



Entangled Histories: Reflecting on Coloniality and Postcoloniality. Bielefeld: Olaf Kaltmeier / Ulrike Lindner / Angelika Epple, Universität Bielefeld, 28.05.2010-29.05.2010.

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Entangled Histories: Reflecting on Coloniality and Postcoloniality

The main aim of the workshop was to discuss and delineate the analytical and theoretical issues related to the conceptualization of 'coloniality/postcoloniality' in recent historiography by comparing the historical experiences in South Asia, Africa, Americas, and Europe. The workshop intended to problematise the terms 'coloniality' and 'postcoloniality' by addressing them as interwoven concepts for assessing social dynamics, domination, and resistance, socio-cultural formations, and regimes of representations and thereby going beyond conceptualising them as representing fixed historical times and spaces.

The workshop started with the presentation by ELIZABETH BUETTNER (University of York) that dealt with the issue of how postcolonial British politics addressed the problem of the proliferation of racial prejudices among a section of the society against the 'coloured' Commonwealth immigrant workers and the far reaching consequences of this development in early 1960s Britain. Her focus of presentation was mainly on the bitter racial campaign waged by the Conservative candidate Peter Griffiths in Smethwick against the Labour candidate Patrick Gordon Walker in the 1964 general election. Buettner not only tried to analyse the historical background of this escalating fear among the Smethwick people about the racial 'other' but also attempted to look at the reaction of the Commonwealth migrant workers who tried to fend off this racial propaganda that warned against a 'nation of half-breeds' by organising themselves and by preparing themselves to integrate into the British society. By so doing, Buettner success-

fully demonstrated how the entanglement of various historical forces was crucial in defining and shaping the political space of postcolonial Britain.

On 29 May, the workshop opened with a session on 'The Use of Postcoloniality/Coloniality in a Global Context'. In this session OLAF KALTMEIER (Bielefeld), ULRIKE LINDNER (Bielefeld) and BINU JOHN MAILAPARAMBIL (Bielefeld) discussed how the concepts 'coloniality' and 'postcoloniality' have been applied in different historical contexts in Latin America, Africa and South Asia and thus tried to problematise the conceptualisation of these terms as representing particular 'times' in history. The discussion effectively brought out the differing temporal experience of colonialism (and postcolonialism) in South Asia, Africa and Latin America and the consequent differences in the perception about 'colonialism/postcolonialism' in the historiography of these regions. It has been pointed out that Latin America went through colonial and postcolonial phases well before Africa and South Asia. Moreover, the historical experiences in these regions under colonialism differed considerably. Therefore, it was argued, it is necessary to do away with locating 'colonialism/postcolonialism' in certain temporalities by giving more stress on differences in spatial experiences.

The first panel of the workshop concentrated on the theme 'colonial/postcolonial governance'. MICHAEL PESEK (Berlin), in his presentation, pointed out that although the Foucauldian idea of 'governmentality' be-

came influential in African colonial historiography, this Foucault-influenced intellectual movement neglected the concept of 'territoriality' and its influence in shaping the colonial and postcolonial political landscape in Africa. Pesek vividly demonstrated how Africa's colonial experience was crucial in introducing the European concept of 'territorial political power' in the region and how the different colonial traditions (British, German, Italian etc.) and artificial creation of colonial borders have created enduring predicaments in the political economy of postcolonial Africa.

THORALF KLEIN (Erfurt), on the other hand, focused on the relationship between colonialism and European missionary activities. His presentation had its focus on the operation of the Basel Mission congregation in the Guangdong Province in China and its tensioned relationship with Chinese converts regarding the administration of these congregations. He successfully pointed out that familial ties continued to be crucial among the Chinese converts and such 'traditional' bonds played an important role in raising their voice for demanding complete control over the administration of these congregations sans European missionary interference. Although he accepted that the imperial/colonial background of these missionaries was crucial in shaping and defining their attitude towards the converts and their demand for the control over congregations, he did not agree to describe such missionary activities merely as 'informal imperialism' or as 'imperialism without Empire', but pointed out the need to look at the complexity of such encounters.

NIRA WICKRAMASINGHE (Leiden) in her presentation emphasized the need to constructively criticize the concept of 'colonial governmentality' by adopting a more contextualised, nuanced, and historically attentive approach to relations of power in colonial situations. She noted that although Michel Foucault has privileged the position of state in his conceptualisation of 'governmentality', according to her, the use of the grid of 'colonial governmentality/modernity' alone casts away other types of analysis and tempts to essentialise and read colonialism as a monolithic universal project and thereby ignoring the role of the colonized in effectuating changes in the colonial power systems. In that case, she pointed out the importance to go beyond the concept 'colonial governmentality' as an analytical category and to look from 'below' - from the perspective of the colonized.

The Second panel focused on 'flows of knowl-

edge'. The first presentation by FELIX BRAHM (Bielefeld) dealt with the colonial and postcolonial transformation of the colonial institution *Ecole nationale de la France d'outre-mer* which was established with the intention of giving training for future officers in French colonies. His presentation mainly concentrated on those trainees who were coming from Africa in order to study at this colonial institution in Paris and by doing so tried to explain the role of this institution in creating a class of 'indigenous officials' to maintain and reproduce colonial rule in the African French colonies.

JULIA TISCHLER (Bielefeld/Köln) devoted her attention to the issues of 'development' and 'modernity' in Africa by looking at the Kariba Dam project in the Central African Federation. By analysing the history of this project, she showed how this created various discourses on 'developmentalism' in Central Africa and tried to look into the politics of such discourses. She argued that this Dam project and the related 'modernity' politics interrelated with the controversial 'white nation-building' in the region and showed how it affected the local black populace who were forced to move away from the project area.

The presentation by UTE SCHNEIDER (Duisburg-Essen) drew attention to the history of and politics behind the making and re-making of the International Map of the World from the 19th century to the present. She described the various motives - economic, imperial, and military - behind the running of such a large-scale project and the conflicting interests, schisms, and disagreements among the nations regarding the nature of the map.

The theme of the third panel was 'changing identity formations in a colonial/postcolonial world'. The first paper presented by EVA BISCHOFF (Münster) looked into the issue of the entanglement and the interdependencies between colonial and metropolitan discourses on masculinity, race, and class. The first part of her presentation dealt with the anthropological knowledge of the 'savage cannibal' in Germany by focusing on the writings of the German botanist and explorer Georg Schweinfurth. In the second part she described how this 'knowledge' played an important role in the stereotypical descriptions of the French-African soldiers employed during the occupation of the Rheinland in post-First World War Germany. Based on criminological publications, forensic expert opinions etc., Eva Bischoff concluded that white German masculinity and the cannibal were not constructed as fundamentally different from each other. In fact, they were perceived as related, by

sharing the same manly, violent, 'primitive' bodily impulses and urges.

The presentation by STEPHAN SCHEUZGER (Zürich) dealt with the theme 'representations of emancipation' by focusing on the postcolonial political discourses in Latin America. Focusing on the interrelated concepts of indigenous and national emancipation in the ideological and political projects of the radical Left, his paper tried to analyse the disputed relationship between postcolonial critique and Marxism in Latin America. According to him Marxism, above all in the first half of the twentieth century, provided the theoretical and political framework within which the issue of the 'emancipation' was discussed in the continental context (emancipation of Latin America from US imperialism/neocolonialism) as well as within the national context (emancipation of indigenous people from the nation-state oppressor).

The final presentation by SEBASTIAN KNAKE (Bielefeld) drew attention to the issue of 'cultural entanglement' in the postcolonial world. By looking at the popularity of 'Jamaican Hip-Hop' in the US, he explicated how the Jamaican Hip-Hop singers in the US tried to construct and convey an idea of 'Jamaicanness' by means of specific visual symbols, special figures of speech and terms, and distinct attributes of the body.

The concluding session of the workshop made an attempt to pull the various arguments and thoughts presented by the participants together and to evaluate the outcome of the workshop. The workshop provided examples of how historical experiences shaped a variety of notions of coloniality and postcoloniality in different parts of the world and how difficult it would be to discuss them within a single theoretical framework. Therefore it is necessary to treat these conceptualisations beyond fixed temporal and spatial frameworks in order to broaden our understanding of colonialism/postcolonialism. However, the workshop was not able to pay adequate attention to all the important issues related to colonial/postcolonial debates, especially to the 'gender' issues. This denotes the scope for discussing coloniality/postcoloniality issues within a broader framework.

Conference overview:

Opening Session

Elizabeth Buettner (York): 'This is Staffordshire not

Alabama': Racial Geographies of Commonwealth Immigration in Early 1960s Britain

Introduction

Olaf Kaltmeier, Ulrike Lindner, Binu John Mailaparambil (Bielefeld): The Use of 'Coloniality/Postcoloniality' in a Global Context

Panel I: Colonial/Postcolonial Governance

Chair: Elizabeth Buettner (York)

Michael Pesek (Berlin): 'Foucault hardly came to Africa': Colonial and Postcolonial Spaces of Governmentality

Thoralf Klein (Erfurt): The Other German Colonialism? Power, Conflict, and Resistance in a German-speaking Mission in China, c. 1850-1920

Nira Wickramasinghe (Leiden): Colonial Governmentality: A Critique

Panel II: Flows of knowledge

Chair: Angelika Epple (Bielefeld)

Felix Brahm (Bielefeld): Techniques 'proves' au cours des siècles. African students at the Paris grande école of overseas administration, 1951-1967

Julia Tischler (Bielefeld/Köln): Orders of modernity: The Kariba Dam project in the Central African Federation

Ute Schneider (Duisburg-Essen): The International Map of the World (IMW)

Panel III: Changing identity formations in a colonial/postcolonial world

Chair: Olaf Kaltmeier (Bielefeld)

Eva Bischoff (Berlin): The Cannibal Within: White Masculinity in (Post) Colonial Germany, 1880-1933

Stephan Scheuzger (Zürich): Representations of Emancipation: Postcoloniality, Marxism and Nation in Latin America from José Carlos Mariátegui to the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional

Sebastian Knake (Bielefeld): 'Dreadlocks and golden necklaces'. Cultural entanglements between the Jamaican dance-hall-scene and US Hip-Hop

Concluding Session

Concluding Discussion

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