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The First Annual Global History Student Conference, Berlin

THE ORGANISATION TEAM OF THE GLOBAL HISTORY STUDENT CONFERENCE

On April 25-26th 2015, the very first international Global History Student Conference on European ground took place at Free University Berlin. It was organized by eight students of the joint master's programme 'Global History' of Free University and Humboldt University with generous support from Professor Sebastian Conrad and the research area Global History at the Friedrich Meinecke Institute. Over the course of these two days, 40 participants from ten different countries presented case studies, debated research goals and methods and attended workshops.

Professor **Michael Goebel** opened the conference with a keynote speech on anti-imperialist networks in interwar Paris, entitled "Global Urban History. The World in Parisian Archives". Drawing on source materials heretofore overlooked by the often elitist mainstream of intellectual history, such as police documents and personal correspondence, he turned the spotlight on what he calls 'ethnopolitical entrepreneurs' and argued that migration and diasporic ethnic associations served as a crucial vehicle of anti-imperialism and third world nationalism.

Panel 1- Travellers, Migrants and Experts

Studies on the movement of people and ideas rank high among the classical global history topics and constituted the thematic framework for panel one: 'Travellers, Migrants and Experts'. The first presentation was given by **Gabriel Schimmeroth** (Freie Universität Berlin / Humboldt Universität zu Berlin), who examined the case of the German construction company Julius Berger and its involvement into the urban governance of Lagos (1965-1975). His study described the movement of experts and technical knowledge between Venezuela, Germany and Nigeria. Apart from analyzing its influence on the shape of Lagos, Gabriel revealed the entanglements of Julius Berger with local authorities, being gradually transformed into a Nigerian company. The second presentation was held by **Ester Pink** (Oxford University), focusing on Cornish migration to Australia, South Africa and Mexico (1869-1910). This interesting study, besides from examining a global network of mining experts, questioned the undifferentiated uniformity of a British migrant diaspora and called for a consideration of regional migrant identities. The following presentation from **Nari Shelekpayev** (University of Montreal) added another worthwhile instance for the global circulation of ideas and practices. Focusing on the construction of the three postcolonial capitals of Ottawa, Brasília and Astana, Nari elaborated on a long-standing transnational network of state actors, city planners and architects. The panel finally closed with a paper about 19th

century tourism in Palestine, given by **Andreas Greiner** (University of Heidelberg). Discussing ambivalent representations of the ‘Holy Land’ in guide books and travelogues, he eventually raised the stimulating question whether tourism itself needs to be reconsidered as an informal practice of imperialism.

Panel 2 - Work, Exploitation and Capitalism

This panel focused on the ever present issues of labour and capitalism and how global historians can engage with these fields. The various discussions which took place examined these issues and explored the differing forms and impacts caused by these phenomena upon specific actors in relation to networks, which spanned cultural and political borders, and highlighted differing constellations of power. **Joe Kelly** (University of Liverpool) began these discussions with his study on the transatlantic slave trade. This study examined the changing nature of discourses in Britain which served to foster the growth of the abolitionist movement and shed light upon early tendencies within the nineteenth century, which would lay the foundations for the modern concept of corporate social responsibility. **Peter Brent**’s (University of Massachusetts/University of Oxford) presentation explored the nature of precarious work in Egypt and India. These two locations were tied together through their shared experience of empire, which served as a common mediator for labour regulation and the creation of precariousness in these locations. **Jonas Söderqvist** (Södertörns högskola) delivered a presentation on the formation of a new labour archive which has recently been founded as part of the ‘Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek’ (ARAB) in Sweden. This archive focuses specifically on testimonies of unregistered workers who have travelled to Sweden from various locations, and the realities which they faced in relation to labour and exploitation, in one of Europe’s most prominent examples of social democracy.

Panel 3- Reshaping the International Order

Panel three was dedicated to institutions, media and other actors that strove to exert some degree of influence in the realm of geopolitics and international relations. **Philipp Kandler** (Freie Universität Berlin / Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) opened the session with a paper on the invocation of the concept of ‘security’ by various parties in the context of the conflict surrounding the incorporation of the Miskito Coast into the Nicaraguan national state in 1894, arguing that this rhetoric was primarily aimed at an international audience, rather than at the local population. **Sean Phillips** (University of Oxford) then examined how the Pacific as an imagined space of intellectual and political communication across political and racial divides was conceptualized by the Institute of Pacific Relations, a pioneering institution that has been described as “an entirely realistic experiment in unpractical politics”. **Tobit Vandamme** (Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales/ Heidelberg University) offered a short summary of his master’s thesis, which dealt with the impact of the First World War on the German and French

communities in Shanghai - an impact which he characterized as a ‘mobilization of the minds’ promoted by the two newspapers *Deutsche Zeitung für China* and *Echo de Chine*. Lastly, the panel ended with a paper presented by **Julian Theseira** (IHEID Geneva), who portrayed Dom Pierre-Célestin Lou Tseng-Tsian, Foreign Minister of the Republic of China and later Benedictine monk, as an example of a ‘syncretic model of modernization’.

Panel 4- Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters

The fourth panel was dedicated to colonial and postcolonial encounters and their role in global history. **Damilola A. Adebayo** (Graduate Institute Geneva) proposed an insightful transnational perspective to study racial discrimination, using the example of African American Baptist Missionaries in South Africa at the end of the 19th century. **Paromita Das Gupta** (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich) also illuminated a case of colonial encounter and the effects of foreign “spirits” on local communities, namely the Baboos in colonial India. **Tatjana Poletajew** (Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf) presented a vivid example of colonial iconography, innovatively using the slide-shows of the German Colonial Society to make a point about colonial exoticization and imagination. Finally, the representation of Islamic art in Western museums was scrutinized by **Eman Abdeen** (The Aga Khan University International). Her talk led to a productive and insightful discussion about the ways colonialism is depicted and reflected upon in today’s society and in academia.

Panel 5- Knowledge production

Panel five revolved around the question of how historians can think and write about the emergence and development of scientific knowledge. The discussions took stock of the different modalities and forms of knowledge production, the actors and networks behind it while also examining the intersection between science and other spheres such as politics or culture. **Julia Mariko Jacoby** (Freiburg Universität) started off the panel with her presentation on the origins and early history of seismology in Japan. Her study looked at the network of local and international scientists which was behind the birth of seismology in Japan while also addressing the significance of the discipline within the national history of Japan. **Thilo Neidhöfer**’s (Johannes Kepler University Linz) presentation explored the life and work of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, two well-known American anthropologists, who played a leading role in the US public and academia from the 1930s till 1950s. His study explored how the personal relationship between Mead and Bateson shaped the articulation of their thought while also assessing their role in US politics during said period. Following up was **Malavika Binny** (Leiden University/Jawaharlal Nehru University), whose presentation took the audience to India’s Malabar Coast in the early modern period. Through the close

analysis of two central texts, she outlined how European explorers and scholars adapted and appropriated existing indigenous knowledge on medicine and botany. The panel was closed by the contribution of **Zoltán Gyimesi** (Eötvös Loránd University) which retraced the various intellectual and political currents which shaped the scientific discipline of geography in Hungary during the Cold War era.

Panel 6- Rethinking Educational Institutions

Panel six dealt with the question how educational institutions – including schools, universities, educational programs, reforms and ideas – functioned as spaces of inter-cultural contact and exchange, how they were shaped by outsiders and perceived by locals and which conflicts that could create. **Andreas Oberdorf** (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster) started by presenting how an expert migrant, Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin, from a Catholic region in Western Germany shaped the ‘Bildungslandschaft’ of Catholic education in Pennsylvania in the recently independent United States. Then **Natalia Pashkeeva** (École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales) had a look on how the North American YMCA was engaged in shaping a model for social organization which was aimed at social improvement and how the organization transferred this model to Russia and used it to spread a range of political, economic, social, and moral values. **Martin Wagner** (Freie Universität Berlin / Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) presented the case of Harbin, in Manchuria during the transition of the region from semi-colonialism to informal empire. In his presentation he examined how the city’s universities became a place where intercultural exchange between Russians and Chinese took place. In the last presentation, **Ifeyinwa Mbakogu** (McGill University) examined the case of girls’ education in Nigeria during the period of British colonial rule and essentially why it failed, due to high cost and cultural insensitivity by the British colonial administration.

Panel 7- Transnational History of Ideas

This was probably most popular panel of this conference. It started with an interesting paper about anarchism and nationalism in the early Kibbutz movement, presented by **Oscar Broughton** (Freie Universität Berlin / Humboldt Universität zu Berlin). The inspiring speech and discussion focused on the complex and relatively understudied relationship between anarchism and nationalism with a special emphasis on the writings of Gustav Landauer at the turn of the 20th century. The subsequent presentation, given by **Tim Rudnicki** (University of Cambridge), moved back in time, examining the image of the Dutch Republic in late 18th century British political thought. In particular he described the conception of the Dutch experience in British books and pamphlet literature, analyzing their influence on the formation of the contrasting political ideologies of radical Whiggery and neo-Toryism. Continuing with late 18th century’s history of thought, the next presenta-

tion was given by **Julian zur Lage** (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität). His paper discussed several instances of European enlightenment scholars and their writings on the history of non-European societies, thereby revealing interesting insights into the ‘ancestors’ of contemporary global historians. The discussion on the practice of global history was finally carried forward by **Schott Schorr** (University of St. Andrews) and the presentation of his visionary research project. Aiming to open up the dialogue between historians, computer scientists and sociologists, Scott introduced some ideas on writing a global history of virtual space, which, as he argued, is mostly independent of national boundaries or demarcations and thus constitutes a global space in the truest sense of the term.

Panel 8- Global History before 1750

Panel eight had to be split into two parts because of the astonishingly large number of contributions concerned with medieval and early modern topics. The first speaker, **Philipp Meller** (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) presented his research project on global contacts at the court of Otto I. Tracing the travels and migrations of ambassadors, merchants, migrants, pilgrims and scholars who crossed religious or language borders, he demonstrated how the rising Ottonian empire established connections with Slavs in the east, Vikings in the north and Muslims in the south. **Richard Herzog** (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg) followed with a presentation about the mestizo writer Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and his work “*Historia de la nación chichimeca*”. He showed how Ixtlilxochitl acted as a cultural intermediary between Spanish and Aztec traditions. **Meera G. Muralidharan** (Universität Leiden) dealt with the descriptions of South Indian Brahmin communities in Dutch accounts in the 16th and 17th century and concentrated on the construction of identities. **Christiane Borchert** (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt) presented on intra-asian trade relations between the Dutch “*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*” and Tokugawa Japan, taking a ‘post-sakoku’ perspective. She grounded her fascinating study on diverse source material ranging from Engelbert Kaempfer’s and Suzuki Ta-dao’s treaties, the Kan’ei (sakoku) edicts, porcelain design manuscripts, Dutch dag-register to rituals like the Hofreis and forms of material communication. **Radu Dîpratu** (Universitatea din București) closed the panel with his talk about the experiences of English foreigners in the Ottoman Empire in the 17th century. He detailed on their travels and living conditions during their stay and their perspectives. The presentations were followed a lively discussion about the usability of global history methods for earlier epochs and possible limitations.

Panel 9- Sexuality and Power in Global History

Panel nine examined the expansive fields of sexuality and power relations and how global histories can attempt to broaden these fields. The discussions which took place followed a number of different strands of the history of sexuality

and focused on the relationship between various actors across wide fields, spanning varying spaces, times and discourses. Furthermore the role that these actors played, sometimes in direct relation to each other, and the impacts which they generated formed a key point of discussion, which allowed participants to directly explore the benefits of how histories of sexuality can be examined in a modular fashion with the aid of comparative methodological approaches. **Josh Mentanko** (York University, Canada) began these discussions with an in depth account of the American photographer Hart Crane, whose work in Mexico during the early 1930s served to highlight differing ideas of masculinity between the USA and Mexico during this period. In this way, a transregional history of sexuality was constructed, which particularly brought out the variety and subtleties of discourses between various locations. **Sébastien Tremblay** (Freie Universität Berlin / Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) delivered a presentation on the history of anxiety, and how this emotion was translated and understood between North America and Europe within gender queer magazines. This analysis led to discussions which tied the history of emotions with histories of the body and of sexuality within a global framework, and drew attention to the discursive nature of sexuality. **Nailya Shamgunova** (University of Cambridge) presented her work on anglophone conceptions of of sexual diversity within South East Asia and Japan during the seventeenth century. This presentation led to discussions on sexuality in Europe and Asia, and the differing conditions of power which mediated them. **Iris Shahar** (Freie Universität Berlin / Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) delivered a comparative perspective on the histories of sexual violence against women in Berlin, following the end of the second world war and Punjab, following the partition of India. This study illuminated the synchronicities of sexual violence in these two locations, and sought to reveal the parallels between women's experiences as victims.

Panel 10- Representations through different Media

The role of the media and media representations in global history were the topics of the tenth panel labeled 'Representations through different Media'. The different ways in which media represented global developments as well as the mutually constitutive character of medialization and globalization constituted the overarching question of the debates. Sadly, one of the invited speakers could not make it to the conference. **Mahmoud Baballah** (Université Abdelmalek Saadi) in Tanger was denied his visa on short notice and could therefore not present his case study on the representation of the Sahrawi community in Spanish media. Global flows and transnational interaction, even in the academic world, reaches its limits when it comes to 'real' contact between the European Union and Africa. **Charlotte Piepenbrock** (Freie Universität Berlin) opened the session with a highly interesting case study from the Vietnam War. She argued that pictures of atrocities of the so called 'My Lai Incident' and their repercussions in global media

could be interpreted as the beginnings of a global iconography of war. **Elisabeth Gheorghe** (University College London) then examined the ‘Soviet Anekdot’ and its media representation during the Cold War. The examples of jokes and satire transcending national borders were not only entertaining but also constitute a very vivid example of how global history can benefit traditional historical research. The panel ended with **Beninio Tranza McDonough** (Freie Universität Berlin / Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) presenting a case study of ‘Japan Punch’ and the depictions of self and other in the British Colonial Imagination. He offered a fascinating example of how media history could be linked to other big debates in global history, such as discourses on race, othering and colonialism.