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Author: Thomas Lindner

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Freie Universität Berlin
Global Histories: A Student Journal
Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut
Koserstraße 20
14195 Berlin

Contact information:

For more information, please consult our website www.globalhistories.com or contact the editor at: admin@globalhistories.com.

First Global History Collaborative Summer School 2015, Tokyo and Sapporo

THOMAS LINDNER

Thomas Lindner obtained his M.A. in Global History at Freie Universität and Humboldt Universität Berlin. He is now a doctoral candidate at the International Max-Planck Research School “Moral Economies” in Berlin. In his PhD project, he works on anti-imperialist movements in Latin America after the First World War, analyzing their local and transnational networks via a global history perspective.

Global collaboration and cross-continental exchange are not only important topics of global history writing – if conducted in a fruitful way, global collaboration can itself stimulate innovative global history research. Realizing the great potential of transnational collaboration was the driving force behind the Global History Collaborative (GHC), a collaboration of five prestigious universities: the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales Paris, Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt University Berlin, Princeton University, and the University of Tokyo. The GHC’s first summer school was held in September with the University of Tokyo as the first host. The school was aimed at offering many young scholars the chance to present their PhD projects in the field of global history.

The University of Tokyo offered a very welcoming surrounding in which the works were displayed and extensively discussed. Debated projects included such diverse topics as exiled New Spain Jesuits in Italy in the eighteenth century, a global history of the reception of John Ruskin, the experiences of Korean ambassadors in China and Japan and contemporary practices of DNA-related heritage search in the US and Brasil. These projects, only a small sample of the vast plurality of works, were discussed in relation to the overarching question of scale in global history. Time frames, spatial boundaries and thematic configurations were scrutinized in their relation to global history research. It became clear that even highly place-specific histories can be envisioned and fruitfully re-read under the lens of global history or using its methodological tools. The focus on the works and the active participation of students was especially noticeable. Faculty members successfully restrained themselves from taking over discussion and thus made the summer school primarily about student discussions.

Alongside the inspiring academic involvement with global history, the cultural encounter with Japanese society and amongst the students with diverse backgrounds themselves was an integral part of the summer school experience. For many of the “Berlin delegation” it was the first opportunity to gain “hands-on” experience with Japanese culture. In terms of weather, the aficionados of heavy rain (which was caused by a severe typhoon) were clearly favored but this did not affect the cheerful and warm atmosphere among all participants. After inspiring

days in Tokyo, the whole group spent the last sessions in the University of Hokkaido in Sapporo and thus also gained a quick look upon Japan's northern island.

Overall, the Global History Collaborative offers myriads of possibilities for students and young scholars to connect their studies to other places in the academic world. The GHC's website (<http://ghc.wp.ehess.fr/>) is regularly updated and events such as workshops, conferences and summer schools are typically open to students. This great opportunity to gain novel academic insights and, get to see the world besides, should definitely be harnessed! The next summer school will take place in summer 2016 in Princeton.