

Tenth Workshop on Early Modern Central European History

Veranstalter: German Historical Institute London; German History Society

Datum, Ort: 26.10.2012, London

Bericht von: Linnéa Rowlatt, University of Kent / Freie Universität Berlin

Warm and welcoming words from Benedikt Stuchtey, the Deputy Director of the German Historical Institute London, opened the tenth workshop on Early Modern European History, with twenty-four historians from Australia, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, the United States, and the United Kingdom gathering at the GHIL on the last Friday of October. Nine papers were delivered and discussed, ranging across topics as varied as the production and history of knowledge, trade and cultural representations, and religion, politics, and war. A common theme among the presentations was an interrogation into means, methods, and motivations for the early modern creation, dissemination, and instrumentalization of information, with a tendency to focus on the late 18th century.

After an introduction by organizers DAVID LEDERER (Maynooth) and ANGELA SCHATTNER (London), work began with a session exploring knowledge of and resource management adaptations to the environment of the late 1700s. ALEXANDER KÄSTNER (Maynooth) introduced two case studies demonstrating the manner in which a failure of social integration and medical knowledge resulted in mortality from exposure to extreme cold in 1799 Holland. Part of a larger project examining early modern understandings of cold and its implications, Kästner highlighted the uncertainties of life in the context of a deadly threat. CLAUDIA STEIN (Coventry) employed Foucault's concept of biopower to analyze the introduction of the potato to Bavaria by Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford, arguing that the vegetable was central to reforms in agriculture, poor relief, and the military. Stein examined a discourse of contestation and cooperation centred on human nutrition occurring at a time when underpopulation was a concern for government; illuminated the relationship

between individuals and society at the onset of the rationalization of the state, where processes of political transformation were effected down to the level of the human body.

The early modern production of science and knowledge was the focus of the second session. The first paper was from KASPAR VON GREYERZ (Basel), which, outlining a forthcoming monograph, investigated the areas, fields, and occupation in which early modern traditions of knowledge (often popular knowledge and science) came together. Beginning with the view of knowledge as a '*gesunkenes Kulturgut*,' a defense was given for the epistemological status of early modern religion within the context of 21st century historiography of knowledge. Following this, the 1644 treatise *Mechanischer Reißbladen* of Ulm architect and engineer Joseph Furtenbach was employed to exemplify the relationship between mechanical knowledge and science; the presentation concluded by tracing the development of the observational genre in late medieval and early modern medicine, and the manner in which the genre of *observationes* integrated personally warranted experience and book knowledge during the course of the 16th and 17th centuries. GERHARD WIESENFELDT (Melbourne) offered the second paper, which looked at transformations in the understanding of Dutch culture within the German discourse using examples from natural philosophy, natural history, and medicine. Instead of a narrative of diminishing Dutch influence, the paper presented the German integration of French or English scholarship as a strategy for the establishment of alternative models in an academic culture within which Dutch scholarship maintained a significant and influential presence. The morning concluded with MARITA HUEBNER (Pasadena), who spoke about Samuel Simon Witte's 1789 "*Universal Explanation of Persepolis and the Pyramids*"; the publication's suggestion that the ruins of Persepolis, the Egyptian Pyramids, and other ancient monuments were products of volcanic activity provoked a fierce and occasionally venomous literary debate among German scholars. Arguing that Witte's theory was a skeptical attack on English and German concepts of universal history and orien-

talism, Huebner illuminated Witte's rejection of scientific value in traveler's accounts and his challenge to the new representation of the East in Western art and writing. The impact of Witte's publication on German academia was to widen the conceptual gap between history and philosophy, to expose the weaknesses of both when attempting to exceed their grasp, and to contribute to debates that would come to define the Enlightenment and Romanticism.

Consideration of trade and cultural representations were the topic of the third session, with ANNE SOPHIE OVERKAMP (Frankfurt/Main) sharing her research on four families from the Wupper Valley in the Duchy of Berg (1760-1830). All four being important merchant families in the textile business, Overkamp's conclusions from her exploration of professional and personal sources led her to propose a third category of bourgeoisie for German historiography, beyond *Wirtschaftsbürgertum* and *Bildungsbürgertum*: *gebildeten Stände*, a group analogous to the middle ranks of English society. This new category combines the cultural participation of these merchant families in activities of the *Gebildeten* with on-going mercantile activity; cohesion in the group is demonstrated through the maintenance of regionally-based endogamous marriage patterns. With this acknowledgement of an educated, mercantile class, changes and developments in Germany around 1800 are thereby integrated into the context of an emerging global consumer society. Musicologist and music historian ELISABETH GISELBRECHT (Cambridge) next offered a paper looking into the uses of music books in early modern Germany. Pointing out the frequent assumption that music books were first and foremost for performance purposes, Giselsbrecht's research suggests more possibilities, including music books as gifts (both 'officially' and 'unofficially'), as devotional items, as collected works, as pedagogical tools, or as manifestations of social status and power, among others.

The fourth and final session of the day focused on religion, politics, and war. ADAM MARKS (St Andrews) explored interventions by the Stuart crown in the German lands from 1603-1639, as his paper centralized the partic-

ipation of c.75,000 English and Scottish soldiers in the Thirty Years' War. Points for discussion included questions about the scope and nature of the war, the extent of mercenary motivations on the part of the soldiery, their military, political / diplomatic, and social effect on the German lands, the impact of the Thirty Years' War on developments in English and Scottish public sphere, printing, taxation systems, and religious tension, and any legacy accruing to the British Civil Wars. The broader motivation of individual soldiers in a military unit was mentioned as well, which included loyalty to the Stuart crown; this clarifies events during the Civil Wars, as former comrades-in-arms found themselves opposing each other at home. The paper of CHRISTIAN MÜHLING (Paris) investigated the impact of contemporary concepts of religious war on foreign affairs in early Enlightenment Europe, in a presentation summarizing part of his PhD research. Usually dismissed as a motivating agent following the Peace of Westphalia, Mühling combined anti-Protestant domestic policy by Emperor Leopold I and Louis XIV with similar anti-Catholic policy by English and Prussian leaders to show how late 17th and 18th century European politics evolved within a framework heavily influenced by religious motivations and concerns. Questions about the propriety of the term 'war of religion' for this period of conflict were raised; Mühling's research focus, however, is on contemporary discourse about the subject, where the phrase is used explicitly.

DAVID LEDERER (Maynooth) chaired a general discussion to conclude the proceedings, where, as during the Ninth Workshop, notice was taken of the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of historical research and the possibility of this as an emerging trend in historiography was mentioned. Explorations of this possibility included a concern about the indispensability of historical analysis, the opportunities and challenges of working with the volume of sources made available by digitalization, and the manner in which changes in historiographical priorities and approaches may reflect changes in 21st century culture.

As demonstrated by the learned and stimulating conversation shared during the work-

shop, early modern Central European scholarship in English continues to benefit from the annual opportunity offered by the German Historical Institute London and the German Historical Society to gather and discuss new research.

Conference Overview:

Session 1: Knowledge, Resource Management and Biopower

Chair: David Lederer, NUI Maynooth

Alexander Kästner (NUI Maynooth/ TU Dresden): Frozen to death. Considerations on the history of low temperatures in early modern societies

Claudia Stein (University of Warwick): Potatoes and Biopower in Eighteenth-Century Bavaria

Session 2: The Production of Science and Knowledge

Chair: Claudia Stein, Warwick University

Kaspar von Greyerz (University of Basel): Thoughts on the relation of knowledge and sciences in the 17th and early 18th century

Gerhard Wiesenfeldt (University of Melbourne): Dutch universities and German academic culture in the 18th century (academic exchange, history of ideas, exchange of ideas)

Marita Huebner (California Institute of Technology, Pasadena): „Mind the gap!“ Samuel Simon Witte’s Universal Explanation of Persepolis and the Pyramids, 1789

Session 3: Trade and Cultural Representations

Chair: Hannah Murphy, Berkeley, University of California

Anne Sophie Overkamp (European University Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder): Merchant families in the Duchy of Berg, 1760-1830

Elisabeth Giselbrecht (University of Cambridge): The uses of music books in early modern Germany (Material culture, exchange)

Session 4: Religion, Politics and War

Chair: Angela Schattner, German Historical

Institute London

Adam Marks (University of St Andrews): Intervention by the Stuart States in the German Lands, 1603-1639

Christian Mühling (Phillips-University Marburg/ University Paris-Sorbonne): War of Religion and European Politics 1679-1714

Tagungsbericht *Tenth Workshop on Early Modern Central European History*. 26.10.2012, London, in: H-Soz-u-Kult 27.03.2013.