die Herausbildung normativer Ordnungen", J.W. Goethe
Universität

04.10.2010-05.10.2010, Frankfurt am Main

THE PRODUCTION OF COLONIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

Frankfurt University, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

October 4th and 5th, 2010.

The understanding of colonial history has considerably changed over the last three decades. A new awareness of dynamics of global dominance, resistance, cultural encounters is strictly tied to renovation in historical studies. In emerging disciplines such as world history, global history, the new imperial history, Atlantic history, socio-history, interconnected and transnational approaches to history have challenged nineteenth and twentieth-centuries narratives of European colonial expansion.

This 'epistemological turn' discloses the need for a scrutiny of the transformations of historical-oriented analyses of colonialism: on the one hand, the production of colonial historiography was part of the development of the European colonial empires themselves; on the other hand, the writing and re-writing of colonial history still remains pivotal to our assessment of these empire-building processes. The reconsideration of trajectories of historical knowledge in the long run is thus crucial to our understanding of colonial dynamics and their impact on European culture; this approach also helps historians gain awareness in their attempts to cope with the legacies of colonial history. Furthermore, a closer examination of recent trends in historical analyses of colonization is needed in order to assess the capacity of attending to the historical complexities without simply superimposing new narratives to the former ones.

Starting from these premises, this workshop aims to explore the transformations in colonial historiography in two directions: a) the conditions, purposes and practices that directed and still direct the production of historically-oriented analyses of colonial processes. b) the capacity of producing knowledge, i.e. the construction and presentation of objects and topics of historical analysis.

The reassessment of relationships between historical knowledge and colonial rule informs the background of this workshop. The purpose is to provide a deeper and non-teleological understanding of the asymmetries between intellectual culture and the enforcement of colonial rule by unraveling the complex set of interconnections and tensions between them. The point at stake is not only to unveil the instrumental uses of historical discourses for colonial dominance, nor to rehabilitate the capacity to produce criticism. Further topics to be addressed are:

a) the functioning or malfunctioning of different narratives of colonization in the context of the dynamics of European overseas expansion. This analysis focuses on the invention of narratives of national overseas expansion within the spaces of European empires from 16th century up to the 21st century.

b) the economical, political, social, cultural issues that were taken into account by these narratives, and other issues that were discarded;

c) the conditions, institutions, networks and circulation of information on which the production of historical knowledge depended.

d) the transformations of history as discipline, from the seventeenth century onwards.

e) the legacies of historical narratives, and recent attempts to overcome them;

f) Exchanges, goods, and spaces. Contributions on these subjects provide insights or raise questions on historical science's capacity to get new or better knowledge of colonial world and its relation to the metropole in a global context: circulations of people, goods, money, ideas, manners.

Paper proposals (500 words, maximum) and a 1-page CV (with full contact details) should be sent via e-mail to <workshop.colonial@googlemail.com> or by mail to: J. W. Goethe Universität, Historisches Seminar, IGK "Politische Kommunikation", Grüneburgplatz 1, D - 60323 Frankfurt am Main, Deutschland. Complete proposals must be received by May 7th.

The languages of the workshop are English and French. Proposal from young scholars at a well-advanced stage of research are welcomed.

The workshop is organized by the Internationales Graduiertenkolleg "Politische Kommunikation" and by the Exzellenzcluster "Die Herausbildung normativer Ordnungen" of the J.W. Goethe University, Frankfurt.

Marco Platania

IGK "Politische Kommunikation", Historisches Seminar
J.W. Goethe Universität, Grüneburgplatz 1, 60323 Frankfurt/M