



*Santé militaire, santé coloniale. Guerres, maladies et empires au long XIXe siècle.*  
Roberto Zaugg, Sciences Po, Paris, 06.02.2015.

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## **Santé militaire, santé coloniale. Guerres, maladies et empires au long XIXe siècle**

The workshop *Santé militaire, santé coloniale. Guerres, maladies et empires au long XIXe siècle*, devoted to the role of military health services in colonial empires and wars, was co-organized by the Service Historique de la Défense (SHD, Vincennes/Paris) and the Centre d'histoire de Sciences Po (CHSP, Paris). It was held at the castle of Vincennes, at the French military archives, and accompanied by a small exhibition of historical books relating to military and colonial medicine.

After the inaugural addresses by VINCENT LEROI and JEAN PÉREZ (both SHD, Vincennes/Paris), JAKOB VOGEL (Sciences Po, Paris) reviewed the latest developments in colonial medical history. He recalled the important headway made in the distinction of intermediary actors between the colonizers and the colonized, and the step forward taken from a dichotomy between European physicians and *local knowledge* to a more careful analysis of ancient circulations of knowledge of which the colonial endeavor was only one stage. Hence the focus on a very long 19th century, connected to a build-up of knowledge and practices dating from the early modern period.

The sources for the history of the French military health services were discussed at length by AGNÈS CHABLAT-BEYLOT (SHD, Vincennes/Paris). She offered an overview on the records scattered in as many as ten archival locations *among them the repositories of five navy ports* and reconstructed the historical developments leading to this spread. She displayed some of the most crucial collections, like the F files of the navy hospi-

tal and medical school at Rochefort, or the ones of the Institut Militaire Tropical du Service de Santé at Toulon.

Two presentations shared a focus on the colonial expeditions of the first French Empire. Through the biographical case study on the Neapolitan exiled physician Antonio Savaresi, ANDREA GRAF (Basel) and ROBERTO ZAUGG (Sciences Po, Paris) followed the Napoleonic armies in Italy, Egypt and Martinique. They showcased how Savaresi's mobility was a defining feature in the construction of his medical career and in his legitimization as a scientist, the way in which he combined empirical observations and medical doctrines such as brownism and miasma theory, as well as his engagement with racial anthropology in the description of non-European populations. Focusing on the Saint-Domingue expedition, PIERRE NOBI (Sciences Po, Paris) uncovered the participation of an array of official and unofficial colonial medical actors in the military health service. Dismayed by yellow fever, health officers often turned to *local* forms of knowledge such as the writings of colonials or the remedies of creole women, and immersed themselves in a well-connected Atlantic medical world. These contacts then allowed them to present themselves to European audiences as American experts of the disease. FRANÇOIS REGOURD (Paris Ouest) discussed these papers by underlining the multiple roots on which these physicians' legitimacy was built (their writings, their specific field experience in the Americas, their position in the military hierarchy). Their inscription in an institutional network had its origins in the 18th century with the development of connections to the ministry of the navy and

the colonies, but also to numerous metropolitan scientific academies. He also reflected on the transfers between so-called local and universal knowledge, pointing out that this was facilitated in the West Indies by the fact that physicians often settled there and acted as *à-go-between*.

Building a database of about 220 German physicians working in the Dutch East Indies from 1815 to 1880 – when German health officers came to represent between a third and half of the personnel in this Dutch colony – allowed PHILIP TEICHFISCHER (Magdeburg) to discern a form of *German colonial medicine* before Germany's own colonial era (1884-1918). Through a comprehensive study of these doctors' socio-historical backgrounds and career advancements, their specific itineraries are revealed, from their recruitment to their rise in the ranks. This presentation connected seamlessly with the paper by SÁLVIO MARCUS DE SOUZA CORREA (Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis) on two German military physicians who served in the *Schutztruppe* of German South-West Africa during the Herero Wars. Relying on sources such as personal correspondence and diaries allowed the presenter a privileged access to their experience, from their work on the ship – which actually functioned as a naval hospital – to their difficult task in a hostile and arid climate. Most of all, these sources reveal their resentment at being treated as handymen and sometimes veterinarians, and as such are first-hand reports on the dysfunction and improvisation of these colonial medical services.

CLAIRE FREDJ (Paris Ouest) offered some leads to renew the research on army physicians during the French conquest of Algeria and their engagement with malaria up to the early 20th century. Rather than the well-known success stories of Maillot or Laveran, she proposed focusing on the medical writings on malaria and the narratives by which the physicians staged their acquaintance with an unknown African field requiring their observations. Besides the impact on the Algerian environment, Claire Fredj also noted the attention to concrete, material issues centered around the application of the quinine to the patient, its marketing with hospitals, or the development of laboratories and institutes on the field.

Discussing the presentations of this second panel, GUILLAUME LACHENAL (Paris Diderot) welcomed an innovative use of sources as well as a move beyond traditional periodization. At the same time he noted that

there is still much to be written on the relationship between military and civil medicine. He underlined the transfers of experience between African and European fronts, and the significance of the metropolitan context, both socio-economic and regional, to explain the colonial medical profession through what historians of migration call push and pull factors.

The Vincennes meeting highlighted the potential for studies focusing on inter-imperial cooperation, multipolar transfers between different colonial and metropolitan spaces as well as the value of micro-historical and biographical / prosopographical approaches. On a whole, medicine constituted a crucial sphere of the colonial project. And as such, it represents – as the lively debates at the workshop have shown – an object of both scholarly interest and of disputed public memories.

#### Conference Overview:

Jakob Vogel (Sciences Po, Paris): Introduction

Agnès Chablat-Beylot (Service historique de la Défense): Sources pour l'histoire des services sanitaires militaires conservés par le Service Historique de la Défense

Andrea Graf (Basel) et Roberto Zaugg (Sciences Po, Paris): Napoleonic wars and medical knowledge. Military physician Antonio Savaresi in Egypt, the Caribbean and Italy

Pierre Nobi (Sciences Po, Paris): Adapting and appropriating health practices. The health services of the Saint-Domingue expedition facing yellow fever (1802-1803)

François Regourd (Paris Ouest): Commentaire

Philipp Teichfischer (Magdeburg): German physicians as members of the Netherlands' colonial health service in East India (1815-1880). A kind of *“German colonial medicine”* before 1884 ?

Claire Fredj (Paris Ouest): Les médecins de l'armée et le paludisme en Algérie (1830-début XXe s.)

SÁlvio Marcus de Souza Correa (Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis): Contre des ennemis invisibles. Médecine militaire et guerre coloniale dans le Sud-Ouest africain allemand (1904-1907)

Guillaume Lachenal (Paris Diderot): Commentaire

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