

Connecting Mediterranean and Atlantic History. 2nd meeting of the Atlantic Italies Network

Veranstalter: Silvia Marzagalli, Centre de la Méditerranée Moderne et Contemporaine; Roberto Zaugg, Universität Bern

Datum, Ort: 08.11.2018–09.11.2018, Nice

Bericht von: Eva Dal Canto, Historisches Institut, Universität Bern

The numerous entanglements between the Italian-speaking area and the Atlantic world have often been reduced to a handful of isolated „heroic“ deeds, fueling the myth of „Italian“ navigators and explorers, rather than being examined as the result of broader connections between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Analyzing the presence of well-structured commercial networks between Italian states, West Africa and the Americas, the Atlantic Italies Network advocates for a re-evaluation of the history of the Mediterranean peninsula within a global dimension. As ROBERTO ZAUGG (Bern) and SILVIA MARZAGALLI (Nice) noted in their introduction, the Atlantic Italies Network aims at adopting a trans-imperial approach to Atlantic history and at developing a de-nationalized perspective on entanglements between the Italian peninsula and the Atlantic world. While acknowledging that actors from the peninsula were involved in many ways within Atlantic markets, they emphasized that we need to understand both opportunities and obstacles which resulted from the fact that Italian states did not possess colonial empires. Moreover, they pointed out that – instead of reproducing a stereotypical dichotomy between a stagnant Mediterranean and a triumphant Atlantic – we should explore links connecting these two maritime regions.

In her keynote lecture MARIA FUSARO (Exeter) stressed the usefulness of a micro-historical approach and the need of avoiding methodological nationalism in order to re-read the global history of the Mediterranean area. Thereby she underlined that microhistory should be used to tackle the fault lines of existing grand narratives and hence to provide answers to big questions through small-

scale analysis. Such scholarship, she claimed, has allowed recognizing that commercial networks do not easily fit into national frames. She also highlighted the importance of examining existing tensions between monopolies, free traders and state actors as well as the ways in which legal frameworks affected the development of trade relations. Finally, Fusaro tackled the concept of modernity and its ideological connection with the Atlantic world. Traditionally, „modernity“ has been linked to (an often stereotypically idealized vision of) north-western European nations and their engagement in Atlantic trade, which are considered as the cradle of modern representative institutions, modern capitalism, modern impersonal enterprise, and so forth. By contrast, in this „Whig“ grand narrative, the Mediterranean has been structurally conceptualized as the space of backwardness. In this sense, studying the connections between Mediterranean and Atlantic history bears the potential (and the challenge) to rethink some fundamental categories of historical discourse.

The first panel examined the role of singular enterprises and their participation as economic actors between Tuscany and the Atlantic world. NICHOLAS SCOTT BAKER (Sidney) investigated the history of the Botti family, who developed a wide ranging commercial network that bridged both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. By examining the volumes of the „Copialettere and Ricordi“, Baker offered attentive insights into the family enterprise and its economical culture. Baker decided to concentrate on the figure of Iacopo Botti, one of the brothers who moved to Seville and participated in the Spanish colonial commercial activities in the Atlantic.

FRANCESCO GUIDI BRUSCOLI (Florence) vigorously endorsed a transnational perspective for his study of Genoese and Florentine merchants participating in Atlantic business networks. While it would be misleading and incorrect to talk about a Florentine or a Genoese „expansion“ – let alone an „Italian“ one –, Guidi Bruscoli recognized the importance these actors played. He particularly focused on the entrepreneurial ability of Florentine merchants, who collected

capitals throughout Europe and actively channeled them into Portuguese maritime ventures to Brazil and Asia.

JAMES NELSON NOVOA (Ottawa) shed light on the role of Portuguese merchants (mainly New Christians) as intermediaries between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic during the Iberian Union. The Portuguese, settled in the area of Pisa since the end of the fourteenth century, proved their ability in trading commodities from and to Brazil and Peru, acting as purveyors of American goods to Tuscany by means of Spanish and Portuguese ports. Novoa tracked their activities and interconnections with their home countries.

The second panel focused on the efforts of a few Italian cities to connect themselves to border-crossing economic networks in the context of the reconfiguration of the maritime spaces and the progressive shifting towards Atlantic routes. GIORGIO TOSCO's (Florence) paper opened with a particular focus on the plans of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and the Republic of Genoa to become active actors in Atlantic trade. While retracing the history of the unsuccessful attempts of the two in establishing several joint-stock companies, Tosco examined the relations between rulers and local merchants. For some merchants the joint-stock companies would provide institutional framework to activities they were already involved in, whereas for others they would just mean an easy way to access new commercial channels. Tosco's analysis focuses on studying how the Genoese and the Tuscan considered interloping and companies as two valid alternatives. Suggesting that the Portuguese Restoration War and the following strive for neutral shipping and foreign capitals offered new opportunities to non-imperial actors and emerging joint-stock companies, Tosco thoroughly examined both the political framework and individual enterprises.

While noting that the shifting of routes to the Atlantic somehow reduced the centrality of the Mediterranean area, BENEDETTA CRIVELLI (Milan) showed the involvement of the latter in new economic networks. In order to do so, Crivelli thoroughly tracked the exchange of products between the At-

lantic Ocean and the city of Venice. Focusing on both goods and merchants, Crivelli examined the circuits of trade between Venice and Lisbon and tried to determine the impact of sugar and other colonial commodities on economic and political networks in the Mediterranean Sea. Comparing the political and financial situation of the area, Crivelli shed light on economic strategies, on alliances between merchants as well as on the interplay between local and global markets.

At the end of this panel, ROBERT WELLS (Indiana) exposed the results of his study regarding the role played by the Order of Malta in the colonization of the Americas. Wells showed that individual Knights of Malta were repeatedly present in French American territories. In the second half of the seventeenth century, five governors of Acadie, New France, the Antilles, and Tortuga were chosen among French nobles belonging to the Knights and the Order itself purchased four Caribbean islands from the Compagnie des Îles de l'Amérique. The position of these Knights of Malta (and of the Order as a Caribbean colonial actor) was thus marked by multiple allegiances: to the king of France, to the government in Malta as well as to the papacy.

The third panel focused on entanglements between Northern Italy and the Atlantic world. In his paper KLEMENS KAPS (Linz) drew the attention to specific locations on the Italian peninsula, which are often neglected in the study of the interconnections between the latter and the Atlantic areas. Aiming at exploring the links between Northern Italy and the markets of the Spanish Atlantic, Kaps focused on Lombardy and on the city of Trieste, comparing their differences and studying their role as hubs between Central Europe and the Spanish Atlantic. In order to do that, Kaps examined the flow of both imported and exported commodities and the merchants' networks that were used to channel such goods.

DAVID DO PAÇO (Paris) presented a study on the involvement of actors from the Holy Roman Empire in Atlantic-Italian entanglements. To do so, he focused on the history of the Grahl family, a family established in Habsburg Trieste since 1770 and operating in

the Mediterranean, Great Britain and North America, during the American War of Independence and the first decades of the American Republic. Analyzing the public records of British and American consuls in Trieste, Do Paço highlighted the crisscrossing networks in which the Grahls took part. Starting with the biography of the head of the family, Johann, a German Jew, Do Paço placed the history of an individual family in a global framework. The complex ramifications of the Grahl family – between Germany, Trieste, Great Britain and New York – offer a case-study for a micro-historical inquiry into the wider history of the Atlantic world.

The fourth and closing panel focused on the circulation of men as a connective factor between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic world. VALENTINA FAVARÒ (Palermo) highlighted the figure of Carmine Nicola Caracciolo, an early-eighteenth-century Neapolitan nobleman who acted as Spanish ambassador to the Holy See and in Venice and later became Viceroy of Peru. Favaro emphasized the importance of a thorough analysis of the government of Caracciolo, stressing his compliance to the directive lines dictated by Madrid, his (often conflictual) relationship with local economic and political elites as well as the relevance of his patronage networks between the Italian peninsula, Madrid and Lima.

The paper by LUCA CODIGNOLA (Notre Dame / Halifax) explored the history of the Viti brothers from Volterra. One of the brothers, Vito Viti, moved to the USA at the beginning of the nineteenth century, settled down in Philadelphia and organized an import-export enterprise operating between Tuscany and North America. From Italy he imported mainly alabaster and marble, but also food, furniture and wine. Studying individual traders such as Vito Viti, Codignola argued, not only allows for a better understanding of the creation of transnational economic networks: it also enables us – in a more anthropological perspective – to grasp the blurred identities and multiple nationalities of such small entrepreneurs.

On a whole, the papers given at the conference showed that – despite the fact that the Italian states did not own any colonies in

Africa and in the Americas – economic entanglements between the Mediterranean peninsula and the Atlantic world were manifold and intense.

Conference overview:

Reception

Silvia Marzagalli (CMMC, Nice) / Roberto Zaugg (Universität Bern): Introduction

Maria Fusaro (Exeter University, ERC „Average“): Keynote Address

Session 1

Chair: Roberto Zaugg (Universität Bern)

Nicholas Scott Baker (Macquarie University, Sydney): The Botti Family. From the Mediterranean to the Atlantic World

Francesco Guidi Bruscoli (Università di Firenze): Breaking Boundaries. Florentine Merchants and the Atlantic (Late 15th-Early 16th Centuries)

James Nelson Novoa (University of Ottawa): Portuguese Merchants as Mediators Between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean in Pisa (1580-1640)

Discussion

Session 2

Chair: Silvia Marzagalli (CMMC, Nice)

Giorgio Tosco (European University Institute, Florence): From Interloping to Companies? Genoese and Tuscan Responses to a Shifting Atlantic Economy (Mid-17th Century)

Benedetta Crivelli (Università Bocconi, Milan): Venice in a Global World. Shipping and Commodities in the Reconfiguration of the Mediterranean Space (16th-17th Centuries)

Robert Wells (Indiana University): From Old World Slavery to New. The Order of Malta in the Americas

Discussion

Session 3

Chair: Markus Koller (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

Klemens Kaps (Universität Linz): Gateway Economies in the North of Italy. The Mercantile Links of Lombardy and Trieste with Spain

ish Atlantic Markets in the 18th Century

David Do Paço (SciencesPo, Paris): Trans-Atlantic Trieste. The Informal Connections of the Grahl Family from the Adriatic to the Delaware and the Hudson Bays, 1770s-1820s

Discussion

Session 4

Chair: Maria Fusaro (Exeter University)

Valentina Favarò (Università di Palermo): From the Neapolitan Court to the Viceroyalty of Peru. Carmine Nicola Caracciolo Between Interests, Networks and Governmental Practices (1700-1720)

Luca Codignola (University of Notre Dame / Saint Mary's University, Halifax): Alabaster Traders and Their Kin. Travelling Between North America and the Italian Peninsula, 1763-1846

Discussion

Conclusions

Tagungsbericht *Connecting Mediterranean and Atlantic History. 2nd meeting of the Atlantic Italies Network*. 08.11.2018–09.11.2018, Nice, in: H-Soz-Kult 21.12.2018.