

**Indigenous Knowledge as a Resource?
Transmission, Reception, and Interaction
of Global and Local Knowledge between
Europe and the Americas 1492-1800**

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Bericht von: Katrin Germann / Lena Moser / Marie Schreier / Anna Weininger, all Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

For this conference historians, linguists, philologists, and archaeologists gathered to explore the transmission and transformation of knowledge between Europe, the Americas, and Africa. Rather than privileging occidental knowledge and how it was enriched by local knowledge from various regions of the world, the participants emphasised the validity and significance of local knowledge cultures in their own right.

The first panel demonstrated the value of researching indigenous medical knowledge for a deeper understanding of cultural exchange and social status during the Conquista. Common themes were European attempts to classify indigenous medical knowledge and the resulting medical hybridization. MIRIAM LAY BRANDER (Eichstätt-Ingolstadt) provided an example of the former by discussing the examples of the Spanish physician and botanist Nicolás Monardes and the Portuguese Jewish herbalist Garcia da Orta. Whereas the latter frequently travelled to the New World and practiced as a doctor in Portuguese India, Monardes never visited Latin America, instead taking advantage of his connections to the plant trade in Seville. The sources used by both demonstrate the connection between the religious and medical spheres, and illustrate European attempts to classify newly-gained medical knowledge. Hybridization was also featured prominently in the papers by HARALD THUN (Kiel), CAMILLE SALLÉ (Florence) and SUSANN HOLMBERG (Oslo). Thun discussed the transmission of Guaraní medical knowledge to the Río de la Plata Jesuits. This process was characterised first by observation rather than

communication, and then by a hybridization of indigenous and European medical knowledge. This hybridity is especially evident in the names of plants and medicines, and in the Europeanization of Guaraní medical infrastructure. Sallé focused on the presence of indigenous medical knowledge in European-founded hospitals in Charcas in the seventeenth century, and on the collaboration of different social groups in their corporate government. The distribution of resources in hospitals shows a simultaneous use of indigenous and Spanish products, so a hierarchical differentiation becomes evident, and the political and labour situation influenced the production of medical resources. Holmberg demonstrated how indigenous knowledge changed outside of its habitat, using the example of the Guaiacum tree. She discussed how Guaiacum was adapted to different climates, complexions and diets, and how, as a result, it went by different local names but retained its character as an exotic medicine. The paper given by PATRICIA MARTINS MARCOS (San Diego) differed by not discussing case studies, but talking about some of the broader issues addressed at the conference, such as the position of indigenous knowledge within the history of science. Challenging the notion that knowledge is universal, she advocated the decolonization of knowledge through a deeper inclusion of the local and indigenous in the history of science.

The second panel discussed missionaries' views of indigenous knowledge, and the ways in which knowledge circulated between cultures. One important common theme was the inevitable inclusion of transformation in transmission. ÁLVARO EZCURRA RIVERO (Lima) explored indigenous knowledge in the sermons of the Creole priest Fernando de Avendaño whose principal intention was to refute local idolatry. According to Ezcurra, Avendaño mentions indigenous knowledge and practices in opposing and sometimes contradictory ways, and his sermons can be interpreted as a rhetorical play alternately approving of, transforming or rejecting indigenous practices and traditions. CORINNA GRAMATKE (Munich) discussed José Sánchez Labrador's encyclopaedic work „Paraguay Natural Ilustrado“. Written by

a European, the work proves the circulation and transmission of knowledge between cultures and continents while at the same time taking a European viewpoint, since Sánchez Labrador contrasts indigenous knowledge with Jesuit epistemology. He sought to create a complete compilation of knowledge, yet neglected to mention the origin and significance of the knowledge he reproduced. SUSANNE SPIEKER (Koblenz-Landau) reconstructed the upbringing of Nahua children and precolonial educational systems as described in the Florentine Codex of Sahagún's „Historia“. Spieker analysed a series of speeches which illustrate indigenous concepts of parent-child relationships as well as moral values and rules of conduct. ANNA BOROFFKA (Hamburg) discussed the same codex, but approached it from a different angle, focusing on its illuminations and Sahagún's attempt to fit local information into the hierarchical scheme of a late medieval knowledge compilation, thereby including indigenous knowledge in universal history. Boroffka stressed that rather than being merely decorative, the illuminations played a crucial role within transcultural translation: They recall Aztec record-keeping techniques while repainting and thus visually transforming local memory.

The discussions in the third panel highlighted processes of using and evaluating indigenous languages by both indigenous and European actors, and the persistence of indigenous language in written texts. Again, hybridity was an important theme. YUKI-TAKA INOUE OKUBO (Tokyo) analysed concepts of authorship in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Mesoamerican codices. Taking examples by Hernando de Alvarado Tezozómac, Cristobál del Castillo, and Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, he examined the persistence of „*tlacuilos*“, an indigenous concept of communal authorship, demonstrating that western concepts of individual authorship infiltrated indigenous practices only gradually, and that communal authorship persisted after the Spanish conquest. ROSA YAÑEZ ROSALES (Guadalajara) studied the endurance of everyday Nahuatl in seventeenth-century textual sources from the bishopric of Guadalajara. She attempted to

discover the oral in the written and to determine how particular indigenous forms of expression persisted, for example in salutations, farewells, diminutives, and forms of address. Yañez showed that indigenous local communities appropriated the Latin alphabet and Spanish forms of text production, while preserving distinctly Nahua forms of expression. ROLAND SCHMIDT-RIESE (Eichstätt-Ingolstadt) analysed the paratexts of more than forty colonial grammars in a variety of indigenous languages from the Spanish-, Portuguese- and French-governed Americas printed between 1547 and 1700. He examined strategies of verification, evaluation, and justification of language data, but also of textual structure, and showed that the authors of the grammars used a variety of arguments to justify their choices. RICHARD HERZOG (Gießen) discussed the „*altepetl*“, a Nahua concept of political organization used by Domingo de Chimalpahin not only on a local but also on regional and supra-regional levels. Chimalpahin's approach inverted a process common among Spanish authors: the application of Spanish concepts to indigenous phenomena, through which he developed a hybrid way of writing history.

The fourth panel dealt with elements of indigenous everyday culture and its hybridization or marginalization. Not all of the papers focused on material culture to an equal extent; this aspect was most prevalent in the papers by JOSÉ FARRUJIA DE LA ROSA (La Laguna), MARÍA HERNÁNDEZ-OJEDA (New York), and CHRISTINE BEAULE (Honolulu). The former two presented the example of the Canary Islands, where European conquest almost completely obliterated indigenous culture. Archaeological traces exist but remain understudied, and the majority of the scant textual evidence is not trustworthy, having been written by European rather than indigenous authors. Nonetheless, traces of indigenous culture are still present in toponyms, pastoral traditions, and everyday practices. On the other hand, the material objects at the centre of Beaule's paper persisted throughout and after the Spanish conquest, but changed significantly along the way: Beaule used the development of *queros*, Andean ceremonial drinking vessels, to discuss the transforma-

tion of concepts of indigeneity. The papers by SILVIA ESPELT-BOMBIN (Exeter) and ELISA FRÜHAUF GARCIA (Rio de Janeiro) focused less on material objects and more on Europeans attempts to understand indigenous everyday culture. Espelt-Bombin discussed indigenous peace-making agreements in French Guiana and the Brazilian Amazon (1680-1720). In their letters, Jesuit missionaries and commentators described ritual gatherings and celebrations involving different ethnic groups as well as the gifting of flutes and food. Whereas Europeans understood these agreements within a diplomatic framework, current anthropological research suggests that the rituals may have been integral to indigenous sociality in the region. Frühauf Garcia examined the approach of Iberian conquerors in the River Plate basin to gender roles within the Tupi-Guaraní groups. Women played a fundamental role in forming alliances, with indigenous men often engaging in polygamous relationships for political reasons. Some conquerors imitated this strategy, while others applied European gender concepts to indigenous women. ANDREW WELLS (Göttingen) and RAFAEL STREIB (Tübingen) were both interested in the complicated relationships between Europeans and African indigenous knowledge. Wells discussed the arbitrary view British and New England physicians and scientists took of inoculatory knowledge learned from enslaved, disenfranchised or vulnerable persons. While they enthusiastically appropriated this knowledge, they also expressed contempt for their „exotic“ sources, and downplayed indigenous intellectual contributions. Streib analysed questionnaires produced in the early eighteenth century by the British Royal African Company. These questionnaires sought to gather local knowledge about central Africa to help further the company's trade interests. The questionnaires, while containing instructions about language and knowledge acquisition, were mainly interested in resources and raw materials, thus confirming preexisting notions about the economic viability of colonial trade.

The closing remarks provided a poignant summary of the themes and concerns of the conference. It was concluded that knowledge

is neither finite nor stable, but adaptable and fluid, and that transformation is always inherent in transmission. Furthermore, the indigenous is still not included as a matter of course in the discussion of knowledge, to the extent that if the adjective „indigenous“ had not been explicitly included in the call for papers, the conference might have looked completely different. It is up to the academic community to further remedy this shortcoming.

Conference Overview:

Section 1: Indigenous Medicine

Harald Thun (Kiel): El conocimiento médico de los guaraníes y la medicina de los jesuitas rioplatenses

Miriam Lay Brander (Eichstätt-Ingolstadt): Cosas que jamás han sido vistas, ni hasta hoy sabidas: La recepción de conocimientos medicinales indígenas por Nicolás Monardes y García da Orta

Camille Sallé (Florence): Medicina de la tierra y medicina de Castilla: conocimientos indígenas en los hospitales de Charcas en el siglo XVII

Patricia Martins Marcos (San Diego): From Science to Knowledge: Carving a Space for the Local in the Historiography of Science in the Iberian World

Susann Holmberg (Oslo): Guaiacum – From Indigenous to Exotic Medical Knowledge

Section 2: Missionary Perspectives on Indigenous Knowledge

Álvaro Ezcurra Rivero (Lima): Concesiones, aceptaciones, transformaciones y rechazos del conocimiento indígena en los sermones de Fernando de Avendaño

Corinna Gramatke (Munich): El Paraguay Natural Ilustrado 1772 – 1776: Manuscrito inédito en el Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu del misionero jesuita español expulso P. José Sánchez Labrador (1717 – 1799)

Susanne Spieker (Koblenz-Landau): Children, Education, and Upbringing Explored in Sahagún's *Historia*

Anna Boroffka (Hamburg): Painting a Universal History of the Aztec World: Translation

and Transformation of Indigenous Knowledge in the Illuminations of the Florentine Codex

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Section 3: Indigenous Languages and Texts

Yukitaka Inoue Okubo (Tokyo): El concepto de „autor“ en la tradición historiográfica indígena novohispana

Rosa Yáñez Rosales (Guadalajara): Lo hablado en lo escrito: saludos y despedidas en cartas en náhuatl. Obispado de Guadalajara, siglo XVI

Roland Schmidt-Riese (Eichstätt-Ingolstadt): For to Legitimize Things Unheard of: An Analysis of Colonial Grammar Addresses to the Reader

Richard Herzog (Gießen): „The Great altepetl Of Salamanca“: Political Organisation between Colonial Mexico and Europe in the Works of Domingo de Chimalpahin (Early 17th Century)

Section 4: Points of Departure: Material Culture and Geographical Comparisons

José Farrujia de la Rosa (La Laguna) / María Hernández-Ojeda (New York): Indigenous Knowledge in the Canary Islands? A Case Study at the Margins of Europe and Africa

Christine Beaule (Honolulu): Queros and the Conservation of Indigeneity in the Spanish Colonial Andes

Silvia Espelt-Bombin (Exeter): Treaty-Making between Indigenous Peoples and Europeans: Knowledge Transformation in Brazil and French Guiana

Elisa Frühauf Garcia (Rio de Janeiro): Gender Knowledge in the Conquest: How to Define Tupi-Guarani Women in the River Plate Basin (16th Century)

Andrew Wells (Erfurt): Slaves and Salves: Communicating African Inoculatory Knowledge in British America, 1700-1820

Rafael Streib (Tübingen): Knowledge as a Resource for Trading

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