

KONFERENZBERICHTE

Managing Empires: Cooperation, Competition, Conflict

Annual Conference of the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context,” Heidelberg, 09.–11. October 2013

The fifth annual conference of the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe” of the University of Heidelberg took place on October 9–11, 2013. This year’s conference theme was “Managing Empires: Cooperation, Competition, Conflict,” around which the participants explored studies of empires, both historical and contemporary, from the perspectives of governance and administration. In particular, the conference sought to expand previous empire studies by emphasizing the role of agency, which in turn employed two views. The inside view focused on the strategies of recruiting, educating, and controlling administrative personnel broadly defined, while the outside view concentrated on the relationships of groups outside administrative systems, such as institutions and personnel. The event attracted more than 200 scholars worldwide and offered 12 panel discussions. Highlights were two keynote speeches analyzing empires from European and Asian perspectives.

Michael Boers (Oxford) delivered the first keynote address, “Nuestras Indias? The European Origins of European Colonialism,” which discussed the idea that the roots of European colonialism in Asia and other parts of the world can be found in French attitudes toward the non-French peoples of Europe during the First Napoleonic Empire. Driven by a sense of cultural superiority and the desire to modernize the societies under their control, the French went beyond what was strictly necessary to establish an efficient administrative system. Not only did they prefer French over local staff for all levels of the administrative apparatus, but they also strove to create a new legal culture and insisted on granting freedom of religion. These and similar policies alienated the local masses as well as the elite.

The second keynote, “Modernity in Common: Japan and World History,” delivered by Carol Gluck (Columbia), observed that the Japanese experience of modernity has long been suggested as being unique and incomparable with that of other nations. Refuting this traditional understanding, she maintained that no experience of a nation can be observed in complete isolation. As she explained, Japan was able to modernize so remarkably quickly and develop into a powerful empire because of preexisting favorable conditions. On the question of Japan’s sensitive wartime memory, she pointed out that an “amnesia of empire” had been granted during the early occupation period and that Japan had suddenly lost its empire without ever being truly post-colonial. Finally, she portrayed the lost decade of the Japanese economy as an extended period of incremental change that she attributed to Japan’s intense disinclination toward social disorder.

While the keynote speeches provided critical analysis of empires from two different angles, the panels offered specific case studies across a broad temporal and geographical spectrum. Following are three selected panels demonstrating the wide-ranging topics in which various Cluster projects are engaged.

In the panel “Premodern Empires,” three scholars observed historical empires from a comparative perspective. Martin Hofmann (Heidelberg), Michael Grünbart (Münster), and Christoph Mauntel (Heidelberg) looked at the Chinese Southern Song Empire, the Byzantine

Empire, and the Roman-German Empire, respectively. These empires appeared specifically to use administrative practices to implement their hegemonic claims from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries.

The panel “Renegotiating Empires” focused on the period when East Asian actors turned the notions of international law to their own advantage. Iokibe Kaoru (Tokyo) explicated how Western consular jurisdiction played out in nineteenth-century Japan, while Harald Fuess (Heidelberg) discussed the important role played by Europeans in Japan’s historical annexation of Korea. Finally, Pär Cassel (Ann Arbor) explained the Chinese experience with Western extraterritorial practices in the century after the Opium Wars.

Lastly, in the panel “Agency in Modern ‘Empires,’” Panayotis Partos (Stuttgart), the Consul-General of Greece, explored the agency and responsibilities of members of international governmental organizations and their interaction with their respective governments. Michael Ioannidis (Heidelberg) in turn explained the political consequences of international loans, showing how granting funds was used to execute control over other states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In addition to panel discussions, extra sessions of the Cluster’s research architecture aimed to showcase its in-house database and technological developments. For instance, in the lunch session “Heidelberg Research Architecture,” Jens Petersen, Eric Decker, and Cathrine Bublitzky (all Heidelberg) presented the Cluster’s “Tamboti” metadata framework, a digital working environment developed to enable researchers to collaboratively collect and annotate research materials such as texts, images, films, and audio recordings.

Through wide-ranging discussions on the issue of governance and administration, this conference has not answered but raised critical questions concerning the studies of empires, both historical and contemporary. Although the discussions ended with the round table, they will continue in the coming months and years at the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context” (www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de).

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Treffen des DoktorandInnennetzwerks Vietnam, Kambodscha, Laos

Bonn, 25.–26. Januar 2014

Das erste Treffen des 2012 gegründeten DoktorandInnennetzwerks Vietnam, Kambodscha, Laos (VieKamLao) fand vom 25. bis 26. Januar 2014 in der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn statt. Die Veranstaltung gliederte sich in vier Workshops, zu denen Prof. Dr. Guido Sprenger (Universität Heidelberg), Dr. Karl-Heinz Golzio (Universität Köln) und Phuong Le Trong (Universität Bonn) wertvolle Beiträge leisteten.

Nach einigen Eröffnungsworten von Prof. Dr. Christoph Antweiler, dem Geschäftsführer des Instituts für Orient- und Asienwissenschaften der Uni Bonn, begann die Veranstaltung am Samstag, dem 25. Januar, mit dem ersten Workshop „Staat und Gesellschaft in Laos, Kambodscha und Vietnam“ unter der Leitung von Herrn Phuong Le Trong. In einem einleitenden Beitrag stellte er die Bedeutung der Zivilgesellschaft für die postsozialistische Entwicklung in den Mittelpunkt. Dabei konzentrierte er sich auf Akteure in den drei Ländern, die zwischen Gesellschaft und Staat aktiv sind und dabei hauptsächlich informelle Kontakte nutzen, um fehlende gesetzliche Strukturen zu ersetzen. Er zeigte am Beispiel Vietnams, dass zivilgesellschaftliche Tätigkeiten bisher lediglich durch Dekrete geregelt werden. Kambodscha und Laos verfügen zwar über Verbandsgesetze, die aber sehr allgemein und restriktiv gehalten sind.