Global Histories: A Student Journal

SCOPE AND PURPOSE
In response to the increasing interest in the "global" as a field of inquiry, a per-spective, and an approach, *Global Histories: A Student Journal* aims to offer a platform for debate, discussion, and intellectual exchange for a new generation of scholars with diverse research interests. Global history can provide an opportunity to move beyond disciplinary boundaries and methodological centrisms, both in time and space. As students of global history at Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, our interest lies not in prescribing what global history is and what it is not, but in encouraging collaboration, cooperation, and discourse among students seeking to explore new intellectual frontiers.

PEER REVIEW STATUS AND ETHICS
This journal provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge. All articles which appear in this issue, with the exception of editorial content, were subject to peer review.

I. RESEARCH ARTICLES

II.   CONFERENCE REVIEWS

III. BOOK REVIEWS

Dear Readers,

The year 2025 is coming to a close and it has been a difficult time for students and schools worldwide. From defunding and active censorship, especially from those corners that once loudly proclaimed their commitment to freedom of expression, to targeted destruction in warzones around the world, institutions of learning and their pupils are under immense pressure. In this context, our team brings you another issue of *Global Histories*, a journal for and by students, for young scholars to meet and share their ideas on the page and to further explore the contours of global history as a field, free from official interference. The issue presented to you now represents the cumulative work of numerous student researchers, reviewers, and editors, without whom, this issue would not be possible.

This issue will focus on the concepts of periphery and encounter. Greta Marie Stripp in her work examines the influence of British and French colonies as sites of local agency in the development of birth control campaigns. Antoine Grépin discusses how the outermost regions of the European Community would shape the later Maastricht Treaty and European Union. Leon Blohm investigates how the employment of colonial subjects as police and security personnel in German Samoa created situations which both challenged and reinforced colonial hierarchies. Anna Zoë Klos explores how descriptions of magic and the supernatural further reinforced colonial binaries in missionary writings. Finally, Christos Kollias-Dakoff will demonstrate the ways in which emotional language influenced the reception of Chinese-style gardens in Europe.

Complementing these themes, this issue includes four book reviews. Continuing a trend from previous issues, *Global Histories* is helping further explore the boundaries of global history scholarship by introducing reviews of non-English works to a broader audience. Of course this new direction brings new challenges, from finding native speakers to edit the review, to sorting out formatting. Nevertheless, if the classic critique is that global history is an Anglophone field, then we would like to help combat this. Vasileios Plaitis reviews a new global history of Greek Communism, placing Greek Communists on the global stage and Han Yutong reviews a new study of the role of mercenaries in European History, providing the reader the fresh perspective of Chinese scholarship on an old topic. Additionally, Ankit Chowdhury reviews a new book on post-colonial industrial development in eastern India, questioning older paradigms of development, and both Bela Hubenstorf and Natalie Tongue review a new history of the concept of sovereignty.

In addition, there are two conference reviews. Imogen Sadler brings us the long awaited 8th Global History Student Conference. Former chief editor Phoebe Ka Laam Ng and myself attended the European Social Science and History Conference in Leiden to discuss the roles of journals like *Global Histories* in shaping the field of global history.

Our *Global Histories* team is proud to have successfully continued the Global History Student Conference. From June 6th to June 9th, 2024, over 30 students travelled from 12 different countries to present their research projects. Spanning from brewing to bees, from the medieval to the medical, this conference never ceases to amaze attendees and provides opportunities to exchange insights about global history. The team is now working on the 10th Anniversary 2026 conference which we hope will be the first step to future decennial celebrations.

Finally this will be my last issue as I will be departing the university and leaving the team in the capable and experienced hands of Margaret Slevin who joined the team in 2023. I have every faith and confidence that she will continue the traditions of the journal and conference and take them to new heights. My tenure as head editor and conference organizer will count as one of the best learning experiences I have yet had. It was a pleasurable, if sometimes stressful, part of my time in this program and I was glad to have contributed to the continued growth of these two indelible institutions, the journal and the conference. I thank everyone who helped to make it possible. The team and I wish good fortune to our conference participants and authors who contributed to this issue, and to our readers, we hope you enjoy reading our latest issue.

Wishing the best for you and your families, and all your future endeavours,

Regards,

Evan Liddle
Editor in Chief

Acknowledgements

I.
RESEARCH
ARTICLES

Emotions of Transcultural Encounters: a Study of Eighteenth–Century Western Discourse about Chinese Gardens

ABSTRACT

The early modern period marked an era of more frequent contact between Europe and China, leading to cultural exchange that generated intellectual challenges for Western and Chinese scholars alike. This article highlights one aspect of this transcultural encounter by employing a history of emotions approach to examine ways that eighteenth-century European writers engaged with Chinese garden design. Through the works of writers who had not travelled to China, such as Joseph Addison and Claude-Henri Watelet, as well as of others who had actually experienced Chinese gardens firsthand, including Matteo Ripa, Jean-Denis Attiret, and William Chambers, this study explores how emotions served as a medium of cultural translation and played a crucial role in imagining the Other, as well as in negotiating foreignness, ultimately lending familiarity to what was otherwise radically unfamiliar. In this light, discourse around gardens, which are spaces abound with emotional practices, can offer unique insights into the emotional dynamics of early modern cross-cultural encounters.

BY

Christos Kollias-Dakoff

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christos Kollias-Dakoff is a Master's student in History at KU Leuven. He holds a BA in History and Archaeology from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. His research explores emotions in the early modern world, focusing on the affective dimensions of cross-cultural encounters.

Introduction

While increased contact between Europe and China in the 1600s had already familiarised some Europeans with the Chinese form of garden design, it was during the eighteenth century that Europeans took significant interest in it. Earlier reports about Chinese gardens, such as the ones from missionary Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) and traveller Johan Nieuhof (1618–1672), were too sporadic or had limited dissemination and cultural impact.[1] Unlike Ricci and Nieuhof, however, European writers of the eighteenth century lived in an era of "jardinomanie,"[2] amidst a spirited debate around garden design, the emergence of new gardening techniques, and increased horticultural experimentation. A record number of texts about gardening were published during this time, and especially during the 1770s, which has been called a, "seminal decade" in terms of gardening literature in Western Europe.[3] Additionally, *chinoiserie*, i.e. the imitation of Chinese or Chinese-inspired decorative motifs, became increasingly influential during this century, with considerable effect on European fashion, architecture, garden buildings and design.[4]

Throughout the eighteenth century, a considerable number of Western writers incorporated descriptions of Chinese gardens or used their 'exotic' paradigm to support their own arguments on their preferred style of garden design. Most of those writers had not actually visited China; rather, they were *imagining* China based on accounts of certain agents of cultural exchange: travellers, missionaries, or merchants. In their imagined confrontations with Chinese foreignness and 'exoticism,' some writers employed a variety of emotional responses, including amusement, embarrassment, curiosity, and admiration. While existing scholarship on early modern Sino-European cultural exchange has largely focused on the material impact of these encounters, as well as the intellectual responses to otherness, less attention has been paid to the role of emotions in these cross-cultural experiences. With regard to European perceptions of early modern Chinese gardens, scholars like Craig Clunas have

---

1   Crucially, both Ricci's and Nieuhof's notes about gardens in China did not include any thoughts over Chinese garden design in relation to the European style of gardening. See Osvald Sirén, *China and Gardens of Europe of the eighteenth century* (The Ronald Press Company, 1950), 7-8.

2   Marie-Pierre Dumoulin-Genest in her "Note sur les plantes chinoises dans les jardins français du XVIIIe siècle. De l'expérimentation à la diffusion" *Études chinoises* 11, no. 2, (1992): 147.

3   Claude-Henri Watelet, *Essay on Gardens. A Chapter in the French Picturesque*. trans. Samuel Danon (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 3.

4   For reactions to chinoiserie see e.g. Beverly Sprague Allen, *Tides in English Taste (1619-1800). Vol. 1* (Harvard University Press), 1937; David Porter, "Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth-Century Fashion and the Aesthetics of the Chinese Taste," *Eighteenth-Century Studies 35*, no. 3, (2002): 395-411, https://www.jstor.org/stable/30054206.

already highlighted the ideological aspect of Western discourse around Chinese gardens,[5] while environmental historians as well as art historians have examined the reciprocal botanical and architectural influence between both European and Chinese gardens.[6] Others, including Bianca Maria Rinaldi, have explored how Chinese garden design ideas were interpreted by European writers and were subsequently incorporated into European garden design.[7] In doing so, they have mostly overlooked the emotional practices that mediated the comprehension and appropriation of Chinese horticultural traditions. This study therefore aims to examine the underdiscussed role of emotions as a medium of negotiation with otherness, which can either accentuate cultural differences or facilitate the process of cultural translation.[8]

The history of emotions has provided researchers with useful methodological tools in order to analyse historically contingent emotional responses. Viewing emotions as performative practices, for example, in line with the framework shaped by Monique Scheer's concept of emotional practices and Andreas Reckwitz's praxeological perspective,[9] is vital in understanding the ways that emotions both reflect and construct social realities. By analysing emotions expressed or implied in these written accounts as *practices* that serve social and cultural functions, I will explore the role emotions played in legitimising the aesthetics of 'exoticism,' therefore reflecting the emotional and social dynamics of early modern cross-cultural encounters.

---

5   See Craig Clunas, "Nature and Ideology in Western Descriptions of the Chinese Gardens," *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 22, no. 22 (2000): 153-166, http://www.jstor.com/stable/42635703.

6   See e.g. Marie-Pierre Dumoulin-Genest, "Note sur les plantes chinoises dans les jardins français du XVIIIe siècle. De l'expérimentation à la diffusion," *Études chinoises* 漢學研究, vol 11 no. 2 (1992): 141-158; Lianming Wang, "How Water Became Landscape: Fountains and Hydraulic Devices in Early Modern China," in: *Memorial Landscapes: World Images East and West*, eds., Uwe Fleckner et al. (De Gruyter, 2020): 193-215.

7   See Bianca Maria Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese gardens: Western accounts, 1300-1860*. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); the incorporation of Chinese garden design ideas into European gardens is also explored by art historian Osvald Sirén in his classic work: Osvald Sirén, *China and Gardens of Europe of the Eighteenth Century*, (Ronald Press Company) 1950.

8   The juxtaposition of these various writers can lead to the impression that they were directly conversing with each other, but most of the texts explored here remained influential mostly within their countries' national borders: e.g. Watelet's work was officially translated into English for the first time only in 2003.

9   See Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotion," *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012); Andreas Reckwitz, "Affective Spaces: a Praxeological Outlook," *Rethinking History* 16, no. 2 (2012): 241-258.

Imagining the Chinese Gardens

One of the first Western accounts concerning the Chinese style of garden design can be found in the work of Joseph Addison, editor of *The Spectator*,[10] who wrote in 1712 an article advocating for a more natural-looking garden.[11] Addison took most of his inspiration from William Temple, a late seventeenth century English diplomat whose essay "Upon The Gardens of Epicurus, or Of Gardening in the Year 1685" praised Chinese gardens. Temple, despite not having visited China himself, used the example of Chinese gardens in order to support his argument that beauty is not always antithetical to irregularity, ultimately wishing to express his dissatisfaction with the then-dominant model of the French formal garden, whose main attributes were the use of geometrically placed parterre designs, strict symmetrical layouts, and the pursuit of monumentality — features meant to assert control over nature and project a sense of power and grandeur.[12] Addison, believing that when nature is imitated "it gives us a nobler and more exalter kind of pleasure," and that "artificial works receive a greater advantage from their resemblance of such as are natural," used Chinese gardens to reinforce his argument. He claimed that the Chinese "choose rather to show a genius in works of this nature, and therefore always conceal the art by which they direct themselves"; for him, Chinese gardens exemplified how garden design could effectively conceal its own artificiality by imitating 'natural' patterns.[13]

Interestingly, Addison did not simply reproduce Temple's rhetoric: while Temple had argued that the Chinese scorn the formal way of garden design by allegedly saying that even, "a boy that can tell an hundred, may plant walks of trees in straight lines, and over against one another, and to what length and extent he pleases,"[14] Addison, using this passage, stated: "Writers who have given us an account of China, tell us the inhabitants of that country laugh at the plantations of our Europeans, which are laid out by the rule and line; because, they say, any one may place trees in equal rows and uniform figures."[15] I argue that Addison chose a much more explicitly emotional narrative to describe

---

10   English daily publication of the early eighteenth century; not to be confused with the modern magazine.

11   Joseph Addison, "No. 414, Wednesday, June 25, 1712" in: *The Spectator* (London: J.J. Chidley, 1841), 476-7

12   See e.g. Chandra Mukerji, "The Political Mobilization of Nature in Seventeenth-Century French Formal Gardens," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 5 (1994): 651-677, https://www.jstor.org/stable/658091.

13   Addison, ibid.; Regarding the ideological uses of the concept of nature, see Clunas, "Nature and Ideology," 153-166.

14   William Temple, "Upon the Gardens of Epicurus; or Of Gardening in the Year 1685," in *Sir William Temple Upon the Gardens of Epicurus, with Other XVIIth Century Garden Essays* (Chatto and Windus, 1908): 54.

15   Addison, ibid.

what Temple had also described: the artful geometrical design of the European formal garden was now ridiculed, presented as *laughed* at by the Chinese, a nation Addison revered and about which his upper- and middle-class readership was enthusiastic to learn more.[16] If anything, to use Tzvetan Todorov's words, "such admiration emphasises rather than erases the distance between them and himself."[17]

Temple's view that the Chinese showed contempt for the European style of garden design underscored cultural difference, presenting an opposing viewpoint to reinforce his critique against the paradigm of the European formal garden — a critique grounded in a narrative of European failings set against and compared with the Chinese masterful way of designing more 'natural' gardens. Addison's use of laughter in his argument not only accentuated this dynamic but also highlighted the emotional aspect of this bewildering encounter with foreignness: how this intellectually challenging experience of confronting the Other can be accompanied by emotions such as embarrassment or discomfort. By imagining the Chinese as laughing at what early modern English elites otherwise generally considered major horticultural and artistic achievements, Addison places his readership within a state of humiliation and discomfort: it is the affective imagining of the reactions that such cross-cultural encounters entail. Admiration for the 'exotic' and a subtle anxiety about the prospect of humiliation thus formed a kind of symbiosis within the emotional dynamics of early modern cultural exchanges.

Claude-Henri Watelet was a French academician who also promoted a more naturalistic style of garden design, being one of the first major French contributors to the discourse about the guiding principles of this naturalist, in France also called 'picturesque,' garden.[18] While describing his own garden in the last chapter of his *Essai sur les Jardins*, published in 1774, Watelet mentioned a poem carved on a tree next to where he used to sit: "Rejoice in the secret charms, of this delightful, shaded place. Find some peace if you are sad; add to your joy if you are merry."[19] Watelet used similar sentimentalist tropes throughout his essay to support his view that gardens are of utmost importance as places of emotional refuge and appreciation for the natural world.

---

16   For eighteenth-century readership of English newspapers and journals and its middle-class connections see Hannah Barker, "Newspaper Readers" in *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695 – 1855* (Longman, 2000), 46-64; For eighteenth-century English middle and upper classes' infatuation with China see e.g. Allen, "Europe's Discovery of the Far East" in *Tides in English Taste,* 180-191.

17   Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America. The Question of the Other* (Harper and Row, 1984), 130.

18   Watelet, *Essay on Gardens*, 3-4.

19   Ibid.*,* 69.

What is noteworthy, though, is how this long chapter in which he thoroughly described his garden, Moulin Joli, is placed directly after a chapter about the Chinese style of garden design titled "le jardin chinois." In this part of his essay, Watelet refrained from commenting much about the Chinese gardens. Instead, he used what seems to be a translated version of the description an eleventh-century Chinese scholar, Sima Guang, had made of his own garden.[20] Watelet, not having visited China himself, relied on this source to understand Chinese gardening. In the passage that Watelet attributed to this "Chinese sage," Sima Guang described his garden as a, "place of solitude" where he found, "pleasure in [his] leisure time,"[21] and experienced joyous emotions that would "immerse [him] in a sweet reverie."[22] The emotional resonance of both Watelet's and Guang's gardens is evidently similarly described; besides, Watelet himself recognised that despite some significant differences between the two gardens, both his and Guang's accounts described a retreat, "intended for the same usages."[23] What is more, he also offered the following commentary at the end of Guang's description:

> His detailed account shows that in all places and at all times wisdom is the consolation of learned men; friendship, their greatest happiness; study, their truest pleasure. This description, moreover, has an exotic quality and wears a foreign costume, features that may well pique some people's curiosity.[24]

While recognising the inherent foreignness of the 'exotic' Chinese garden, Watelet simultaneously acknowledged how *both* European and Chinese gardens are spaces of similar emotional and social practices. The gardens' similarly described emotional impact attenuated their differences – foreignness became less foreign in the event of shared emotional practices.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *aesthetic disposition* is insightful in this regard. It refers to the idea that, for any cultural product to be legitimised and appreciated by a certain social class, it must align with its socially determined sense of taste — one that reflects and reaffirms its identity and self-perception. Through this lens, Bourdieu has explained how the "propensity and capacity to recognize [a class of works] as worthy of admiration in themselves […] is inseparable from the capacity to recognize in them something already known."[25]

---

20   For information about Sima Guang and the scholarship around his text see Watelet, *Essay*, 81-82.

21   Ibid.*,* 56.

22   Ibid.*,* 59.

23   Claude-Henri Watelet, *Essai sur les Jardins* (Prault, Saillant & Nyon, Pissot, 1774), 123-124.

24   Watelet, *Essay on Gardens,* 59.

25   Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984): 26

In a Bourdieusian manner, Watelet essentially utilised emotions as a medium for recognising the distinctive value of what he views as 'exotic' Other. By including this long chapter on Chinese gardens and the emotional and social practices they entail, he signified how a cultural item so foreign can be legitimised when one can effectively identify the appropriate, "aesthetic intention capable of recognising and constituting [it] as [a] work of art."[26] In other words, what was otherwise so *absurdly* 'exotic' could become meaningful and legitimate when certain emotional practices, represented as similar to those practiced by European "learned men" like Watelet, were also recognised.

Experiencing The Chinese Gardens

Crucially, gardens are *emotional spaces*, i.e. spaces whose design and spatial arrangements are closely related to emotional practices.[27] Gardens are also ever-changing spaces: whether it is seasons changing, plants growing, or the visitor moving through their different areas — gardens are not static. When European missionaries or merchants travelled to early modern China, their confrontation with the 'exotic' style of Chinese garden design was, unlike Addison or Watelet who had never set foot in China, a tangible physical reality — their emotional experiences were spatially framed, and so were their memories.[28] Besides, if, "emotions are something we *do*, not just *have*," as Monique Scheer has argued, they are not solely the result of sociocultural dynamics but also entail a corporeal aspect.[29] This bodily element can help researchers to better explain the appeal of emotions in transcultural contexts and the role of emotions in cross-cultural translation and communication.

In this part of the article, I will examine how European travellers to early modern China *felt* about their encounters with Chinese gardens or to be more precise, how they *wrote* they felt. Indeed, most texts I reviewed do not really *get emotional* in the most obvious ways: explicit mentions of emotional experiences, of what William Reddy has called *emotives*,[30] are rare. Despite that, I argue that

---

26   Bourdieu, *Distinction,* 29.

27   For the interplay of emotions, spatiality, and materiality see e.g. Andreas Reckwitz, "Affective Spaces: a Praxeological Outlook," *Rethinking History* 16, no. 2 (2012): 241-258, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2012.681193; Christopher Tilley and Kate Cameron-Daum, *Anthropology of Landscape: The Extraordinary in the Ordinary* (UCL Press, 2017), 1-22; Margrit Pernau, "Space and Emotion: Building to Feel," *History Compass* 12, no. 7 (2014), 541-9.

28   See e.g. Owain Jones, "An Ecology of Emotion, Memory, Self and Landscape," in *Emotional Geographies*, ed. Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith. (Ashgate Publishing, 2016), 210.

29   Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotion," *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012): 194, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23277639.

30   See William Reddy, "Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions," *Current Anthropology* 38, no. 3 (1997): 327-351, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/204622.

the emotionality of these texts is found in narratives that their writers employ; these narratives can reveal the writers' aesthetic disposition, to use Bourdieu's term, towards what they view as radical foreignness. Emotional narratives found in discourse about Chinese gardening traditions can thus demonstrate the transformative experience of trying to understand the 'exotic' Other in early modern societies.

An important account on Chinese gardens comes from Italian missionary Matteo Ripa. Ripa arrived in China in 1710 as part of the Propaganda Fide congregation and served at the Qing imperial court as a painter and engraver for more than a decade, until 1732, when he returned to Europe. His arrival in London drew considerable interest among English intellectuals, who were then also introduced to some of his engravings depicting Chinese gardens (Figure 1).[31] Additionally, Ripa had recorded some of his impressions of China in a personal journal, which he organised into his memoirs upon his arrival in Italy. These impressions were finally published in Italian, posthumously, in 1832.[32]

[Figure 1. Matteo Ripa, Thirty-six views of the Imperial Summer Palace at Jehol, Plate 30, 1713, engraving on paper © The Trustees of the British Museum]

In his memoirs, Matteo Ripa included his own description of the gardens he had seen while in China. One of them was the imperial garden named Changchun Yuán (長春園), the "Garden of Joyful Spring," located in Kangxi emperor's Summer

---

31   According to Patrick Conner, his engravings' influence has been overestimated, as garden theorists still mostly cited authors like Attiret. Imagining the Chinese gardens through written accounts proved to be more appealing than 'looking' at them, see Patrick Conner, "China and the Landscape Garden: Reports, Engravings and Misconceptions," *Art History 2*, no. 4 (1979): 431-432.

32   There is still not a full English translation of all three volumes of this work, although Bianca Maria Rinaldi has translated into English the points mostly analysed in this paper; it can be found in, Bianca Maria Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese gardens: Western accounts, 1300–1860* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 84-90.

Residence near Beijing, which Ripa described as very dissimilar to the European gardens he had known. He noted this difference, explaining that "we [Europeans] artfully attempt to distance ourselves from the natural […]; the Chinese, on the other hand, work with art to imitate nature […],"[33] and he revered the aesthetic appeal of the variety of elements found in Chinese gardens. He described it as a place of pleasurable social interaction at least for the few allowed to be there in the first place.[34] Ripa then introduced an interesting simile: this scene of the imperial garden reminded him of the Neapolitan crèche, i.e. the representations of the Nativity of Christ scene found in Naples, his hometown. "To describe this complex in a few words," he wrote, "I will say that it has much of the taste of the good crèche scenes here in Naples made to represent the nativity of Our Lord naturally."[35] As Rinaldi has convincingly argued, Ripa chose the Nativity scene as the emblematic representation of those Chinese gardens, essentially using an already familiar microcosm in order to describe a radically unfamiliar one.[36] In doing so, though, he did not just compare the imperial garden to the Neapolitan crèche in terms of pictorial similarity; he spoke of them as sharing a similar 'taste' (*gusto*), ultimately pointing to their aesthetic similarity as well as emotional impact. This process of recognising a degree of aesthetic familiarity in an otherwise 'exotic' space reveals the affective strategies at play in Ripa's cross-cultural encounter especially given that the Nativity scenes must have been of profound emotional effect for a pious man like him. For Ripa, as well as his audience, this Chinese garden became intelligible — and by extension legitimate as a distinctive work of art — through successfully reproducing emotional practices already familiar to them. As Reckwitz has shown, "affects only form when a space is practically appropriated by its users, which always activates these users' implicit cultural schemes and routines."[37] In seeking to comprehend the cultural differences he had experienced in this garden, Ripa symbolically appropriated its design, reinterpreting its aesthetic appeal and translating its 'exotic' aesthetics into something recognisable but also *emotionally palpable*. Emotions, in this way, functioned as a medium of transcultural translation: they created equivalences in meaning and a sense of transculturally shared emotional experiences.[38]

---

33   Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese gardens*, 84-85.

34   Similarly to Ripa, other travellers to China had also mentioned how difficult it was for anyone to have access to those gardens; see e.g. Peter Osbeck, *A Voyage to China and the East Indies,* vol. 1, (Benjamin White, 1771), 326.

35   Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese gardens*, 87; for the original Italian text, see Matteo Ripa, *Storia della Fondazione della Congregazione e del Collegio de' Cinesi*. vol. 1. (Manfredi, 1832), 402.

36   Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese gardens*, 83-4.

37   Reckwitz, "Affective Spaces," 255; My understanding of this aesthetic aspect in the broad sense and not just in terms of beauty is also influence by Reckwitz.

38   Gammerl, Benno, Phillip Nielsen, and Margrit Pernau, ed., *Encounters with Emotions: Negotiating Cultural Differences since Early Modernity* (Bergbahn Books, 2019), 11.

Another missionary to China in the early eighteenth century was the Jesuit painter Jean-Denis Attiret. Attiret travelled to China in 1738 and then spent the remainder of his life there serving the Qing emperor as a painter. Part of his correspondence was published, some of it becoming very popular not only in his native France, but also in neighbouring England. One particular letter he wrote in 1743, published in 1749 and then translated into English in 1752,[39] enjoyed lasting popularity: it was the description of the imperial gardens of Yuánmíng Yuán (圓明園), the "Garden of Perfect Brightness," and it was the first such description to reach a wide audience, largely owing to the contemporary infatuation with Chinese designs and the chinoiserie fashion.

Attiret's description creates a visual narrative that guides readers as if they are travelling from one part of the palace complex to another. Attiret notably admired the variety featured in the garden and suggested that "you must examine every piece by itself, and then you would find enough to amuse you for a long time, and fully satisfy your curiosity,"[40] While acknowledging that "nothing bears the least resemblance to our manner of building,"[41] his description is enthusiastic and almost cinematic: the reader is invited to imagine landscapes filled with zig zag paths, pavilions, grottoes, mountains offering awe-inspiring views, canals, various bridges and islands, in what was, "indeed a terrestrial paradise"[42] and also a "beautiful disorder."[43] The experience of wandering around the garden consisted of different scenes that are part of various emotional experiences.

Attiret then stressed the importance of spatiality in this emotional experience, by wishing his addressee could teleport there, and physically explore this garden himself instead of merely reading about it:

> To make you more sensible   of the entire beauty of this single spot, I wish
> I could transport you there, when the lake is covered with the barks finely

---

39   In the first English translation, a large part of the original text is missing because its writer, Sir Harry Beaumont [Joseph Spence], wanted to better adjust the text to his audience's preferences, depriving it of its emotional narrative which the translator probably considered hyperbolic; therefore, I used Thomas Percy's translation which is complete and more literal. Jean-Denis Attiret, "A Description of the Emperor of China's Gardens and Pleasure-Houses Near Peking," *Miscellaneous Pieces Relating to the Chinese,* vol. 2, ed. Thomas Percy, (Dodsley, 1762).

40   Attiret, "A Description," 181.

41   Ibid., 155.

42   Ibid., 157.

43   Ibid., 180.

gilt and varnished, rowing either for pleasure or exercise, or for the purpose of fishing, or for mock-encounters, tilting and other sports.[44]

It is not just the pleasant views that made Attiret so enthusiastic: the garden's emotional appeal is also related to its spatial and material frame. It is this exact material frame that could not be translated effectively with any other means other than with emotional narratives. Attiret's description of the garden's emotional resonance was not meant only to describe the emotions such a space can generate but explain, *through these emotions*, this otherwise 'exotic' space itself. In trying to translate cultural difference, affective strategies served to amplify what was otherwise culturally illegible: where ideas could not be easily translated, emotions could by providing what Porter has called "familiar structures of meaning."[45]

Attiret did not approach Chinese gardens from an intellectual or philosophical standpoint, his focus being rather impressionistic. Attiret's account is less of an effort to understand Chinese gardening principles and more of an attempt to grasp its aesthetic and emotional appeal; it is the description of a "sequence of emotional moments engendered by aesthetic seduction and a sense of discovery," as Rinaldi aptly puts it.[46] In this regard, I argue that he emphasised the garden's form instead of substance as a means for imposing his *own* meaning to what was otherwise culturally unfamiliar; for Chinese garden design to become available for appropriation, it first had to acquire meaning capable of proving the taste it illustrates and its worth as a distinctive work of art.[47] This process of explaining and translating cultural differences is closely linked to the process of actively redefining them based on the agent's own disposition.

In this way, eighteenth-century readers of Attiret's letter are supposed to *feel* the Chinese garden design notwithstanding its cultural unintelligibility, ultimately giving them the freedom to interpret, essentially impose, its meaning depending on their own dispositions. As Conner has noted, "Attiret's letter was exploited [by European garden theorists], as Ripa's engravings could never have

---

44   Ibid.,166-167; See also the original in French: pour vous faire mieux *sentir* toute la beauté [italics added] found in Jean-Denis Attiret, "Lettre du frère Attiret de la Compagnie de Jésus, peintre au service de l'empereur de Chine, à M. d'Assaut. A Pekin le Ier novembre 1743," *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères, par quelques Missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus*, vol. 27. (Guerin, 1749): 19.

45   David Porter, "Beyond the Bounds of Truth: Cultural Translation and William Chambers's Chinese Garden," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal 37*, no. 2. (2004): 55, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44030380.

46   Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese gardens*, 91.

47   Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 29

been, to promote the already-established [naturalistic] gardening fashion."[48] While Ripa's engravings presented this sense of 'wilderness' found in Chinese gardens, Attiret's impressionistic description explicitly proved the ways in which this 'wilderness' could be meaningful.

Another frequently cited description of early modern Chinese gardens is that of William Chambers. When Chambers first published his *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* in 1772, he did so after an already successful career in designing governmental buildings, houses, and gardens for the highest strata of English society. Born in Sweden in 1723 and having travelled extensively across Europe, mostly in France and Italy, as part of his studies in architecture, he also had the extraordinary opportunity to witness Chinese architecture while employed for the Swedish East India Company in the 1740s. Chambers proved willing to capitalise on his experience in China, despite it being considerably limited compared to Ripa's or Attiret's;[49] only a few years after returning to England from the Continent, in 1757, he published another work on Chinese architecture called *Designs of Chinese Buildings*.

Chambers' essay "Of the Art of Laying Out Gardens among the Chinese," included in his 1757 Designs work, is illuminating in understanding his view on Chinese gardens. As Porter has claimed, "[Chambers] deeply admired the Chinese model, but simultaneously despised it."[50] Despite belittling Chinese buildings as "toys in architecture,"[51] he lauded the Chinese for their achievements in garden design and the pleasurable variety of forms and colours. Chambers mentioned that distinctive features of Chinese garden design helped the visitor become fully immersed into a physical space designed to provoke different emotions: "strange and uncommon sounds," "extraordinary trees," "monstrous birds and animals," inter alia, created an enchanting atmosphere meant to "excite surprise." "Horror scenes" are also featured, and are meant to be alternated with pleasurable ones, and included "impeding rocks, dark caverns and impetuous cataracts rushing down the mountains."[52] Therefore, in his *Designs*, Chinese gardens were revealed as emotional spaces whose varied spatial structure was meant to maximise the

---

48   Conner, "China and the Landscape Garden," 434.

49   Chambers travelled to Canton twice, in 1743–44 and 1748–49. Although these voyages were certainly transformative for him, their duration as well as their extent is not comparable to the experiences of missionaries like Attiret or Ripa. We should also account for the duties he was surely tasked with, which were, as Sirén points out, "rather exacting" while his "personal freedom of movement was restricted" as a member of the Swedish East India Company, see, Sirén *China and Gardens,* 65.

50   Porter, "Beyond the Bounds," 47.

51   William Chambers, *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils* (London, 1757), Preface.

52   Chambers, *Designs*, 15.

visitors' emotional experience.[53] This work enjoyed enduring popularity as one of the few detailed accounts of Chinese architecture and garden design, with Chambers being virtually the only Western architect of his time to have personally seen Chinese gardens, which surely added to his own prestige as an authority on this topic.

When Chambers revisited the topic of Chinese gardens, in his 1772/1773 *Dissertation*,[54] he engaged in a controversial polemical rhetoric against the then-dominant trend in English garden design promoted by personalities such as Lancelot "Capability" Brown. This trend, known as the English landscape garden — characterised by its purposefully irregular garden typology and its declared attempt to achieve an idealised "naturalness" — enjoyed lasting popularity starting in the mid-eighteenth century.[55] Although this style of garden design was a significant break with the tradition of formal, symmetrical gardens that had shaped seventeenth-century garden design ideals and which Chambers himself did not think highly of, the landscape garden had led, according to him, to the creation of monotonous, unimaginative gardens that were completely devoid of artfulness. "Because, in the Old Gardening, art, order and variety were carried to an extravagant excess, you have, in the New, almost totally excluded them all three; to mend an exuberant fantastick dress, you have stripped stark naked; and, to heal a distempered limb, you have, […], chopped it entirely off," in his own words.[56] In his *Dissertation*, Chambers essentially presented his argument that gardens should not strive to create the impression of "natural" simplicity, but rather embrace the Art needed to design a garden that can be a space of various emotional practices.[57] His own cross-cultural experience served as inspiration for the rejuvenation of what he saw as terribly uninteresting contemporary English gardens. Although he mentioned in detail the actual ways that the Chinese achieved such a variety of scenes and forms, his main goal was to achieve what can best be described as transcultural translation,

---

53   Research on whether Chambers' account is a faithful representation of Chinese garden design is inconclusive: certain aspects of his description are close to the views of early modern Chinese garden theorists, while others are exaggerated or imaginary. See Richard E. Strassberg, "War and Peace: Four Intercultural Landscapes," in *China on Paper: European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century*, ed. Marcia Reed et al. (Getty Research Institute, 2007), 124-5.

54   After fierce criticism over the initial edition of his Dissertation, Chambers had a second edition published in 1773, which included an "Explanatory Discourse by Chet-qua," presented as if written by a Chinese sculptor named Chet-qua, although Chambers admitted writing it by himself. See Wiliam Chambers, *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, 2nd ed. (W. Griffin, 1773).

55   See e.g. Rudolf Wittkower, *Palladio and English Palladianism* (Thames and Hudson, 1974): 177-190

56   Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 154-155.

57   Sirén, *China and Gardens,* 68-77; however, Strassberg considers that the assertion that Chambers' Dissertation was almost exclusively an attack to his contemporaries is exaggerated (Strassberg, "War and Peace," 127).

an interpretation of the Chinese garden design and its way of bridging Art and Nature. What Chambers intended to do is explain this 'exotic' form of garden design to his European audience by rendering its aesthetics meaningful within the European cultural framework. I argue that what can provide meaning to this otherwise radically foreign aesthetics is a set of emotional practices; besides, Chambers explained that what makes Chinese gardening so distinguished as a work of art is, "its efficacy in moving the passions."[58] Whether his description of Chinese garden design was genuinely representative of early modern Chinese gardens is unimportant in this regard. Rather, his work, being the result of a cross-cultural encounter, should be examined for the narrative strategies he employed to negotiate and respond to cultural difference. In Porter's words, such artifacts of cross-cultural encounters can highlight "the imaginative epiphany engendered by the recognition of difference."[59]

Chambers' *Dissertation* could be viewed as an allegorical journey of a traveller confronted with a radically different cultural framework. Porter has suggested that the *Dissertation* should be read "as a narrative mapping of the lived experience of Chinese difference,"[60] and that in describing the variation of scenes found in the Chinese gardens, Chambers' writing resembles that of travel writing.[61] Indeed, he frequently used "traveller" or "passenger" to describe what the reader could see while wandering in a Chinese garden.[62] In another part of his *Dissertation*, Chambers suggested, allegedly quoting an unnamed Chinese gardener, that "if the planter be a traveller, and a man of observation, he can want no such helps to variety, as he will recollect a thousand beautiful effects along the common roads of the countries through which he has passed, that may be introduced with much better success."[63] He essentially promoted travelling as a form of invaluable education, in what must reflect his own formative years spent in China, France, and Italy. Besides, he also bemoaned the, "state of languor which the mind naturally sinks, by dwelling long on the same objects."[64] For Chambers, confronting alterity serves as a preventative measure against lethargy.

Chambers' narrative building is also inextricably linked to his own writing experience. His writing of this *Dissertation* must have been a very emotional

---

58   Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 13.

59   Porter, "Beyond the Bounds," 56.

60   Ibid., 51.

61   Ibid., 52.

62   See Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 38, 42, 45, 50, 52, 54, 97, and 154.

63   Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 49; although Chambers frequently includes such Chinese accounts in his text, most of these sources are either unnamed or explicitly made up, serving only as disguise.

64   Ibid., 51.

process, as a way of reliving, decades after this encounter, his own experience of confronting foreignness.[65] Chambers maintained that his writing is based on, "[his] own observations in China, from conversations with their Artists, and remarks transmitted to me at different times by travellers."[66] Given how his experience in China was admittedly limited and could not have provided him with this range of images and scenes described in his *Dissertation*, his lengthy descriptions must have been primarily a reflection of other travellers' accounts.

I would argue that it was an *imaginative upset*, the result of his cross-cultural experiences, that was ultimately the guiding principle in his writing.[67] Therefore, while the process of reading about other travellers' cross-cultural encounters is an emotional experience per se,[68] Chambers was actively reliving and *performing* the emotions of his *own* past. Thus, when he was admiring gardening as an art form whose "charms […] are equally sensible to the ignorant and the learned,"[69] he was perhaps reflecting on his own inexperience when he first encountered Chinese gardens at the age of 20.[70] When, again, he was commending the ornaments that "study, travelling, and long experience can supply [gardeners] with,"[71] he was also praising his own journeys across cultural divides. When, likewise, he was describing how "by constantly hiding parts of [the open space of the garden], they create a mystery, which excites the traveller's curiosity,"[72] he was also reminiscing about his own experience of not being allowed access to everything he wished to discover in China. Similarly, when he was expressing the view that the quest for novelty is vital and only unfamiliarity can, "excite any strong sensations in the mind of the beholder, or to produce any uncommon degree of pleasure,"[73] he was also illustrating the emotional dynamics of cross-cultural experiences. In this regard, Chambers' *Dissertation* is a fascinating work of emotional response to otherness, and can be summarised in his own words:

---

65   Ripa's and Attiret's accounts also share this emotional aspect of transcribing their own memories. Unlike them, however, Chambers wrote this text several decades after his journeys.

66   Chambers, *A Dissertation*, Preface, ix.

67   See Porter, "Beyond the Bounds," 49. Porter uses the term 'imaginative trauma of encounter.' I would argue that 'upset' is a more appropriate term to describe the affective strategies that are employed as a response to cultural difference.

68   See e.g. Renate Dürr, "Emotions as Guide to Untrustworthiness. John Lockman's Struggle with What He Could Not Check," in *Far from the Truth: Distance, Information, and Credibility in the Early Modern World,* ed. Michiel van Groesen and Johannes Müller (Routledge 2023), 232.

69   Chambers, *A Dissertation*, Preface, ii.

70   Rudolf Wittkower says Chambers was 17 when he first visited China, but he is probably conflating it with an earlier journey Chambers made to Bengal. See Wittkower, *Palladio*, 219.

71   Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 14.

72   Ibid., 54.

73   Ibid., 16.

[A winding road] has not the power of raising violent emotions, yet, by bringing the passenger suddenly or unexpectedly to great or uncommon things, it occasions strong impressions of surprize and astonishment, which are more forcibly felt, as being more opposite to the tranquil pleasure enjoyed in the confined parts of the road.[74]

In another part of his *Dissertation*, Chambers addresses the temporal element in the design of the Chinese gardens, claiming that the Chinese contrive different scenes for every season of the year. He then proceeds to describe those scenes, starting off with the winter scenes, composed of evergreen plants and "gloomy productions" amongst whom they put conservatories to protect plants suited to warmer weather.[75] Spring scenes follow, abound with blossomed trees and flowers like roses and daffodils and filled with buildings for practicing sports such as wrestling, fencing, and running.[76] Then, summer scenes, with their lakes and water-works, surrounded by flowers and trees, as well as spacious buildings meant for a variety of activities, social or solitary, like eating, conversing, bathing or meditating, are the only ones to be extensively described: perhaps a reflection of Chambers' own acquaintance with the summer activities in such gardens.[77] As for the autumnal scenes, they are filled with all sorts of decaying buildings and ruins which serve as "mementos to the passenger," mausoleums and cemeteries and, "whatever else may serve to indicate the debility, the disappointments and the dissolution of humanity."[78]

The described order of the scenes resembles the one in actual journeys: as was standard for voyages of the Swedish East India Company, also confirmed by Swedish naturalist Peter Osbeck whose travels to China postdated Chambers' by less than a decade, travellers would begin their journey in the winter, reach China by the late summer, only to depart again for Europe in the beginning of the following winter.[79] This rambling description of the different seasons and landscapes could arguably be an allegory of this transoceanic journey. The voyagers' southwardly sail towards the Cape of Good Hope, through the torrid zone, is reflected in the winter scenes of the Chinese gardens, where "rare shrubs, flowers and trees of the torrid zone" were covered with glass frames — in a way that the visitor could be close to them, yet not touch them. In Osbeck's description, the voyagers would, "frequently find some [fish] which shine in water,"[80] while in Chambers' described winter scene some "gold and silver fishes"

---

74   Ibid., 50.

75   Ibid., 25.

76   Ibid., 27.

77   Ibid., 27-32.

78   Ibid., 38.

79   Peter Osbeck, *A Voyage to China and the East Indies,* vol. 2, (Benjamin White, 1771), 132.

80   Ibid., 141.

were kept porcelain cisterns.[81] In the late spring, when the Swedish ships would go ashore in Java before sailing off to China, Chambers would be acquainted for the first time with such a variety of plants and animals: he would not have been able to witness, at least not in China, the "other flowers as appear in […] March and April" or the "all sorts of tame or ferocious animals, and birds of prey" which he described in his Dissertation,[82] but he could have seen, if his journey was anything like Osbeck's, the "most remarkable animals" found in Java.[83] In the end of autumn, after months of acclimatisation to China, Chambers would be reminded of the transient nature of his cross-cultural encounter; the change of season would be an actual "memento" to a passenger such as himself.

Chambers does not call on European gardeners to imitate the Chinese model; he uses the Chinese example as inspiration, asking European gardeners to use their imagination to design gardens that could generate various emotional experiences and creatively bridge Art and Nature, an aspiration found already in Addison's 1712 article. Indeed, Chambers himself rarely built anything in Chinese style — most of his designs were actually neoclassical.[84] The Great Pagoda, designed by Chambers and located at Kew Gardens, was an exception to his style of building; even the Great Pagoda, though, which was indeed imitating Chinese architectural designs, was not part of an attempt to recreate a 'Chinese garden.' Instead, it was surrounded by other buildings of Western or Eastern inspiration, in what was ultimately a celebration of British imperial ambitions and a representation of a *global geography* in a garden of the British royalty (see Figure 2).[85] Chambers, if anything, created a model for the hybrid juxtaposition of different architectural elements, which was the result of a transcultural approach that allowed him to integrate heterogeneous designs by aesthetically redefining them. More so than any other writers examined in this article, Chambers practically appropriated Chinese architectural designs. Therefore, his Dissertation could arguably be part of his effort to legitimise, a posteriori, his use of such designs — and in this effort, the means for translating and legitimising the Chinese aesthetics considered 'exotic' were primarily, as I have shown, emotional.

---
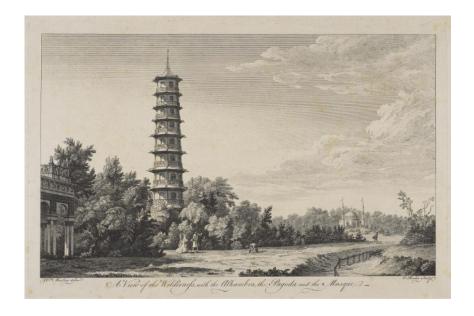
81 Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 26.

82 Ibid., 27.

83 Osbeck, *A Voyage,* vol. 2., 141.

84 Strassberg, "War and Peace," 124; for his architectural designs, his long-term stay in France and especially in Italy was particularly impactful.

85 Ibid., 125-6.

[Figure 2. William Chambers, A View of the Wilderness with the Alhambra, the Pagoda and the Mosque, etching included in *Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Perspective Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew in Surrey*, London, 1763 © The Trustees of the British Museum]

Chambers' account also illustrates how emotionally charged discursive practices could reflect processes of identity construction, as he sought to affirm his compatibility with the ideal type of the *Enlightened Man*. His claim that opposition to novelty was driven by, "interests and prejudices" of the, "angry champions of the old" reflects a rhetorical topos that is typical for Enlightenment authors.[86] Besides, infatuation with China as a model of wise governance and universality was a commonplace Enlightenment idea, one shared by Frederick, Prince of Wales, who was close to the Swedish architect and had probably influenced him a lot during his early years.[87] Similarly, to defend his idea that in a proper garden Nature should be artfully "improved," Chambers claimed that a naturalist garden deprived of emotional experiences is "in opposition to reason."[88] His underlying openness to the 'exotic' was not only a product of his youthful overseas experiences, but also a reflection of his self-perception; as a member of a cosmopolitan intellectual elite, distinguished enough to be able to appreciate the works of Chinese gardeners, whom Chambers describes as "men of high abilities."[89] In other words, his appreciation of the ingenuity of Chinese gardens was the result of his emotionally charged cross-cultural encounter *as well as* his aesthetic inclinations that permitted him to "perceive, classify and memorise [his emotional experiences] differently."[90] With his Dissertation,

---

86   Chambers, *A Dissertation*, Explanatory Discourse, Preface.

87   Strassberg, "War and Peace," 124.

88   Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 144.

89   Ibid., 14.

90   Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 28.

Chambers is a prime example of Bourdieu's "cultivated man" whose social identity — constitutively linked to a declared openness towards other cultural experiences — is what allowed him to master the means of symbolic, as well as *emotional*, appropriation of the 'exotic' aesthetics of Chinese gardens.[91]

Conclusion

By building upon the burgeoning literature around the history of emotions, this article is an attempt to uncover aspects of Western discourse around Chinese gardens that are often overlooked due to the emphasis put into examining the reciprocal material or intellectual influences of cross-cultural encounters. Sino-Western cultural exchange, as any other cultural exchange, was also deeply affected by emotional dynamics that shaped the way that people reacted to otherness. Regardless of whether the emotions represented in these texts, including admiration, embarrassment, surprise, and curiosity, were accurately representative of the emotional practices linked to confronting foreignness, they were surely part of emotional narratives that eighteenth-century European writers employed in their writings, ultimately shaping the ways that Chinese garden design was integrated into Western thought.

Essentially, all authors examined here attempted to translate their cross-cultural encounters or comprehend the cultural differences that they found in the Chinese style of gardening. In doing so, they frequently used emotions to mitigate the intellectually challenging effect of encountering radical foreignness. They were not, by any means, using the same approach; nor were they employing the same emotional narratives. The utilisation of emotions in their rhetoric was sometimes direct, such as in the accounts of William Chambers and Jean-Denis Attiret, or covert, as in the case of Matteo Ripa. Other than that, texts that are fundamentally descriptive of one's own experiences, as in the case of Ripa's memoirs, were quite different from manuals or prescriptive texts such as Watelet's *Essai* or Chambers' *Dissertation*.

I would also argue that their utilisation of emotions as a means of negotiating otherness and translating their cross-cultural encounters was also, ultimately, a way for them to extend aesthetic legitimacy to the Chinese style of garden design. Based on the Bourdieusian idea of aesthetic disposition, I argue that for these authors striving to achieve transcultural translation, emotions were the only way, or simply the most effective one, for this piece of exoticism

---

91   Ibid., 563.

to acquire recognisable legitimacy and overcome its illegibility.[92] The capacity to recognise in Chinese gardens something already known — or in the case of emotions, something already *practiced* — was necessary for this aesthetic legitimacy to take hold among early modern Western elites. While potentially projecting their own thoughts, ideals and preconceptions, European 'cultivated men' found that the most effective strategy for symbolically appropriating the aesthetics of exoticism was, evidently, emotions.

---

92   See Ibid., 26: "[…] the very principle of the disposition to recognize legitimate works, a propensity and capacity to recognize their legitimacy and perceive them as worthy of admiration in themselves, which is inseparable from the capacity to recognize in them something already known"; see also, David Porter, "Monstrous Beauty," 395-411.

European Ultraperiphery at the 1988 Conference of Madeira: The Start of Something "New?"

ABSTRACT

The accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986 brought their overseas regions into the Community's framework, prompting renewed discussions about the European status of these territories. While the 1988 Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR) in Madeira is remembered as a turning point by regional leaders, this article critically examines its actual role in shaping the "outermost regions" status, which was formally recognized in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. Existing scholarship, primarily from legal and institutional perspectives, tends to overlook the socio-historical processes underlying the construction of this status. This study adopts a constructivist approach, analyzing archival records from relevant decision-making institutions, contemporary media, and memoirs to address this research gap. It argues that while the Madeira Conference played an important role as a bottom-up lobbying effort to advocate for a Community-based status, the narrative of its centrality often overlooks key factors. These include the broader context of European institutions' pre-existing initiatives addressing overseas regions through national frameworks and the internal opposition within these regions to European integration. The article contends that the conference's most enduring legacy certainly lies in fostering a transnational network of regional leaders, which ultimately succeeded in institutionalizing the status of outermost regions in the Maastricht Treaty. By broadening the spatial and temporal scope of analysis, this study contributes to the historiography of the intersections between European integration and postcolonialism, extending its implications into contemporary contexts.

BY

Antoine Grépin

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Antoine Grépin holds two Bachelor's degrees in History and in Political Science from the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (2023). He is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Transnational History at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris (ENS-PSL), after semesters abroad at the University of Toronto (2022) and at the University of Bologna (2024). His research interests include the history of international relations and European regional policy in the late 1980s, particularly exploring the intersections between colonial history and European integration.

"Mayotte is Europe, and Europe will not abandon you."

On December 16, 2024, after Cyclone Chido devastated Mayotte, the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, delivered the preceeding statement before observing a minute of silence.[1] Mayotte, located off the coast of Mozambique and Madagascar, is both a French *département* and, since 2014, an outermost region of the European Union (EU). This latter status is particularly intriguing as it encompasses territories that are former colonies of France, Spain, and Portugal, such as Mayotte, Réunion, Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, Saint-Martin, the Azores, the Canary Islands, and Madeira. These regions differ from Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) like Greenland, New Caledonia, or Curaçao, which are associated with the EU since 1957 and do not benefit from key instruments such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). This article examines the formation of the outermost regions' status during the late 1980s, culminating in its official recognition in an annex declaration of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty.[2]

Defining the Outermost Regions in a Historical Perspective

The outermost regions of the EU have predominantly been studied by legal scholars. Emmanuel Jos and Justin Daniel, professors at the University of the French Antilles, were pioneers in this field as early as 1995. According to their analysis, "ultraperiphery" represents a delicate balance between the application of European law and the numerous derogations required by these regions' unique socio-economic challenges.[3] They argue that being an "outermost region" is less about a distinct legal status and more about facilitating EU policy implementation. Others suggest ultraperiphery constitutes a legal exception within the EU institutional framework.[4] Additionally, debates exist regarding the

---

1   Gerald Imray, Thomas Adamson and Rainat Aliloiffa, "France rushes aid to Mayotte after Cyclone Chido leaves hundreds feared dead," *AP News,* December 17, 2024. https://www.ap.org/news-highlights/spotlights/2024/france-rushes-aid-to-mayotte-after-cyclone-chido-leaves-hundreds-feared-dead/.

2   Jacques Ziller, "Les 'Outre-Mer de l'Union Européenne,'" in *Revue de l'Union Européenne* 610, no. Juillet-Aout (2017): 408–18. The current status for the outermost regions is defined in Article 349 of *The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*, Official Journal of the European Union, December 13, 2007, Lisbon, 150. Available at https://www.cvce.eu/obj/treaty_on_the_functioning_of_the_european_union_consolidated_version_2007-en-e49fd232-e12a-4a45-924e-1b35b3631f94.html.

3   Justin Daniel, and Emmanuel Jos, "Les régions ultrapériphériques face à l'union européenne: les difficultés de l'harmonisation dans la différence," *Annuaire des Collectivités Locales* 15, no. 1 (1995): 23–50. https://doi.org/10.3406/coloc.1995.1183.

4   Didier Blanc, "L'Union Européenne et Ses Outre-Mer Intégrés: Quand l'Exception Devient Commune" in *L'exception En Droit de l'Union Européenne*, ed. Eric Carpano and Gaelle Marti (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2019), 267–86; Isabelle Vestris, *Le statut des régions ultrapériphériques de l'Union européenne: la construction d'un modèle attractif et perfectible d'intégration différenciée* (Bruylant, 2012).

alignment of national constitutional statuses with the European classification of these regions. For instance, Jacques Ziller highlights how Greenland's withdrawal from the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1985 illustrates that a region's European status can evolve independently of its national affiliation.[5] While this body of research provides valuable insights, it generally treats the outermost regions' status as a *fait accompli*, without delving into its historical construction.

More recently, in his study of business interest representation of overseas regions in the EU, political scientist Willy Beauvallet briefly outlined the emergence of the outermost regions' status in the late 1980s. He emphasizes both the legal dimensions as well as the coordinated involvement of the European Commission, national and regional governments to develop a framework that ensured the continued integration of these regions into the EEC.[6] This included providing specific funds and the formalization of specific derogations, such as dock dues . Similarly, Thibault Joltreau, drawing primarily on sources from European and national institutions, highlights the perceived threat posed by a potential deeper European integration of the French overseas *départements* (DOM).[7] Nevertheless, this body of work addresses the question only as background context to their own political science questions. Consequently, it offers a limited analysis of the complex formation of this status in the late 1980s, especially overlooking the role of local agents and their transnational cooperation. This article seeks to fill that gap by examining how the status was conceptualized and institutionalized within the European Communities, grounded on archival records, memoirs, and contemporary press from France, Portugal and the European Communities.
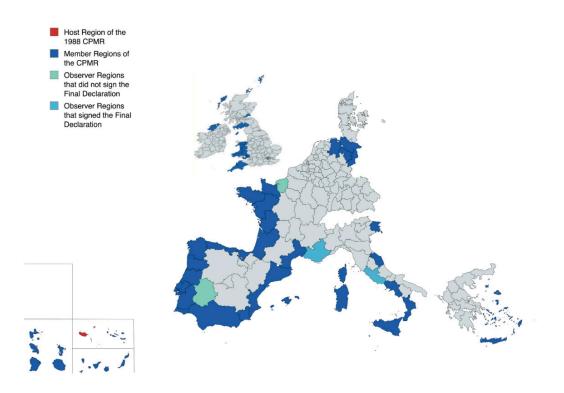
When it comes to researching the birth of the outermost regions status, many stakeholders at the time refer to the defining moment constituted by the 1988 Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR) in Madeira. During the conference, six presidents of overseas regions within the EEC advocated for a Community-based status for ultraperipheral regions. Their proposal aimed to secure aid measures and exemptions from Single Market rules, addressing the development issues of these territories. This initiative's success in the following

5   Ziller, "Les 'Outre-Mer de l'Union Européenne,'" 414.

6   Willy Beauvallet, "Out of Sight, but Close to the Heart of Power : Mobilising Politically for French Overseas Territories in Strasburg and Brussels" in *Political Sociology Perspectives on Lobbying in the EU*, ed. Cécile Robert and Willy Beauvallet (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), 170-175.

7   Thibault Joltreau, "Gouverner l'agriculture ultramarine : Une économie politique de l'agro-industrie canne-sucre-rhum des départements français d'outre-mer," (PhD diss., University of Bordeaux, 2023), 121-131.

decade cemented the conference as a turning point in recognizing the outermost regions[8].

[Fig. 1 : Participating regions in the 1988 Madeira Conference.[9]]

Held on November 24–25, 1988, at the Savoy Hotel in Funchal, the conference gathered 227 participants representing 56 regions from various Member States like Greece, the United Kingdom or Spain. These insular or coastal regions, characterized by their maritime nature, claimed to share common development challenges because of their distance from the European Megalopolis. The conference also involved representatives from European institutions, such as the Commission and Parliament, as well as organizations like the European Center for Regional Development (CEDRE). While the conference's immediate context was the 1988 European Structural Funds' reform to prepare for the Single Market in 1993, its enduring significance lies in its role in advocating for the outermost regions' status. The late 1980s marked a period of both deepening and enlargement for the European Communities, under the

---

8   For various accounts, see Jean-Didier Hache, *Quel statut pour les îles d'Europe ?* (L'Harmattan, 2000), 108 ; Fernando Fernández Martín, *Iles et régions ultrapériphériques de l'Union européenne* (Éditions de l'Aube, 1999), 104 ; Gobierno de Canarias. "La Coopération Entre Les Régions Ultrapériphériques: L'Opération Cadre Régional RUP plus," 2008, 6.

9   According to "Textes votés à Funchal (Madere) par la CRPM," November 25, 1988, Madère 1988, CRPM, Rennes and "Liste des participants," November 15, 1988, Madère 1988, CRPM, Rennes. Map realized with mapchart.net.

mandate of Jacques Delors, then President of the European Commission.[10] This "European relaunch" included the 1986 Single European Act and the accession of Spain and Portugal, signaling both institutional reforms and geographical expansion.[11]

Framing a Transnational History of European Integration

Nowadays, the history of European integration has embraced the transnational turn. Laurence Badel defines transnational history as a perspective that moves beyond the nation-state as the unit of analysis, focusing instead on dynamics that transcend borders like the circulation and transfer of people, objects, ideas, and practices.[12] In that regard, she identifies France's René Girault as a pioneer in studying early European integration networks, while Wolfram Kaiser and Kiran Klaus Patel have advanced transnational perspectives in Germany. Patel, in particular, calls for "provincializing the European Union," to better understand integration dynamics within a multiplicity of European organizations.[13] These approaches inform this article's investigation of the outermost regions, emphasizing on the role of transnational networks in shaping European policy.[14]

Colonial legacies are another crucial dimension of this study. Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson have examined the concept of "Eurafrica," scrutinizing colonial dynamics in European integration's intellectual, economic, and diplomatic foundations, as promoted by figures like Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi and later Léopold Sédar Senghor.[15] However, this colonial perspective remains contested. Laurent Warlouzet critiques the reliance on limited institutional

---

10 Koen Van Zon, Matthew Broad, Aleksandra Komornicka, Paul Reef, Alessandra Schimmel, and Jorrit Steehouder, "The Era of Transformation and Treaties, 1987-2007," in *The Unfinished History of European Integration*, 2nd ed., (Amsterdam University Press, 2024), 129–56.

11 Sophie Vanhoonacker, "The Making of the European Union," in *The Cambridge History of the European Union*, ed. Mathieu Segers and Steven Van Hecke, (Cambridge University Press, 2023), 93–117.

12 Laurence Badel, *Écrire l'histoire Des Relations Internationales. Genèses, Concepts, Perspectives XVIIIe-XXIe Siècle* (Armand Colin, 2024), 63-64.

13 Kiran Klaus Patel, "Provincialising European Union: Co-Operation and Integration in Europe in a Historical Perspective," *Contemporary European History* 22, no. 4 (November 2013): 649–73.

14 Wolfram Kaiser has advocated for the cross-disciplinary study of transnational networks in shaping European public policy in Wolfram Kaiser, "Bringing History Back In To the Study of Transnational Networks in European Integration," *Journal of Public Policy* 29, no. 2 (August 2009): 223-39.

15 Peo Hansen, and Stefan Jonsson. *Eurafrica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism,* (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014).

archives,[16] while Kiran Klaus Patel warns against teleological interpretations of European integration through a strictly colonial lens.[17]

By adopting a constructivist approach to Public Action this article studies how the 1988 Madeira Conference contributed to the creation of the ultraperiphery status by the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht. Berger and Luckmann's emphasis on the objectification, institutionalization and legitimation of problems underpins the analysis.[18] The Madeira Conference is shown to have marked a turning point from nationally-centered approaches to the emergence of a transnational network of former colonies advocating for a Community-based response to shared challenges.

The Madeira Conference as a Turning Point in Constructing Ultraperiphery

What was the concept of "ultraperiphery" in 1988? According to François Grosrichard, a journalist at *Le Monde*, this term was used by the Regional Government of Madeira to justify benefiting from a special regime while remaining part of the EEC.[19] This approach was uncanny compared to other overseas territories of Member States: the Faroe Islands declined to join the EEC, and Greenland held a referendum in 1982 to leave the Community.[20]

The term ultraperiphery was first introduced by Mota Amaral at the 1987 CPMR's Islands Commission in Réunion. According to various accounts, he described these islands as, "the periphery of the periphery, or ultra-periphery."[21] This sentence referenced their extreme geographical remoteness from mainland Europe as well as the "periphery" part of the CPMR's name, thus reinforcing the idea of a political construct developed within the CPMR's Islands Commission.

At the Madeira Conference, six presidents of these ultraperipheral regions were present, as shown in the photograph below (Fig. 2). These leaders represented nearly half of the thirteen regional presidents attending the

16   Laurent Warlouzet, "L'histoire de l'intégration Européenne Au-Delà Du Tournant Critique," in *Histoire@Politique*, no. 51 (December 20th 2023), 2.

17   Kiran Klaus Patel, "Widening and deepening? Recent advances in European Integration History," in *Neue Politische Literatur* 64, 2, (2019), 354.

18   Peter L. Berger, and Thomas Luckmann. *Social Construction of Reality : A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Penguin Books Limited, 1991), 207.

19   François Grosrichard, "Vivre à Madère, " in *Le Monde*, January 15, 1989.

20   Jacques Ziller, "Les États européens et les territoires ultra-marins placés sous leur souveraineté," in *Les Nouveaux Cahiers du Conseil constitutionnel* 35, no. 2 (2012): 179-80.

21   Hache, *Quel statut pour les îles d'Europe ?*, 108; Fernández Martín, *Iles et régions ultrapériphériques de l'Union européenne*, 46. In the source, in French, it is written "la périphérie de la périphérie, ou ultra-périphérie."

conference. Of the 157 regional delegates from 56 regions of the EEC, 43 came from these six specific regions, highlighting their overrepresentation and underscoring the importance of the conference for these territories.[22] The meeting allowed them to collectively discuss their specific challenges.

Os seis presidentes das ilhas Ultra-Periféricas reuniram-se no Funchal e identificaram problemas comuns.

[Fig. 2 : Anonymous, "Os seis presidentes das ilhas Ultra-Periféricas reuniram-se no Funchal e identificaram problemas comuns," November 26, 1988.[23]]

The picture above, published in the *Diario de Noticias Madeira* with the title, *The Presidents of the Ultraperipheral Islands meet in Funchal and Identify their Common Issues*, underscores the shared interests of these diverse islands, unified by their distance from mainland Europe. At this time, each region's GDP per capita was below 75% of the European Community average, making them all eligible for ERDF aid.[24] An accompanying article explains their purpose:

> The declaration begins by noting that the "very open and friendly exchange of views enabled the identification of common problems among the six participating island regions." "Being the most remote regions of the EEC,

---

22   "Liste des participants," November 15, 1988, Madère 1988, CRPM, Rennes.

23   From left to right, there were Pierre Lagourgue (Réunion), Mota Amaral (Azores), Alberto Jardim (Madeira and the host of the Conference), Félix Proto (Guadeloupe), Fernando Fernández Martín (Canary Islands), and Camille Darsières (Martinique). Published in Anonymous, "Alberto Joao Jardim reeleito presidente da Conferência das Regioes Periféricas e Marítimas," *Diàrio de Notìcias Madeira*, November 26, 1988, PT-ABM-COLJOR-DN_19881127, Arquivo e Biblioteca da Madeira, Funchal, 1. https://biblioteca-abm.madeira.gov.pt/media/publicacoesPeriodicas/Jornais/DiarioNoticias/1988/PT-ABM-COLJOR-DN_19881126.pdf.

24   "Troisième rapport périodique de la Commission sur la situation et l'évolution socio-économique des régions de la communauté," May 21, 1987, SGCI, 19930226/25, Archives Nationales, Saint-Denis, 85.

further marked by the serious problems arising from insularity, the six presidents consider it absolutely essential—especially with the approach of 1992 and the Single Market—to call upon European leaders and the public opinion of the Community to provide an adequate response to their specific problems." [25]

The presidents demanded measures tailored to their circumstances, beyond the usual ERDF aid. They highlighted the smallness of their own markets, which prevented agricultural economies of scale, the high costs of transportation, and the fiscal challenges posed by the 1993 Single Market and its abolition of border controls.[26] Specifically, they expressed concern that the Single Market could eliminate the dock dues taxes, called *octroi de mer* in French overseas regions and *arbitrios fiscales* in the Canary Islands.[27] They constitute a colonial-era tax on imports (exempting local goods) collected by local authorities, which constituted for them a significant revenue.[28] They were threatened by the 1993 Single Market, as it risked being classified as a prohibited internal customs duty.[29] As a result, they stressed the need for targeted derogations to address their geographical disadvantages and achieve parity in living standards with mainland Europe.

This process aligns with Felstiner, Abel and Sarrat's framework of "Naming, Blaming and Claiming."[30] Here the Naming is giving a name to their particular condition by a process of objectivation through the concept of ultraperiphery. Blaming refers to the Single Market that might make them lose some fiscal revenues and endanger the future of these islands. While Claiming is calling upon

25   "Alberto Joao Jardim reeleito presidente da Conferência das Regioes Periféricas e Marítimas," *Diàrio de Notìcias Madeira*, 7. In original Portuguese: "A declaração começa por referir que a "troca de impressões realizada, muito aberta e amistosa, permitiu identificar problemas comuns das seis Regioes Insulares participantes." "Sendo estas as Regioes da CEE mais afastadas, marcadas' ainda por cima pelos graves problemas derivados da insularidade, entendem os seis presidentes ser absolutamente prioritário, na perspectiva da aproximação de 1992 e do Mercado Único, desafiar os responsáveis europeus e a própria opinião publica da Comunidade, a dar resposta adequada aos respectivos problemas especificos.""

26   Ibid., 6; Laurent Warlouzet, "The Implementation of the Single Market Programme, 1985-1992" in *Reshaping Europe: Towards a Political, Economic and Monetary Union, 1984–1989*, ed. Michael Gehler and Wilfried Loth, (Nomos Verlag, 2020), 248-249.

27   Ziller, "Les 'Outre-Mer de l'Union Européenne,'" 417.

28   Georges Othily, *Les régions d'outre-mer et l'Europe* (Sénat, 1991), 20 ; Jean-Christophe Gay, "Chapitre 2. De l'état de colonies aux statuts à la carte," in *La France d'outre-mer* (Armand Colin, 2021), 59 ; Joltreau, "Gouverner l'agriculture ultramarine : Une économie politique de l'agro-industrie canne-sucre-rhum des départements français d'outre-mer," 126.

29   Joltreau, Ibid., 127 ; Beauvallet, "Out of Sight, but Close to the Heart of Power : Mobilising Politically for French Overseas Territories in Strasburg and Brussels," 175.

30   William L.F. Felstiner, Richard L. Abel, and Austin Sarat. "The Emergence and Transformation of Disputes: Naming, Blaming, Claiming" *Law & Society Review* 15, no. 3/4 (1980): 631–54. https://doi.org/10.2307/3053505.

European leaders to design a specific status for them, insisting on their shared insularity.

The emphasis on insularity as an objectivation tool is notable, as all these regions are members of the Islands Commission of the CPMR. French Guiana, however, was not part of the Commission and did not participate in the president's meeting. Contemporary press and pictures never mention Georges Othily, then president of French Guiana's Regional Council, as a participant in the meeting, though he was present at the conference. His participation is only noted in later memoirs from Fernando Fernández Martín,[31] and Alberto Jardim.[32] The exclusion of French Guiana from the definition of ultraperiphery in 1988 suggests further that this status was initially shaped within the CPMR's Islands Commission. Another televised news report from RFO Paris (*Radio France Outre-mer*) covered this conference. By highlighting the similarities between Madeira and Réunion, the report also stated that the six islands planned to adopt a unified position the following year. Their goal was to secure derogations under the proposed Single Market.[33] This particular definition of ultraperiphery at the Madeira Conference highlights how it definitely constitutes a Public Action construct.

One other notable element of those ultraperipheral islands lies within their former colonial status. Nélio Mendonça, President of the Legislative Assembly of Madeira since 1984, gave the opening speech of the Madeira Conference:

> These tiny islands, with a population of less than three hundred thousand inhabitants, economically dependent, within the context of the existential cycle of the Portuguese nation, share with the mainland Portugal a feeling of *portugality* and aspects of the past that made the Portugal of the Age of the Discovery a flourishing and powerful empire.[34]

---

31   Fernández Martín, *Iles et régions ultrapériphériques de l'Union européenne*, 104.

32   Alberto Joao Jardim, *Relatório de combate* (Don Quixote, 2017), 327-328.

33   Anne-Marie Masquin and Jean-Christophe Clément, *Pierre Lagourgue à la conférence périphérique de Madère*, JT 20h Télé Réunion, December 2 1988. (Available at INA, Paris, ref: VDO11033020).

34   "XVI Conferênciadas Regioes Periféricas Marìtimas da CEE decorre no Funchal," in *Jornal da Madeira*, November 25, 1988, 6. In original Portuguese : "Estas pequenas ilhas com uma população que não atinge as tres centenas de milhar de habitantes, economicamente dependente, no contexto do ciclo existencial da nação portuguesa, têm em comum com Portugal Continental, o sentimento de portugalidade e trechos do passado que fizeram do Portugal dos descobrimentos um florescente e poderoso império."

The speech transcript was published in the *Jornal da Madeira*, a diocesan newspaper closely aligned with regional political power.[35] While Nélio Mendonça celebrated Madeira's colonial heritage as a shared national identity, such narratives contrasted with Lisbon's efforts to reframe its global position following the end of the *Estado Novo* regime after endless colonial wars in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau.[36] According to this opening speech, the link between colonialism and the European integration of Portugal becomes more ambiguous, and it is the same for the other regions. For instance, a later 1991 report written by Georges Othily as a French Senator states that those ultraperipheral regions, whether French, Spanish or Portuguese, "are former colonies that escaped either independence through decolonization, or internal autonomy like the other overseas territories."[37] This highlights that these regions are part of the European Communities, even though they are located far away from the European continent, first and foremost because they are former colonies, or even "post-colonial spaces" as Françoise Vergès puts it.[38]

The 1988 Madeira Conference played a pivotal role in shaping the concept of ultraperiphery, uniting six regional leaders through a transnational network to address shared challenges and advocate for a unified yet constructed status within the European communities. Their coordinated demands for Single Market derogations and notable overrepresentation at the Madeira Conference highlighted a collective push to establish this distinct designation. Yet, closer examination reveals inconsistencies and complexities, challenging the notion that the ultraperiphery concept emerged entirely as a bottom-up initiative from regional leaders directed towards European institutions.

More a Milestone than a Beginning : Reassessing the Madeira Conference's Contribution

A Conference Beyond Ultraperiphery Issues

The 1988 Madeira Conference was not exclusively centered on ultraperipheral islands. The vast majority of the 56 participating regions were located in mainland Europe and, whether insular or coastal, did not share any contiguous border.

---

35   Teresa Ruel, *Political Alternation in the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 77.

36   Yves Léonard, *Histoire du Portugal contemporain de 1890 à nos jours* (Chandeigne, 2016), 201.

37   Othily, *Les régions d'outre-mer et l'Europe*, 7. In original French : "[Les Canaries, Madère et les régions françaises d'outre-mer] sont d'anciennes colonies qui ont échappé soit à l'indépendance dans le cadre de la décolonisation, soit à l'autonomie interne comme les territoires d'outre-mer."

38   Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire (ed.), *La Fracture coloniale. La société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial* (La Découverte, 2005), 71.

The conference agenda encompassed a broad range of topics beyond issues specific to overseas regions, as shown in Figure 3 below.

Day	Time	Theme	Discussed topics
November 24	Morning	Aftermath of the 1987 La Réunion Conference	Assessment of the action taken and debate
	Afternoon	Proposals for actions aimed at strengthening the European policy of key sectors.	Support of traditional and threatened activities in peripheral and maritime regions
			Aerial and maritime means of transport
			Strengthening the EEC's coastal policy
			Specific policy towards the islands
November 25	Morning	Continuation of the promotional actions of the CPMR.	New technologies and interregional cooperation
			Reinforcement of actions towards youth
			Promoting regional cultures and cultural tourism
		Internal organization and functioning of the CPMR	Working relations CPMR - AER - CEDRE Renewal of the Bureau and of executive delegations
	Afternoon	Closing session	With the participation of European Commissionner Cardoso e Cunha

[Fig. 3 : Program of the 1988 Madeira Conference.[39]]

Despite the host region's place within the ultraperiphery, references to ultraperipheral islands in the Final Declaration were minimal. Their specific issues appeared in only a few instances: a bullet point calling for a specific approach to their particular condition;[40] a resolution from French overseas regions demanding specific Single Market derogations and involvement in future Lomé Convention negotiations claiming to be supportive and united to "every underprivileged regions of the Community, especially the ultraperipheral regions of Azores, Canary Islands and Madeira";[41] and a request for the Commission to fund half of a CEDRE study on air and maritime transport for French overseas regions and other Irish, Italian and Breton coastal islands.[42] This final declaration does not mention at all the meeting between the six presidents of ultraperipheral

---

39   "Ordre du jour," November 24, 1988, Madère 1988, CRPM, Rennes.

40   "Textes votés à Funchal (Madere) par la CRPM," November 25, 1988, Madère 1988, CRPM, Rennes, 3.

41   Ibid., 11. In original French: "Réaffirment leur soutien et leur solidarité à l'ensemble des Régions défavorisées de la Communauté, en particulier aux Régions ultra-périphériques des Açores, des Iles Canaries et de Madère."

42   Ibid., 9.

islands. These limited mentions reflect that, while the Madeira Conference facilitated discussions among ultraperipheral islands, the event was dominated by wider issues.

Nevertheless, media coverage emphasized the ultraperiphery meeting. For instance, the *Diario de Noticias Madeira* dedicated a full page on November 26, 1988, to the meeting of presidents from the ultraperiphery.[43] In France, RFO aired two news reports focused on the ultraperiphery aspect of the Conference, mainly because this network is aimed at citizens from French overseas.[44] In his memoirs, Alberto Jardim later described the conference as the origin of ultraperipheral regions' collective advocacy, which would eventually gain recognition in European treaties.[45] However, the first official organization coordinating ultraperiphery's interests, the Outermost Regions' Conference of Presidents, was only established in 1995 in Guadeloupe.[46]

While researching the birth of the EU's outermost regions, one should never forget what Pierre Bourdieu termed "biographical illusion"—the tendency to construct a coherent and linear narrative of one's life, even though it is largely shaped by contingent events and social structures.[47] In this case, the illusion lies in the bottom-up creation process of the outermost regions as told by the agents involved in its development. Thankfully, this illusion does not withstand the scrutiny of archival research. To sum it up, the Madeira Conference was not primarily focused on ultraperiphery, yet it remains one of the most documented aspects.

Beyond the Conference: Early Engagements and Contestations of the European Integration of Overseas Regions

European Communities' institutions had already engaged with these issues prior to the conference. For instance, Réunion was the first of the overseas regions to receive regional funding from the European Development Fund in 1961, receiving

---

43   "Alberto Joao Jardim reeleito presidente da Conferência das Regioes Periféricas e Marítimas," *Diàrio de Notìcias Madeira*, 6.

44   Anne-Marie Masquin and Jean-Christophe Clément, *Pierre Lagourgue à la conférence périphérique de Madère*, JT 20h Télé Réunion, December 2 1988; Anne-Marie Masquin and Jean-Christophe Clément, *Latitudes*, RFO Paris, December 4, 1988. (Available at INA, Paris, ref: VDO15229510).

45   Jardim, *Relatório de combate*, 356.

46   "Déclaration des Présidents des Régions Ultrapériphériques," March 29, 1995, Gourbeyre. Available at https://cp-rup.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/library_files/1995_-_Declaraci%C3%B3n_de_Gourbeyre_-_Guadalupe_FR.pdf.

47   Pierre Bourdieu, "The Biographical Illusion (1986)" in *Biography in Theory: Key Texts with Commentaries*, ed. Wilhelm Hemecker and Edward Saunders (De Gruyter, 2017), 210-216.

172 million CFA francs[48] for a clean water project in Saint Denis.[49] In 1984 and 1985, the ERDF allocated 1.125 million French francs for a preparatory study for an integrated operation in Réunion.[50] Additionally, in 1985, the ERDF provided 12.1 million ECUs (European Currency Unit) to fund the endiguement of the *Rivière aux Herbes* and Pointe-à-Pitre's harbor renovation in Guadeloupe.[51] Between 1980 and 1987, the ERDF allocated an average of 37.15 million ECUs annually to the French overseas regions, with amounts ranging from 1.3 million ECUs in 1980 to 87.6 million ECUs in 1983.[52] Consequently, the European Communities had been funding these regions well before the Madeira Conference. However, this funding shifted from the European Development Fund to the ERDF. This change occurred because, on the one hand, the ERDF was only created in 1975[53] and on the other hand, the European Development Fund was primarily designed to aid ACP countries and OCTs.[54] According to Jean-Christophe Gay, the 1978 Hansen ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Communities granted the French overseas regions access to Internal Structural Funds, including the ERDF, following their inclusion in Article 227(2) of the Treaty of Rome.[55] This ruling explained the shift from the European Development Fund to the ERDF, although funding at that time was still primarily based on the territories' specific national status rather than a Community-based approach.

In addition to these funding initiatives, the European Commission established an interservice group in 1986 to focus on the DOM, OCTs, the Azores, Madeira, the Canary Islands, Ceuta, and Melilla. The group's role was to coordinate the efforts of various Directorates-General regarding these territories. Led by Giuseppe Ciavarini Azzi, a jurist working for the Commission since 1964, the idea for this group came directly from Jacques Delors after Spain and Portugal joined the Community in 1986 with their overseas regions.[56] Fernando Fernández Martín also acknowledged Jacques Delors' contribution in creating a group beyond national borders to include overseas regions within the European

---

48   The CFA franc is a colonial currency that was in use in Réunion until 1975.

49   Megan Brown, *The Seventh Member State: Algeria, France, and the European Community* (Harvard University Press, 2022), 170.

50   "Demande de crédits d'étude en faveur d'une opération intégrée à l'Ile de la Réunion," June 27, 1984, 25POI/1/3289, 'La Réunion,' Archives diplomatiques, La Courneuve, 25.

51   "FEDER - Instruction des demandes de concours 1985 - Dossier GUADELOUPE," November 13, 1985, 25POI/1/3289, 'Guadeloupe,' Archives diplomatiques, La Courneuve, 8.

52   Othily, *Les régions d'outre-mer et l'Europe*, 13.

53   Kiran Klaus Patel, *Project Europe: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 203.

54   "ACP" refers to African, Caribbean, and Pacific states linked to the EEC through the Lomé Conventions for trade and development cooperation.

55   Gay, "Chapitre 2. De l'état de colonies aux statuts à la carte," 58.

56   Giuseppe Ciavarini Azzi, "Entretien avec Giuseppe Ciavarini Azzi," interview by Anne-Sophie Gijs and Laurent Warlouzet, *Histoire de la Commission européenne 1986-2000*, September 30, 2016, 14-15. Available at https://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT983.

Communities.[57] Notably, this group's scope extended and included OCTs and Ceuta and Melilla, covering all territories outside the European mainland. As head of the group, Ciavarini Azzi visited Madeira in October 1988 to "understand, learn, and return to Brussels to present a report to the Commission, to President Delors, to think about the solutions," with no mention whatsoever of any other overseas territories, only Madeira.[58] Despite the formation of this interservice group, initiatives for these territories were still defined by national frameworks. For example, on June 4th and 5th, 1987, a "DOM Day" event was held in Brussels. During this event, Jacques Delors gave a speech connecting the issues of the French overseas regions to those of ACP countries. While he recognized the need to adapt the Single Market to the economic and social realities of the DOM, he also stated, "We are a community of law, and exemptions cannot be systematically granted,"[59] emphasizing that national governments remained the primary interlocutors.[60] Similarly, Alberto Jardim recalls having been received in Brussels in the beginning of May 1988 by Jacques Delors, alongside Mota Amaral as representatives of the Portuguese overseas regions. Their discussions centered on achieving parity in living standards with mainland Europe.[61] Rather than addressing the issue community-wide, the European institutions gave solutions to those territories still according to their national affiliation. In summary, although the creation of the interservice group marked a step toward a more systematic, Community-based approach, the EEC's solutions still addressed overseas regions firmly through their respective Member States. Likewise, the 1987 Ligios Report by the European Parliament only dealt with the French overseas regions, offering no systematic or Community-based approach and excluding any reference to the remote territories of other Member States.[62]

Also, the Madeira Conference was not the first attempt at constituting a transnational network of overseas regions. Fernando Fernández Martín recalls attending a different meeting in Fort-de-France (Martinique) in September 1988 with his counterparts from the French Americas: Georges Othily, Félix Proto, and

---

57   Fernández Martín, *Iles et régions ultrapériphériques de l'Union européenne*, 47.

58   "Missao das Comunidades Europeias visitou a Região Autônoma da Madeira,_" October 12, 1988, PT-ARM-DRAECE-DRACE/1/2/5, box no. 2, Arquivo e Biblioteca da Madeira, Funchal, 6. In original Portuguese: "…compreender, aprender e retornar a Bruxelas para fazer um relatório a Comissão, ao presidente Delors, para refletir sobre as soluções."

59   "Journées DOM - Discours de M. Jacques Delors Président de la Commission des Communautés Européennes," June 4-5, 1987, JD-60, Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence, 2. Original in French: "Nous sommes une communauté de droit et on ne peut accorder systématiquement des dérogations."

60   Ibid., 4.

61   Jardim, *Relatório de combate*, 348-49.

62   Giosuè Ligios, "Rapport sur les problèmes régionaux des départements d'outre-mer (D.O.M.)," March 12, 1987, PE2-18023, Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence.

Camille Darsières.[63] The following month, he met with Mota Amaral in the Azores. Furthermore, according to Emmanuel Jos and Justin Daniel, Réunion established a permanent office in Brussels in 1979,[64] making it the first regional office destined to the European Communities, predating the textbook example of the Saarland office set up in 1985.[65] Even though the Madeira Conference still marked the first time these six regional presidents gathered to address common challenges, it was not the first instance of discussing the status of these remote islands at the European level. As noted earlier, the term ultraperiphery itself was forged in Saint-Denis (Réunion) in 1987.

This linear narrative also overlooks significant opposition to the European integration of overseas regions. In 1988, Ernest Moutoussamy, a French MP and member of the autonomist Communist Party of Guadeloupe, published a book warning against integrating overseas *départements* into the Single Market. Using extensive statistics, he argued that France's overseas policy relies on maintaining their underdevelopment so as to maintain the dependence of these territories toward the *métropole*. He pointed out that GDP per capita in these regions averaged only 35% of France's,[66] with unemployment reaching up to 40% in Réunion,[67] and described integration as an, "imperialist policy [that] sacrifices the interests of development and aims at locking up the overseas *départements* even more, to make them the collective colonies of Europe where local populations will be dissolved within the huge amount of European foreigners."[68] Through its anti-colonialist and polemical tone, the book underscores genuine concerns about European integration of French overseas regions, including the potential removal of dock dues taxes which would increase the dependence of these regions on mainland France, as well as the challenges posed by rising

---

63   Fernández Martín, *Iles et régions ultrapériphériques de l'Union européenne*, 47.

64   Daniel and Jos, "Les régions ultrapériphériques face à l'union européenne : les difficultés de l'harmonisation dans la différence," 43.

65   Laurence Badel, "Pratiques diplomatiques européennes et mondialisations contemporaines," *Encyclopédie d'histoire numérique de l'Europe*, June 2020, accessed December 26, 2024. https://ehne.fr/fr/node/14223.

66   Ligios, "Rapport sur les problèmes régionaux des départements d'outre-mer (D.O.M.)," 6. According to the Ligios report, in 1983, the average GDP per capita for the French overseas regions was equivalent to 37,5% of the one of mainland France.

67   According to the Ligios Report, the unemployment rate was around 33% of the active population in Réunion, and above 30% of the active population in the other regions, except in French Guiana.

68   Ernest Moutoussamy, *Un Danger Pour Les DOM: L'intégration Au Marché Unique Européen de 1992* (L'Harmattan, 1988), 20. In original French: "Cette politique impérialiste sacrifie les intérêts du développement et vise à corseter davantage les DOM et à en faire des colonies collectives de l'Europe où les populations locales seront dissoutes dans la masse d'allogènes européens."

immigration in areas already struggling with high unemployment. However, such issues had already been raised in the 1960s.[69]

Similar concerns arose in the Canary Islands. In December 1983, during negotiations for Spain's admission to the EEC, the archipelago's parliament approved the accession, provided that specific economic and fiscal exemptions were granted. Yet, in June 1985, the same institution rejected the Treaty of Accession, prompting the resignation of Jerónimo Saavedra, then President of the Canary Islands.[70] The principal concerns centered on the treaty's impact on agriculture and fisheries, as well as the potential threat to the island's economic and fiscal regime. The issue was later addressed through exemptions from the Customs Union, Common Agricultural Policy, Common Fisheries Policy, and VAT system, alongside tariff quotas for agricultural products and tobacco.[71] This case illustrates that, despite a common claim to a status of ultraperiphery, these regions possess different legal arrangements within both their respective national frameworks and the European Community. More broadly, these instances challenge the idea that the integration of overseas regions into the European framework followed a linear, progressive, and bottom-up trajectory starting with the 1988 Madeira Conference, instead highlighting a contested and negotiated process.

While the 1988 Madeira Conference did not exclusively address issues related to overseas regions, and despite European institutions having engaged with these regions prior to the event, its significance lies in a critical shift. This marked a transition from European institutions focusing solely on nationally-defined overseas territories to the emergence of a transnational network. This collective bargaining can be interpreted as a form of "venue shopping,"[72] wherein the agents involved, operating on the margins of the 1988 CPMR Conference in Madeira, recognized this platform as the most advantageous access point to the European polity. It provided better opportunities to advocate for their specific needs and interests within the European institutional framework, in contrast to relying on their respective national governments.

---

69   According to Megan Brown, in 1965, two German master mechanics and their wives were denied their visa renewals in Réunion after three years of living there. That decision was justified by the island's employment situation. See Brown, *The Seventh Member State: Algeria, France, and the European Community*, 209-10.

70   Maria Teresa Noreña Salto, "Canarias: De Comunidad Autónoma a Región Europea," *Boletín Millares Carlo*, no. 15 (1996): 419-420.

71   Bulletin of the European Communities, "Political agreement on the accession of Spain and Portugal," no. 3 (Office for official publications of the European Communities, 1985), 9. Available at https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/political_agreement_on_the_accession_of_spain_and_portugal_29_march_1985-en-2e881412-7fae-4566-88df-f2b26a03543e.html.

72   Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 1993).

Towards a Community-based Approach after the Madeira Conference

In the aftermath of the Madeira Conference, the six ultraperipheral regions continued to advocate for a Community-based response to their challenges by maintaining interregional relations. For instance, archival records from Funchal reveal that Madeira's European Affairs Office exchanged information with the French overseas regions. Specifically, French Guiana, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Réunion shared with Madeira's Regional Government their revised dock dues rates for 1993 to comply with the new rules of the Single Market.[73] This is part of a common strategy among interest groups, which is the exchange of information.[74] Although these documents were sent nearly four years after the conference, there is little doubt that the meeting between the Presidents facilitated ongoing information exchanges on European matters among these regions. It is notable that all the presidents of the French overseas regions had changed since the Madeira Conference, with Guadeloupe and Réunion experiencing political alternations following the 1992 French regional elections. Although these new leaders did not participate in the Madeira Conference, they continued to maintain relationships with their Portuguese counterparts, demonstrating a "lock-in" effect toward European integration that persisted beyond political transitions.[75]

Following the Madeira Conference, those regions still maintained strong ties and positions within the CPMR which organized the event. As such Alberto Jardim, President of Madeira and host of the 1988 Conference, remained president of the CPMR until 1996, still to this day the longest serving President of the organization. According to his autobiography, Jardim was elected during the 1987 Réunion Conference with the support of French Gaullists, following a longstanding strategy of Europeanization predating Portugal's entry into the EEC.[76] Likewise, in 1990, the President of CPMR's Islands Commission was Pierre Lagourgue from Réunion, with Mota Amaral from Azores and Jerónimo Saavedra

---

73 "Délibération portant adoption du tarif des droits d'octroi de mer appliqué dans le département de la Guyane," October 5, 1992, PT-ARM-DRAECE/DRACE/A/2/6, Arquivo e Biblioteca da Madeira, Funchal. Under the same collection, the following documents are very similar but concern Guadeloupe, Martinique and Réunion.

74 Andreas Dür, "Interest Groups in the European Union: How Powerful Are They?," *West European Politics* 31, no. 6 (November 2008): 1212–30.

75 Frank Schimmelfennig, "Transnational Socialization," in *Transnational European Union: Towards a Common Political Space*, ed. Wolfram Kaiser and Peter Starie (Routledge, 2005), 76. Using the example of Central European countries, Schimmelfennig argues that the transnational socialization of their elites created strong ties to the European Union, which persisted even after political alternation.

76 Jardim, *Relatório de combate*, 325.

from the Canary Islands as two of the four Vice-Presidents of the Commission.[77] This configuration demonstrated the significant overrepresentation of outermost regions within the Islands Commission. Overall, the Madeira Conference catalyzed enduring links among these regions, fostering sustained collaboration through information exchange and shared platforms like the CPMR.

After the conference, these ultraperipheral regions were still considered through national frameworks, as proven by the aid programs launched by the Commission. In the late 1980s, three programs were launched by the European Commission, namely POSEIDOM for the French overseas regions, then POSEIMA for the Portuguese overseas regions and POSEICAN for the Canary islands,[78] mainly destined for agricultural production.[79] These programs were criticized via an unofficial document of the German delegation to the EEC, arguing that subsidies for non-profitable agricultural goods could hinder the Single Market and the Common Agricultural Policy.[80] While these programs remained nationally segmented, their symmetry marked a step toward a more Community-based approach for European overseas territories.

The earliest official document from the European institutions using the word "ultraperipheral regions," so far, was a decision on March 13th 1990 by the European Commission for the REGIS initiative directed towards them, referenced in a document from the French Bureau for European Economic Cooperation.[81] Unlike the agricultural focus of the POSEI programs, REGIS aimed to diversify economic activities, strengthen links between these regions and the rest of the Community, foster cooperation with neighboring regions, and enhance, if possible, disaster resilience. This term, coming from lobbying efforts by these regions, took three years to integrate into European institutional jargon.

This status was definitely recognized in the Maastricht Treaty, on the 26th Annex Declaration. Unlike in the Madeira Conference, French Guiana is here included among the outermost regions. The declaration states that, due to, "major structural backwardness compounded by several phenomena

---

77 "Décisions administratives," 1991, PT-ARM-DRAECE/CRIE/CC/1/295, Arquivo e Biblioteca da Madeira, Funchal.

78 The acronym 'POSEI' ("*Programme d'Options Spécifiques à l'Éloignement et à l'Insularité*" or programme of options specifically relating to remoteness and insularity) was initially coined for the DOM with an obvious mythological reference, before being adapted for Spanish and Portuguese overseas regions.

79 Jean-François Drevet, *Histoire de la politique régionale de l'Union européenne* (Belin, 2008), 95.

80 "Document officieux de la délégation allemande concernant POSEICAN et POSEIMA," March 21, 1991, PT-ARM-DRAECE/DRACE/A/2/6, Arquivo e Biblioteca da Madeira, Funchal.

81 "Programme d'initiative communautaire REGIS," March 19, 1991, SGCI, 19930226/27, Archives Nationales, Saint-Denis.

(remoteness, island status, small size, difficult topography and climate, economic dependence on a few products) [restraining] their economic and social development […] it is nonetheless possible to adopt specific measures to assist them." [82] Basically, the declaration extended the Treaty of Rome's Article 227(2) and the 1978 Hansen ruling provisions to Portuguese and Spanish overseas regions, thereby institutionalizing targeted derogations, and granting those overseas regions the recognition of a specific European status —that of outermost region in the English version of the treaty. So far, this appears to be the first account of this word as a translation for *ultrapériphérique.*[83]

Perhaps the 1988 Madeira Conference's greatest legacy lies in its ability to forge enduring relationships among the participating regional governments, forming a transnational network. This network ultimately influenced the European institutions' shift from nationally-framed approaches to a more Community-based perspective towards the European integrated overseas thanks to a bottom-up initiative from these regions themselves within the CPMR. It recalls what Daniel and Jos already assessed in the aftermath of the Maastricht Treaty, that the creation of the "outermost regions" status 'communitarized' the issue of the European overseas.[84]

Conclusion

While the 1988 Madeira Conference was indeed a turning point in the advocacy of a specific European overseas status through a process of uploading Europeanization—the process of transferring specific policy preferences to the European level[85]—its role should not be overstated. Pre-existing entanglements between these regions, internal oppositions within them to European integration, and the fact that European institutions had already addressed these issues through nationally based frameworks and solutions must also be considered. Nonetheless, the network constituted during that meeting in Funchal was successful in implementing, for the Maastricht Treaty, a specific European status acknowledging those specific region's need for derogations.

---

82   Official Journal of the European Communities, *The Treaty on European Union*, February 7, 1992, Maastricht, 154. Available at https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/4/9/2c2f2b85-14bb-4488-9ded-13f3cd04de05/publishable_en.pdf.

83   Bruce Millan, then Commissionner to the Regional Policy, used the term "ultraperipheral regions" in an English-language speech around 1990, hence why this word was preferred in this article. This shift in the terminology used warrants further investigation. See "Speech by Bruce Millan," circa 1990, PT-ARM-DRAECE/DRACE/A/2/6, Arquivo e Biblioteca da Madeira, Funchal.

84   Daniel and Jos, "Les régions ultrapériphériques face à l'union européenne : les difficultés de l'harmonisation dans la différence," 30. In French, they use the verb "*communautariser*" between quotation marks.

85   John Connolly, "Europeanization, Uploading and Downloading: The Case of Defra and Avian Influenza." *Public Policy and Administration* 23, no. 1 (2008), 7-25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0952076707083283.

In the broader scholarly debate, I argue that to fully grasp the ongoing interrelations between colonialism and European integration, we must look beyond an excessive focus on Eurafrica. Whereas the work of Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson has compellingly challenged the overly simplistic narrative that views European integration as a direct outcome of decolonization, incorporating the outermost regions into the analysis offers a more comprehensive perspective. This approach not only expands the spatial scope but extends as well the temporal scope to the present day. In doing so, it reveals the enduring and multifaceted entanglements between European integration and (post) colonialism in regions home to approximately five million people. The Canary Islands alone surpass the population of several fully-fledged Member States, including Malta, Luxembourg, Cyprus, and Estonia. Furthermore, these territories remain among the EU's poorest, with Mayotte ranking as the poorest in 2022.[86] This broader perspective clarifies why the European Union continues to bear responsibility for geographically distant regions, as seen in the introduction.

---

86 "Regional gross domestic product by NUTS 2 region," *Eurostat*, 2023. https://doi. org/10.2908/TGS00003

Magic, Medicine and Invulnerability in the Boxer Uprising and the Majimaji War: A Comparative Discourse Analysis of German Missionary Writings on Anticolonial Resistance Movements, 1897–1907

ABSTRACT

When studying the Boxer Uprising in Northern China in 1900 as well as the Majimaji War in German East Africa between 1905 and 1907, some notable similarities between them come to attention. Both have seen involvement by the German Empire, and both conflicts have until today been characterized by the supposed superstitious rites that involved varying degrees of medicinal use and invulnerability rituals by members of those anti-colonial resistance movements. These portrayals, while not necessarily incorrect, uncritically repeat discourses that were historically developed by western actors like missionaries, military personnel or journalists on the ground. I show how the narratives of local missionaries create a distinction between the good Christian colonialist "self" and a superstitious, barbaric resisting "other" to aid violent repression of these movements, as well as support colonial narratives and the "civilizing mission" in general. I compare writings of the German Catholic Steyler Missionary Society in China, mainly its newspaper "Stadt Gottes" and those of the Lutheran Berlin Mission Society in East Africa in the "Berliner Missions-Berichte" to shed a light on how these processes played out discursively and were publicized to a wider readership in the colonial metropole.

BY

Anna Zoë Klos

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Zoë Klos is a student in the Global History M.A. program at Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. She received her bachelor's degree in history and political science from Heinrich-Heine-University of Düsseldorf in 2022. Her research interests include African history, the history of German colonialism, Christian missionaries and historical discourse analysis, as well as the social history of sex work.

Introduction[1]

> All non-Europeans were firmly in the grip of religion, and "Oriental" or "primitive" societies could best be described and understood in terms of religion. […] This approach, shallow as it might seem to us, made some sense in the nineteenth century. On the one hand, these societies […] revealed themselves to Western scholars mainly through texts of a religious character […]. On the other hand, it seemed to Europeans that the most threatening resistance to colonial conquest came from religious dignitaries and religiously inspired movements. The thesis of the primacy of the religious in non-Western societies contributed to a lasting dematerialization, dehistoricization, and depoliticization of the way in which those societies were understood in the West.[2]

Two examples for such apparently "religiously inspired movements," as Jürgen Osterhammel described them in his seminal work "The Transformation of the World," are the Yihétuan, or "boxers," a popular anti-foreign movement who in 1900 brought large parts of northern China under their control, provoking a punitive military expedition by eight imperial powers under German leadership. Similarly, the Maji movement, also a popular resistance movement, fought a war against the German colonial empire in German East Africa (modern day Tanzania) from 1905 to 1907. The similarities between both anticolonial resistance movements are so notable that Thaddeus Sunseri has already put forward the thesis that "the Boxers might have directly inspired German perceptions of Majimaji."[3] Both narratives on these movements contain magic, invulnerability rituals, spirit possession, a ritual significance of water as medicine and "female pollution" among other aspects. These characterizations, are a result of the endeavors of missionaries to portray the associated anticolonial resistance movements of the Yíhetuan and the Maji movement as inferior, superstitious and at times dangerous, to justify their suppression by colonial and imperial forces, as well as to justify the missionaries' role in "civilizing" the resistors and advancing their own religious goals.

---

2   Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*: *A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 876–77.

3   Thaddeus Sunseri, "Majimaji and the Millenium: Abrahamic Sources and the Creation of a Tanzanian Resistance Tradition," *History in Africa* 26 (1999): 71, https://doi.org/10.2307/3172146.

To analyze this justification, this paper utilizes the analytical frameworks of historical myths, Osterhammel's three d's — "dematerialization, dehistoricization, and depoliticization" — as well as Sebastian Conrad's concept of global integration to analyze the similarities of historical discourses on both conflicts in missionary writings. Firstly, I will use and understand "Myth" in this paper according to Paul Cohen and in tradition of Roland Barthes, as a narrative with a particular function to the mythmakers and their present, that is not necessarily untrue but certainly ideological.[4] This functionality is tied, secondly, to the three d's, as the mythmakers, the missionaries in this case, construct narratives of superstition, invulnerability and spirits to dematerialize, dehistoricize and depoliticize — to "other" in another term — these movements to justify the civilizing mission and their own presence on scene.[5] Resistance becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, that further justifies the colonial oppression. Thirdly, global integration provides a framework to understand the possibility of the emergence of such widespread narratives by understanding colonial Christian mission as an integrated endeavor, that due to ideological structures, can lead to similar discursive outcomes in different far-away places.

The source basis of this paper consists of missionary publications, in particular the newspaper *Stadt Gottes* (City of God) published by the Catholic mission society *Steyler Missionare* (*Societas Verbi Divini/SVD*) for the Boxer Uprising, as well as the *Berliner Missions-Berichte* (Berlin Mission Reports) published by the Lutheran *Berliner Mission* for the Majimaji War. Both organizations were exceptionally close to the theaters of these wars, their representatives experienced them directly and wrote extensively about them to their audiences in the colonial metropole. As Thoralf Klein noted, "Missionary periodicals, like their secular counterparts (newspapers and magazines), had the potential to create and sustain media events."[6] Thus, they are perfectly suited for this examination of their discursive make-up as their articles often explicitly deal with the religious characters of the movements.

This paper consists of three main chapters. The first chapter serves as a general introduction into the different historical contexts of the two distinct locations that this story takes place in, northern China and southern German East Africa. Here, I examine the different Colonialisms, and how they structurally influence missionary thought and thus the analysis. The second chapter then delves into the Boxer Uprising, the Steyler Mission and how narratives of magic,

---

4   Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys*: *The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (Columbia University Press, 1997), xii; Roland Bernhard et al., "Was Ist Ein Historischer Mythos? Versuch Einer Definition Aus Kulturwissenschaftlicher Und Geschichtsdidaktischer Perspektive," in *Mythen in Deutschsprachigen Geschichtsschulbüchern: Von Marathon Bis Zum Elysée-Vertrag*, ed. Roland Bernhard et al. (Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2017), 11–12.

5   Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 826–27.

6   Thoralf Klein, "Media Events and Missionary Periodicals: The Case of the Boxer War, 1900-1901," *Church History* 82, no. 2 (2013): 399.

medicine and invulnerability were created there, while the third chapter examines the same for the Majimaji War[7] and the Berliner Mission. I conclude with a comparison of the two discourses.

Colonialisms and Missionary Thought

Despite the similarities in narrative, both the Boxer Uprising and the Majimaji War developed and were fought under vastly different circumstances. Both occurred under a prevailing atmosphere of colonial invasions, but China and East Africa were in vastly different stages of the "race against time" to modernize and resist the respective invasions.[8]

In China, different colonial powers exercised their influence in an informal way, through unequal treaties, economic power and missionary enterprises, while competing with each other since the Opium Wars. The country is thus generally assumed to be part of an "Informal Empire," as it was not directly colonized.[9] Leading up to the uprising, the country was politically and militarily weakened, made evident by the defeat in the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895,[10] and the Juye Incident and subsequent German occupation of Jiaozhou Bay in 1897.[11] In response to these losses, the court in Beijing tried to enact sweeping reforms — known as the Hundred Days' Reform — to bring the country out of its visible crisis. The uprising can be understood as an opposing force to these foreign supported reforms. After her reactionary coup against the Guangxu-Emperor in 1898, empress-dowager Cixi became if not a direct ally to the Boxer Movement at first, certainly an indirect supporter, as their views and goals were complimentary. Both wanted to contain the foreign influence, whether for practical and religious concerns or for reasons of ongoing power struggles at the court. The race against time was still fought intensely between the reformist Chinese southerners and the conservative Manchu northerners led by Cixi.[12] The Boxer uprising then came to play a major part in this particular episode of the "race against time" in China.

---

7   In this paper, I will use the term "Majimaji" instead of the more common English name "Maji Maji" to describe the conflict, except when quoting sources or literature. On this spelling see: Nancy Rushohora, "An Archaeological Identity of the Majimaji – Toward an Historical Archaeology of Resistance to German Colonization in Southern Tanzania," in *Archaeologies* Vol. 11, (2015): 246-271, 250.

8   John Darwin, *After Tamerlane*: *The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000* (Penguin Books, 2008), 224.

9   Susanne Kuß and Bernd Martin, "Einleitung," in Susanne Kuß and Bernd Martin, *Das Deutsche Reich Und Der Boxeraufstand*, 11.

10   Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, 351–53.

11   Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 20–21.

12   On the power struggles at the Qing court between the Hundred Days' Reform and the uprising see: Xiang Lanxin, *The Origins of the Boxer War*: *A Multinational Study* (Routledge, 2003), 17–24.

On the other hand, the region of the Majimaji War, had been an "official" part of the German colony *Deutsch-Ostafrika* since 1890. As opposed to the Informal Empire in China, German East Africa was subjected to direct colonial authority and violence. Although this colonial authority's power was practically limited, often times to an area encompassing little more than a day's march from a military outpost – a concept described by Michael Pesek as *Inseln von Herrschaft* (islands of rule)[13] – it nonetheless made for a very different situation in which familiar patterns developed. Local groups and governances had lost their "race against time" in 1898, when German colonial forces ended the successful long running resistance movement known as the "Hehe War" after Chief Mkwawa's final military loss and subsequent suicide. Mkwawa's troops were not easily defeated, having wiped out almost an entire company of the euphemistically named German *Schutztruppe* (Protection force) in 1891.[14] In this sense, the Majimaji war was not an attempt to act against growing colonial influence, but an attempt to resist the colonial structures that had already been placed on people. Despite these fundamentally different Colonialisms, both conflicts were a part of or in close proximity to the "race against time." The race against time and its counterpart, European imperial rule, characterized by violence and suppression are the kind of "regular and sustained"[15] interactions in Conrads's sense of global integration.

The setting of the race against time is not the only integrated phenomenon that is present in this story. Religion and the colonial mission that facilitated the construction of narratives are not more important ones, but certainly more concrete examples. Paul Cohen points to several factors that made possible the expansion of Christian missionary enterprises, naming Christianity's "universalist pretensions," long distance travel becoming less of a hurdle in the 19th century, and most importantly, a specific growing ideology.[16] The (at first primarily Protestant) missionary societies that had developed out of the Pietist Revival Movement and the Awakening movements since the late 18th century,[17] were structurally independent from both church and state.[18] In the same way, decades later the reappearing Catholic mission was a result of popular piety. Missionaries

---

13 Michael Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika*: *Expeditionen, Militär Und Verwaltung Seit 1880* (Campus, 2005), 244.

14 David Pizzo, "To Devour the Land of Mkwawa: Colonial Violence and the German-Hehe War in East Africa c. 1884-1914" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007), 86–104,, https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/downloads/df65v7991.

15 Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton University Press, 2016), 9.

16 Paul A. Cohen, "Christian Missions and Their Impact to 1900," in *The Cambridge History of China: Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), 544.

17 Winfried Speitkamp, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte* (Reclam, 2005), 91. Important early missionary societies include the London Missionary Society (founded in 1795), the Church Mission Society (founded in 1799) and the Basler Mission (founded in 1815).

18 Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 890.

that later went into contemporary (and future) colonized regions, were for the most part, not well educated and found themselves in the same ideological tension as people in the metropole. As a result, they brought this tension with them, going into the colonies. Some missionaries rejected the colonial state or remained neutral towards it,[19] while others became accomplices to colonialism and the colonial invasion. The Steyler Missionaries in China for example, bore a "catholic-fundamentalist, antiliberal and antimodernist spirit,"[20] combined with exceptional German nationalism.[21] The Lutheran *Berliner Missionsgesellschaft* had similar tendencies, evidenced by the role of their inspector Alexander Merensky in the colonial labour regime.[22] With these tendencies came a certain view of the subjects of proselytization. Missionaries viewed themselves as "saviours of the souls of the heathens,"[23] while their counterparts were seen as "idol worshippers."[24] This thinking reveals a dichotomy of true faith and superstition that had to be continuously constructed and reaffirmed in the practice of mission.[25] Defining what religion *was* led to a simultaneous definition of what it *was not*. In constructing the self, missionaries constructed the other.

The Genesis of Narratives of the Boxer Uprising

Missionaries were the first Europeans that encountered the growing Boxer Movement. Due to their presence in Shandong province, the birthplace of the Yìhetuan, they became the movement's first European victims. The "foreign" in the popular phrase "Support the Qing, destroy the foreign" primarily addressed the foreign religion (*yang-jiao)* of Christianity.[26] Both Catholic and Protestant missionaries were present in Shandong, the latter in far greater numbers in the east of the Shandong peninsula, the former mostly concentrated in the western inland parts of the province. Despite their lesser numbers, the Catholics in the form of French Jesuits and the German Steylers were far more successful in their attempts to convert the local populace. Esherick attributes this in part to their more aggressive efforts, which included frequently taking the side of Christians

---

19 Majida Hamilton, *Mission Im Kolonialen Umfeld*: *Deutsche Protestantische Missions-gesellschaften in Deutsch-Ostafrika* (Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2010), 59–60.

20 Klaus Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft Und Widerstand in Der "Musterkolonie" Kiautschou*: *Inter-aktionen Zwischen China Und Deutschland, 1897-1914* (Oldenbourg, 2000), 326.

21 Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (University of California Press, 1987), 79.

22 Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010), 85–90.

23 Mühlhahn, *Kiautschou*, 327.

24 Horst Gründer, "Die Rolle Der Christlichen Mission Beim Ausbruch Des Boxeraufstandes," in Susanne Kuß and Bernd Martin, *Das Deutsche Reich Und Der Boxeraufstand*, 25. Both examples refer to Johann Baptist von Anzer SVD, the Apostolic Vicar of Southern Shandong.

25 Karolin Wetjen, *Mission Als Theologisches Labor*: *Koloniale Aushandlungen Des Religiösen in Ostafrika Um 1900* (Franz Steiner Verlag, 2021), 24.

26 Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 68.

in local conflicts and trials.[27] Locals used this to their advantage, to the point where the perceived distinction between bandits and Christians became blurred for the leaders and members of heterodox[28] community self-defense organizations like the so-called "Big-Sword Society."[29] As Bandits converted to Christianity, violence against Christians was the result.[30] Thereby missionaries facilitated an important cause of the atmosphere of persecution of Christians that engulfed the region in 1896 and later from 1898 to 1899.[31]

Christenverfolgungen or persecutions of Christians was the term or the motif through which Steylers attempted to make sense of what they saw and how they then described it to their audiences in the metropole, using allusions to the perils Christians had faced during the times of the Roman Empire.[32] Missionary Anton Wewel does not spend much time discussing the perpetrators of violence against Chinese Christians in one such particular piece published in the monthly newspaper *Stadt Gottes* (City of God). Rather his focus is on their suffering and pain, in an attempt to mobilize the readers into making donations to the mission.[33] Where the attackers do appear, Wewel plainly describes them in alternating terms: bandits, robbers, rebels, insurgents or heathens. The mention of the Boxer motto, here archaically translated as "*Zum Schutze der kaiserlichen Dynastie und zur Ausrottung der europäischen Nation*" ("For the protection of the imperial dynasty and the extermination of the European nation" as opposed to the modern "Support the Qing, destroy the foreign"), makes these "bandits" conclusively identifiable as Boxers.[34] This identification however was not so easily discernible for the Steylers themselves. In practice they frequently conflated especially Big Swords and Boxers.[35] After the 1896 incidents, Yu Xian, the governor of Shandong province started successfully suppressing the Big Swords by executing its leadership.[36] Despite that, the Steylers attributed the murders of their missionaries Richard Henle and Franz Xaver Nies in the so-called

---

27   Ibid, 77–79.

28   On Heterodoxy in the Chinese religious and state life see: Richard Shek, "The Alternative Moral Universe of Religious Dissenters in Ming-Qing China," in *Religion and the Early Modern State: Views from China, Russia, and the West*, ed. James D. Tracy and Marguerite Ragnow, (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010).

29   Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 19.

30   Esherick, *Boxer Uprising*, 113.

31   Thoralf Klein, "Aktion Und Reaktion? Mission Und Chinesische Gesellschaft," in *Kolonial-krieg in China: Die Niederschlagung Der Boxerbewegung 1900-1901*, ed. Mechthild Leutner and Klaus Mühlhahn (Ch. Links, 2007), 39–40.

32   Anton Wewel SVD, "Die Jüngste Christenverfolgung in Südschantung," *Stadt Gottes*, 1899.

33   Thoralf Klein, "Media Events and Missionary Periodicals," 402.

34   Anton Wewel SVD, "Die jüngste Christenverfolgung in Südschantung," 553.

35   Esherick, *Boxer Uprising*, xvi.

36   Ibid. 120.

Juye Incident of November 1897 to the Big Sword Society.[37] Even after the Boxer uprising had come to an end, missionary Georg Stenz – survivor of the Juye Incident and its actual target – continued the conflation in an article entitled *Die Gesellschaft "vom grossen Messer" (Boxer)* (The Society of the "Big Knife" (Boxers)).[38] The conflation of these fundamentally different movements by missionaries is the first large complex that influences discussions of magic, medicine and invulnerability in the context of the Boxer uprising. In fact, invulnerability rituals become a major reason for the conflation.

Esherick has made it clear that invulnerability rituals and spirit possession are the key to understanding the organization of the Yìhetuán, instead of martial arts as the name "Boxers" might suggest.[39] After the uprising, Georg Stenz gave us an insight into the development of these rituals:

> They [the old brothers, predecessors to the Big Sword Society according to Stenz] surrounded themselves with a mysterious darkness and thereby won over the superstitious people of Shandong [*Schantunesen*]. They wanted to be invulnerable; puncture- and bulletproof, they could dare to oppose the impudent robbers. […]. Throughout a long time they had to practice, in the beginning by hitting parts of their bodies continuously with bricks, later with knifes, all the while emitting a groaning "hm" to preserve their "power" ["*Kraft*"]. Smaller wounds could be healed by the heroes of the knife [*Messerhelden*] by blowing over the wound [*Überblasen*].[40]

Stenz's use of words like *abergläubisch* (superstitious), and *Kraft* (power/strength) or neologisms like *Messerhelden* (heroes of the knife) shows how his religious worldview corresponds to the dichotomy of true faith and superstition. Practitioners of these rituals become the "other," they are dematerialized, dehistoricized and depoliticized by Stenz' attitude and snippy choice of words that remove the described ritual from its material and spiritual context and function. Herein lies the root of the conflation of Big Swords and Boxers. It did not come from their actual historical genesis and organizational structure that

---

37 Johann Baptist von Anzer SVD, "Jahresbericht Über Die Mission Von Südschantung," *Stadt Gottes*, 1899, 224.

38 Georg Stenz SVD, "Die Gesellschaft 'Vom Großen Messer' (Boxer)," *Globus: Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder- und Völkerkunde*, 1901, 1.

39 Esherick, *Boxer Uprising*, xiii.

40 Georg Stenz SVD, "Die Gesellschaft 'Vom Großen Messer' (Boxer)," 10. Translation by the author. Original: "*Sie umgaben sich mit einem geheimnisvollen Dunkel und gewannen dadurch die abergläubischen Schantunesen. Sie wollten unverwundbar sein; stich- und schussfest, konnten sie es wagen, den frechen Räubern entgegenzutreten. […] Längere Zeit hindurch mussten sie dann Übungen machen, indem sie sich anfangs mit Ziegelsteinen, später mit Messern fortwährend an bestimmte Teile des Körpers schlugen, dabei aber immer ein ächzendes 'hm' ausstiessen, um ihre 'Kraft' zu behalten. Kleinere Wunden konnten die Messerhelden durch Überblasen heilen.*"

was in some cases observable[41] which were quite different, but from their similar ritualistic practice; a mistake that Yu Xian also made during his early attempts to supress the Boxers as judicial commissioner in Shandong.[42] Big Swords and Boxers were the same to Stenz (and by extension to Yu Xian), because from his perspective they acted the same; they persecuted Christians and practiced invulnerability rituals.

Taking this perception into account, it becomes less surprising that the first mention of the term "Boxers" in *Stadt Gottes* did not come from a printed missionaries' letter or from a yearly report on the state of the mission, but from an ordinary news report on *Die Wirren in China* (The Turmoil in China). It read: "This time the secret society of the Boxers *(Icho-tschuan)* is mainly involved in Zhili [*Tscheli*], in Shandong [*Schantung*] it is the Cult of the Big Knife *(Dadauchui)*, namely during the Christian persecutions of 1898 and 1899 […]."[43] It appears as if to the editors, at the time Boxers were a Zhili province phenomenon and Big Swords a Shandong province one, even though all organizations that used variations of the name "Boxers" — The Boxers United in Righteousness (*Yihequan*) in Guan county, the Red Boxers near Jining and the Spirit Boxers in northwestern Shandong — originated in Shandong province.[44] In some cases, groups were also differentiated,[45] showing how these editorial reports at the time, had to rely on incomplete and unreliable information.

The reports in the *Stadt Gottes* on the Boxers, both by missionaries and by editors, were for the most part not much concerned with their rituals, but transported a political narrative, that centered the Qing court and the Mandarins. The Boxers were mostly seen as puppets of the politicians, thus depoliticizing the movement itself. As such, the first mention of rituals in the newspaper did

---

41 Anton Volpert cites a different unnamed missionary: *"'Die Sekte vom großen Messer' so schreibt ein Mitbruder aus Zhauchiän, 'ist viel zahlreicher als früher und übt immer mehr Rekruten ein. Mit ihren langen Messern sieht man sie überall herumspazieren. Indessen fehlt ihnen ein fähiges Haupt, und so lassen sie uns in Ruhe. […],'"* Anton Volpert SVD, "Von Der Jüngsten Verfolgung in Südschantung," *Stadt Gottes*, 1900, 495.

42 Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 120.

43 *Stadt Gottes,* "Die Wirren in China," 1900, 515. Translation by the author. German original: *"Diesesmal ist in Tscheli hauptsächlich der Geheimbund der Boxer (Icho-tschuan) beteiligt, in Schantung die Sekte vom großen Messer (Dadauchui), namentlich bei den Christenverfolgungen von 1898 und 1899 […]."*

44 Esherick, *Boxer Uprising*, 153, 195, and 206. Esherick also mentions an equation of Yihequan and Big Swords by Franciscan missionaries local to Guan county.

45 The same article making the Zhili-Shandong differentiation separated Big Swords and Red Boxers, the latter ones being situated very close to the Steyler's area of proselytization, as follows: *"Von den Sekten 'vom großen Messer' und 'von der roten Faust' (Boxer) steht es ja durch zahlreiche Zeugnisse fest, daß sie fremdenfeindlich sind […]."* *Stadt Gottes,* "Die Wirren in China," 517.

not come in the form of a missionary letter or a news report, but in form of a translation of a proclamation by the governor of Shandong in poetry form:

> Since they boasted of magic formulas,
> How did it happen that their strength left them?
> Since they were safe from blows and bullets,
> How could their bodies be destroyed?
> All this shows how vain their boasting,
> which only had the purpose of deceiving the crowd.[46]

Here rituals are framed through Chinese actors' viewpoints, but the translation makes this proclamation difficult to interpret. While Mandarins certainly see these rituals of heterodox origin, just like Christian missionaries do, as superstition,[47] it is very likely that we also find the views and biases of translator Josef Freinademetz in the above quote. Translation as a concept and process must be acknowledged as playing an enormous part in synthesizing two very separate belief systems which both have the same outcome: the othering of the Boxer movement as superstitious. However, only one of these belief systems spread this narrative around the world and into the colonial metropole. Another example of such a translation problem appeared in *Stadt Gottes* in 1901, in a citation of report by a Dutch missionary:

> According to my Mandarin, the uprising originated among the people themselves. Among them, stood some outstanding heroes (the Boxer leaders), who, as they believe, could smash European cannons and warships with their hands and fists. They enjoy the protection and assistance of the spirits of the underworld, so that European bullets bounce off their impenetrable bodies […].[48]

---

46   *Stadt Gottes,* "Proklamation Des Gouverneurs Von Schantung: Ermahnung an Das Volk, Ruhig Seinen Geschäften Nachzugehen Und Von Dem Verwerflichen Sektenwesen Abzulassen. Ein Gesang," 1900, 519–20. Translation by editor. Original: "*Da sie doch rühmten sich der Zauberformeln,* Since they boasted of magic formulas, *Wie kam es, daß die Kraft von ihnen wich?Da sie doch sicher waren gegen Hieb und Schuß, Wie konnte sinken hin zum Tod ihr Leib?Das alles zeigt, wie eitel ihr Geprahl, Das nur den Zweck gehabt die Menge zu bethören.*"

47   This is exemplified by a mandarin's report on an invulnerability ritual in Zhili in 1826. Cited in: Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 56; Richard Shek, "The Alternative Moral Universe of Religious Dissenters in Ming-Qing China," (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

48   Dr. Faber, "Die Wirren in China," *Stadt Gottes*, 1901, 106. Translation by the author. Original: "*Nach meinem Mandarin entstand der Aufstand beim Volke selbst. Unter demselben standen einige ausgezeichnete Helden (die Boxerführer) auf, die, wie sie glauben, mit Hand und Faust die europäischen Kanonen und Kriegsschiffe zertrümmern können, die den Schutz und die Hilfe der Geister der Unterwelt genießen, so daß die europäischen Kugeln von ihrem undurchdringbaren Körper abspringen […].*"

Again, the magical powers of the Boxers are framed through a Chinese perspective, namely that of a Mandarin. This perspective was first translated into Dutch and then German. It is thus difficult to attain the nature of what was originally said, and we again must assume a high degree of European translators' perspective in this quote. On a textual level, the quote again speaks of invulnerability against bullets but also adds new powers into the mixture, like the Boxers ability to destroy ships and cannons with their fists. Through the *Stadt Gottes*, "one of the most popular and widespread catholic newspapers in the German Empire" and "possibly the only source of information on China for artisans, peasants and shopkeepers in rural regions"[49] this narrative on magic and invulnerability became a part of the German imagination, the picture of the conflict and of China in general.

When talking about myths and narratives about China, it is important to recognize perhaps the most important cultural myth that pervaded western discourse at the time: The "Yellow Peril." While the racial classification of the Chinese as "Yellow" dates back to the "race-science" and Sinophobia of the late 18th century,[50] the term developed in the United States in the 1870s as a reaction to the presence of Chinese laborers in California. However, it only became common spread after the first Sino-Japanese War of 1895, and later through the Boxer Uprising.[51] One of its most important discursive features is its "dialectical relationship [to superiority]: the insecurity of the imperialists and their fear of the subjugated and colonized peoples."[52] This dialectical relationship however is not as clearly visible in the missionary discourse. While a sense of superiority permeates articles in the *Stadt Gottes*, fear or peril is rarely to be seen, particularly in discussions of rituals. As I showed in the numerous quotes, whether they came from missionaries directly, or were framed through Chinese intermediaries, efficacy — or rather inefficacy — is a recurring theme. In one news story, the *Monatsschau* from July and August 1900 — the height of the conflict, this becomes particularly clear: "In these costly battles with the foreigners, the Boxers' superstitious faith in their invulnerability had proven to be a fraud, and the Boxers' troops partially disbanded afterwards […]."[53] Explaining inefficacy is very much in the playbook of othering on the basis of superstition, but it does not

---

49   Mühlhahn, *Kiautschou*, 322.

50   George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*: *Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa, Chicago Studies in Practices of Meaning,* (The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 385–88.

51   Thoralf Klein, "The 'Yellow Peril,'" in *Europäische Geschichte Online,* (Mainz, 2017), http://www.ieg-ego.eu/kleint-2015-en.

52   Ibid.

53   Dr. Faber, "Monatsschau: (Von Mitte Juli Bis 12. August)," *Stadt Gottes*, 1900, 571. Translation by the author. Original: "*In diesen verlustreichen Kämpfen mit den Fremden hatte sich der Aberglaube der Boxer an ihre Unverwundbarkeit übergenug als Schwindel erwiesen, die Scharen der Boxer lösten sich danach zum Teil auf[…].*"

conjure up images of threatening Chinese peasants. At this point in the war the Steyler missionaries were far away from any fighting, which was mainly concentrated in Zhili province. What was there to fear about? Accounts from missionaries closer to the fighting differed, such as from the Apostolic Vicar of Beijing, Alphonse Favier, who was under siege in the imperial city and who was quoted in the *Stadt Gottes* as follows:

> The Boxer cult appears to be under diabolical influence; their incantations, a kind of possession, and miraculous facts [*wunderbare Thatsachen*] indicate this. Scholars in Europe, however, will surely explain this with magnetic and hypnotic states.[54]

"Diabolical influence" and "possession" are definitely more fearful and in line with a proper "yellow peril" narrative. But the Stadt Gottes added the following to Favier's statement:

> The "miraculous facts" [*"wunderbare Thatsachen"*] mentioned by Mgr. Favier are certainly cases of invulnerability and the like; for it would be inexplicable that the belief in the invulnerability of the Boxers had become so widespread and so deeply established if some such cases did not exist. This is in fact possible through hypnotic and similar states in which insensitivity to blows and shocks and, in the case of wounds, lack of bleeding and very rapid healing, thus apparent invulnerability, have been observed. […] We find it quite understandable, however, that an old missionary, who in all his work is so accustomed to looking at the supernatural, explains them, in view of the magic formulas [*Zauberformeln*], the summoning of spirits [*Geisterbeschwörungen*], the hatred against Christianity, by demonic influences.[55]

The Stadt Gottes paired technocratic explanations for invulnerability with paternalistic empathy for Favier, essentially rationalizing the "yellow peril" away.

---

54 Dr. Faber, "Die Wirren in China," 107. Translation by the author. Original: *"Die Sekte der Boxer scheint unter teuflischem Einfluss zu stehen; ihre Beschwörungen, eine Art Besessenheit und wunderbare Thatsachen weisen darauf hin. Die Gelehrten in Europa werden dies freilich mit magnetischen und hypnotischen Zuständen erklären."*

55 Ibid. Translation by the author. Original: *"Die von Mgr. Favier erwähnten 'wunderbaren Thatsachen' sind jedenfalls Fälle von Unverwundbarkeit und ähnliches; denn es wäre unerklärlich, daß sich der Glaube an die Unverwundbarkeit der Boxer so weit verbreitet und so tief festgesetzt hätte, wenn nicht manche derartige Fälle vorlägen. Dies ist in der That durch hypnotische und ähnliche Zustände möglich, in welchen Unempfindlichkeit gegen Schlag und Stoß und bei Verwundung Mangel an Blutung und sehr rasche Heilung, also scheinbar Unverwundbarkeit beobachtet worden sind. […] [W]ir finden es aber ganz begreiflich, wenn ein alter Missionar, der in seinem ganzen Wirken soviel auf das übernatürliche zu schauen gewohnt ist, sie in Anbetracht der Zauberformeln, der Geisterbeschwörungen, des Hasses gegen das Christentum durch teuflische Einflüsse erklärt."*

This shows the complexity of the construction of narratives, taking place both "on the ground" and in Europe, and suggests that the Steyler's had a reduced impact on the overall *Deutungshoheit* (interpretive authority) over the conflict.

The Genesis of Narratives of the Majimaji War

As a direct colony, the relations between the colonial mission and the colonial authorities during the Majimaji War were fundamentally different from the situation in China. Despite representatives of Protestant Missions' criticism of the colonial invasion and their ambivalence toward their future role inside the colonial system,[56] their self-given role as "arbiters of peace" instead of "colonial administrators"[57] was a fictional distinction. The missions were in many cases seen as the "extended arm of the German administration"[58] by the locals. This is not limited to the aforementioned role of Alexander Merensky in the colonial labour regime, but even mission stations were designed to serve as military outposts. This made missionaries, as in the Boxer Uprising, direct targets of anticolonial resistance. One of the first German victims after the start of the war in July 1905, was Bishop Cassian Spiß as well as other missionaries and mission sisters of the Catholic *Benediktinerkongregation von St. Ottilien* (Benedictines) who accompanied his caravan.[59] Despite their differences, missionaries supported the actions of the colonial administration and provided them with their stations, probably out of a sense of self-preservation.[60] Across the whole area of the war, mission stations of all confessions were left abandoned, raided and plundered.[61] This left missionaries, again, as the first Europeans to be exposed to the movement and their beliefs and ritualistic practices.

Similarly to the Boxer uprising, the narrative of Majimaji is riddled with tales of magic, medicine and invulnerability. Jamie Monson describes them: "These stories come down to us in their most primary form through the lens of German observers and participants in the rebellion, who learned most of what they knew about medicine during the war from their own African representatives (akidas

---

56   Hamilton, *Umfeld*, 59–60.

57   Ibid.

58   Hans-Joachim Niesel, "Für Kreuz Und Krone: Die Deutschen Missionen Im Kriegsgebiet," in *Der Maji-Maji-Krieg in Deutsch-Ostafrika 1905-1907*, ed. Felicitas Becker and Jigal Beez (Ch. Links, 2005), 101.

59   James Giblin and Jamie Monson, "Introduction," in *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog of War, African Social Studies Series 20*, ed. James Giblin and Jamie Monson, (Brill, 2010) 6.

60   Karl Axenfeld, "Der Aufstand in Deutsch-Ostafrika," *Berliner Missions-Berichte*, September 1905, 359.

61   Giblin and Monson, "Introduction," 7.

and askari), accused prisoners and mission converts."[62] According to Thaddeus Sunseri, the single most influential person regarding the construction of the Maji narrative was Martin Klamroth, a missionary of the Berlin Mission Society. Before and after the war, he examined religious belief systems in the Uzaramo region and shared his findings with the colonial administration.[63] Klamroth's reports are the basis of not only the earliest knowledge the administration had on what was going on, but also of what was printed about the war in the *Missions-Berichte*. In October 1905, they described the religious worldview of the Maji movement as follows: "The unrest in Maneromango, like that among the Matumbi, is linked to a stronger revival of the Koleo (Kolelo) worship (snake cult) […]."[64] This narrative, specifically the mention of the god Koleo or Kolelo, seems to be specific to the region of Uzaramo, close to the capital of the colony, Dar es Salaam. In other regions, such as in the Rufiji Delta another god by the name Bokero dominated the understanding of the war, who Klamroth was also the first one to connect to the Maji movement.[65] This is the narrative that was later proliferated, first by Gilbert Gwassa,[66] and later by Jigal Beez,[67] but has now undergone considerable reevaluation. In Klamroths account, water (Maji) and invulnerability make their first appearance:

> Kolelo is said to have forbidden further payment of taxes to the white foreigners. In the middle of July [1905] a great flood would come and destroy all whites and their adherents; later the earth would open up and engulf them, from the guns of soldiers water but no bullets would come, seven lions would come and destroy the foreigners, "fear not, Kolelo spares his black children."[68]

Sunseri calls this interpretation, "the Ur-Majimaji tradition on which later interpretations were built."[69] Just like Monson, he emphasizes the involvement

---

62   Jamie Monson, "War of Words: The Narrative Efficacy of Medicine in the Maji Maji War," in *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog of War, African Social Studies Series 20,* ed. James Giblin and Jamie Monson, (Brill, 2010), 35.

63   Sunseri, "Majimaji and the Millenium," 372.

64   Karl Axenfeld, "Über Die Unruhen in Deutsch Ostafrika," *Berliner Missions-Berichte,* October 1905, 408. Translation by the author. Original:"*Die Unruhen in Maneromango hängen ebenso, wie die unter den Matumbi, mit einem stärkeren Wiederaufleben des Koleo (Kolelo)-Dienstes (Schlangenkult) zusammen* […]."

65   Sunseri, "Majimaji and the Millenium," 372–73.

66   Gilbert Clement Kamana Gwassa, *The Outbreak and Development of the Maji Maji War 1905 - 1907*, with the assistance of Wolfgang Apelt, InterCultura 5 (Rüdiger Köppe, 2005), Dar es Salaam, Univ., Diss., 1973.

67   Jigal Beez, *Geschosse Zu Wassertropfen*: *Sozio-Religiöse Aspekte Des Maji-Maji Krieges in Deutsch-Ostafrika (1905-1907),* (Rüdiger Köppe, 2003).

68   Martin Klamroth, "Beiträge zum Verständnis, " 140, cited in: Thaddeus Sunseri, "Majimaji and the Millenium," 373.

69   Sunseri, "Majimaji and the Millenium," 373.

of intermediaries in the creation of the narrative and states the influence it had on the interpretation of the colonial government as evident in the *Denkschrift über die Ursachen des Aufstandes in Deutsch-Ostafrika 1905*. But despite having the most influence on officials, it is noteworthy that the first mention of invulnerability in the *Missions-Berichte* did not come from Klamroth's reports but from his colleague Hermann Krelle at Maneromango station in Uzaramo:

> Koleo's servants need not fear; they could beat their enemies with sticks, for water would flow from the guns of the whites, and if heathens were really killed, they would be resurrected from the dead within a few days, with the power of the medicine with which the sorcerers wanted to anoint them.[70]

This report centers the apocalyptic and other religious tales of the "Koleokult" rather than its immediate effects on warfare. Unlike in the *Stadt Gottes*, the *Missions-Berichte* let the Maji movement appear fearful: "The fanaticism and fatalism with which the natives have plunged themselves into this revolt stem from their blind faith in the power of Koleo and the promises of his priests."[71] This reflects the character of Klamroth's examinations, the narrative changed with time, was revised, but was never one solely about war. While the war was certainly present in Uzaramo, it was not its main theatre, mostly due to preceding famine in the region.[72]

Until December 1905, almost half a year since the beginning of the war, the *Missions-Berichte* clung to the Koleo interpretation from Uzaramo, with some mentions of medicine and water in between. This only changed when reports from other regions of the colony slowly made their way to Berlin, hindered by the extensive fighting. The most important ones for the Berliner Mission came from their second area of proselytizing in Ubena, between Songea and Lake Malawi. Fighting was common in this region, and it is here that we see discourses about efficacy enter the consciousness of the missionaries and their audience. One report from Kidugala station is strongly reminiscent of the Boxer Uprising: "Since the enemy has seen that fire, not water, comes out of the guns, and many have already fallen, they spread a new lie. They say the fallen will come back to

---

70 Karl Axenfeld, "Der Ostafrikanische Aufstand," *Berliner Missions-Berichte*, November 1905, 463. Translation by the author. Original: "*Koleos Diener brauchten sich nicht zu fürchten, sie könnten ihre Feinde mit Stöcken schlagen, denn aus den Gewehren der Weißen werde Wasser hervorkommen, und wenn wirklich Heiden getötet werden sollten, so würden sie in einigen Tagen wieder auferstehen in Kraft der Medizin, mit der sie die Zauberer bestreichen wollten.*"

71 Ibid, 462. Translation by the author. Original: "*Aus dem blinden Glauben an die Macht Koleos und die Verheißungen seiner Priester stammt der Fanatismus und Fatalismus mit welchen die Eingeborenen in diesen Aufstand gestürzt sind.*"

72 Thaddeus Sunseri, "Famine and Wild Pigs: Gender Struggles and the Outbreak of the Majimaji War in Uzaramo (Tanzania)," *Journal of African History* 38 (1997): 255–256.

life, and so everyone fights with fanatical courage.ˮ[73] Again, talks about efficacy explicitly serve the myths of superstition, backwardness and danger. (In)efficacy was an important talking point for missionaries, as they used it to prove the truth of Christianity to their local allies, as the Superintendent of the Berlin Mission, Schumann explained in a report: "In front of everyone, I took my pocketknife and said: 'You who have used the medicine are invulnerable, aren't you? Even the tip of a spear breaks before it penetrates the flesh?' Then I took his arm and cut into it a little. When blood soon came out, all the blacks erupted in cheers."[74] The same report on the attacks on Yakobi station also mentions medicine and invulnerability in detail:

> The whites try to defend themselves with their rifles, but when they try to shoot, water comes out instead of a bullet. […] The most important thing in everything, however, was the new medicine that the Lord [*der Herr*, as in sovereign, not necessarily a god. The source is ambiguous in its terminology] brought. Whoever takes the medicine becomes invulnerable, both to bullets which turn into water and to spears that would meet a rock-hard body. The medicine is sprinkled onto the chest. […] Over time, the medicine became the main thing, and the new god became secondary. No one waited for him anymore, but countless medicine men appeared and brought the mysterious medicine. Whoever has taken the medicine becomes wild and brave; he cannot do anything else; he must wage war.[75]

This quote is evidence against Klamroth's Koleo narrative as the origin of the whole Maji narrative, as Sunseri claims. It points to large spatial differences in what missionaries observed, integrated into their ways of thinking and then

---

73   Karl Axenfeld, "Der Aufstand in Deutsch-Ostafrika," *Berliner Missions-Berichte*, December 1905, 508. Translation by the author. Original: "*Da die Feinde gesehen haben, daß nicht Wasser, sondern Feuer aus den Gewehren kommt, und schon viele gefallen sind, verbreiten sie eine neue Lüge. Sie sagen, die Gefallenen werden wieder lebendig, und so kämpft jeder mit fanatischem Mut.* "

74   *Berliner Missions-Berichte,* "Die Schreckenstage Auf Der Missionsstation Jakobi: Bericht Von Superintendent Schumann," February 1906, 67. Translation by the author. Original: "*Vor aller Augen nahm ich mein Taschenmesser und sagte: 'Ihr, die ihr die Medizin gebraucht habt, seid ja wohl unverwundbar? Sogar die Spitze eines Speers bricht eher, als daß sie ins Fleisch dringe?' Darauf nahm ich seinen Arm und schnitt etwas hinein. Als nun bald Blut kam, war bei allen Schwarzen der Jubel groß.* "

75   *Berliner Missions-Berichte,* "Die Schreckenstage auf der Missionsstation Jakobi," 63. Translation by the author. Original: "*Zwar versuchen die Weißen mit ihren Gewehren sich zu verteidigen, aber wenn sie schießen wollen, kommt statt der Kugel Wasser heraus. […] In allem die Hauptsache war aber die neue Medizin, die der Herr brachte. Wer die Medizin genommen hat, wird unverwundbar, sowohl für Kugeln der Gewehre, die sich in Wasser verwandelten, als auch für Speere, die einen steinharten Körper träfen. Die Medizin wird gegen die Brust gespritzt. […] Mit der Zeit wurde die Medizin die Hauptsache, und der neue Gott wurde die Nebensache. Auf diesen wartete keiner mehr, aber Medizinleute ohne Zahl tauchten auf und brachten die geheimnisvolle Arznei. Wer einmal die Medizin genommen hat, wird wild und tapfer, er kann nicht anders, er muß Krieg führen.* "

constructed the narratives out of. The narrative from Ubena seems to be a lot closer to the one that later became dominant. The problem is that the "War of Korosani," as the attack on the Yakobi mission station is locally known, is not considered to be a part of Majimaji in the recent historiography, but is rather attributed to local factors.[76] This was of course hard to differentiate for the missionaries on scene, Gröschel and Schumann. But even the Maji narrative becomes inconsistent as James Giblin explains:

> Similarly, we must doubt that the maji medicine played a part in the "War of Korosani." From Yakobi there is a striking lack of direct evidence for the use of new war medicine. Groschel may not have heard of new war medicine until after he evacuated Yakobi. We have seen, however, that the circumstances of the missionaries predisposed them to believe rumors of a new medicine.[77]

This form of Maji narrative which prominently appears here for the first time and in this specific space is not a local one like Koleo is to Uzaramo. It was diffused from other regions and then adapted by the Ubena missionaries. Schumann was not personally in Yakobi at the time like Gröschel, but in close by Lupembe, from where he corresponded with Gröschel. In his report from the 9th of September, before the evacuation of the station took place, Gröschel mentions that Schumann informed him about medicine: "Through Superintendent Schumann, Lupembe, we heard that the natives, who had previously been on the fence, but rebels as well, were becoming doubtful in their belief in their mysterious medicine, which was supposed to make them bullet- and stab-proof […]."[78] It is unclear whether this timeline contradicts James Giblin, or whether it falls into the rumors he mentions. With the sources from the Berlin Mission, I am unable to determine from what region this "Ubena-narrative" originated, but both local examples from Uzaramo and Ubena show a clear local and temporal differentiation in the construction of the narrative.

The interpretation of the conflict by missionaries was of a religious nature and framing from the beginning. In October of 1905, the *Missions-Berichte* made a clear point about the role paganism played in their perspective, in this challenge of the colonial order:

---

76   James Giblin, "Taking Oral Sources Beyond the Documentary Record of Maji Maji: The Example of the "War of Korosani" at Yakobi, Njombe," *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog of War, African Social Studies Series 20*, ed. James Giblin and Jamie Monson, (Brill, 2010), 260.

77   Ibid, 289.

78   *Berliner Missions-Berichte,* "Die Schreckenstage Auf Der Missionsstation Jakobi: Bericht Des Missionar Gröschel," February 1906, 84. Translation by the author. Original: "*Durch Superintendent Schumann, Lupembe, hörten wir, daß die Eingebornen, die bisher schwankend standen, aber auch wohl Aufständische, zweifelhaft werden im Glauben an ihre geheimnisvolle Medizin, die sie kugel- und stichsicher machen solle* […]."

We now draw attention to only two things. First, the role that the sorcerers with their Koleo (snake) cult and the drunkenness of the natives undoubtedly played in this rebellion. Here, therefore, not only socio-legal factors, but also, to a significant extent, religious-moral factors come into consideration. If paganism, as a religious power, constantly carries within itself the seeds of disobedience [*Unbotmäßigkeit*], then the government must work towards overcoming this paganism.[79]

In this, they used the conflict as an opportunity to advance their own goals and push the colonial administration towards recognizing the role the mission plays in the prevention of such challenges by using a clear dichotomy between superstitious and inherently dangerous heathens, versus good Christian subjects of the emperor. However, this is not merely an observation, but a deliberate construction of a narrative to aid the civilizing mission. It is of note, that through the years 1905 and 1906, the *Missions-Berichte* not once mentioned the term under which this war became popular: Majimaji. According to Sunseri, it in of itself was "a product of colonial-era publications rather than African oral testimony,"[80] that possibly first appeared in the *Denkschrift über die Ursachen des Aufstandes in Deutsch-Ostafrika 1905* by Governor Gustav Adolf von Götzen. While "water" had appeared throughout the missionary coverage of the event, the reverse translation into Kiswahili as "maji" was a political maneuver that von Götzen latest performed in his 1909 book *Deutsch-Ostafrika im Aufstand 1905/06*,[81] and that was equally designed to serve as a tool to other the Majimaji fighters.

Similarly to the Boxer Uprising, the construction of the narrative of Majimaji was a temporal process, as well as a very localized endeavor. Missionaries observed different variations of beliefs and rituals of medicinal use and invulnerability in different places, or simply constructed their narratives based on rumors. Contrary to the Boxer Uprising, the construction of narratives of Majimaji was not an international project, which makes the results of this part of the analysis more representative. Unlike the Steyler Mission, the Berliner Mission had its stations in more than one region affected by the conflicts subject to this paper. Again, the role of intermediaries, be they Mandarins or African

---

79   Karl Axenfeld, "Über die Unruhen in Deutsch Ostafrika," 412. "*Wir machen jetzt nur auf zweierlei aufmerksam. Nämlich zuerst auf die Rolle, welche die Zauberer mit dem Koleo (Schlangen) - Kult und die Trunksucht der Eingeborenen bei diesem Aufruhr unstreitig gespielt haben. Hier kommen also nicht nur rechtlich-soziale, sondern in hervorragendem Maß religiös-sittliche Faktoren in Betracht. Wenn das Heidentum als religiöse Macht die Keime der Unbotmäßigkeit dauern in sich trägt, so muß der Regierung daran gelegen sein, daß dieses Heidentum überwunden wird.* "

80   Sunseri, "Majimaji and the Millenium," 370.

81   Gustav Adolf Graf von Götzen, *Deutsch-Ostafrika Im Aufstand 1905/06,* (Dietrich Reimer, 1909), 42.

Christians was highlighted, although the missionaries in the African context did not make this as clear as those in China.

Conclusion: Comparing the Boxer Uprising and Majimaji

Both the Boxer Uprising and the Majimaji War are conflicts that have been characterized by narratives of magic, medicine, and invulnerability. Their construction was a complicated project, in which the missionary societies of the Steyler Mission and the Berliner Mission were not the only actors involved. In the case of the Boxer Uprising, the construction was an international effort, while in the case of the Majimaji War, the Colonial Administration was heavily involved. Constructions in both cases were heavily dependent on locality as well as temporality; it was a process. In China, this could be observed by the differences in terminology. Missionaries used names of organizations that were related to the Boxers but were fundamentally different in organizational structure. The reason for this was their interpretation of Anti-Christian incidents in Shandong province in 1898 and 1899, as well as the "proper" Boxer Uprising in Zhili province in 1899-1900, as *Christenverfolgungen*. The name große Messer, or Big Swords initially became the standard German term for the Boxers, despite referring to a different organization. It was only later replaced by the English term "Boxers," evidence of the international nature of the process. Missionaries portrayed the Boxers as superstitious due to their own preconceptions of Christianity as the true faith. In contrast to common narratives about the "Yellow Peril," to which the Boxer Uprising is generally regarded as a catalyst, Steyler missionaries rarely portrayed the Boxers as dangerous, possibly due to the distance that developed between them and the fighting as the conflict went on. Narratives of danger came solely from those missionaries close to the fighting. The analysis also revealed, that missionaries were heavily reliant on local intermediaries like mandarins, with which they shared a similar worldview about superstition.

In case of the Majimaji War, the construction of narratives was rather similar. Again, the process was characterized by local and temporal differences. The first narrative that developed was the tale of the god Koleo or Kolelo in Uzaramo. Due to its close proximity to the capital of Dar es Salaam it spread widely early on in the war and was thus widely publicized in the newspapers of the Berliner Mission. Ubena on the other hand, was not the origin of the later developing narrative of medicine, but it became the place from where it spread to the colonial metropole. The missionaries in Ubena heard rumors about medicinal use and created discourses about the inefficacy of the invulnerability it was supposed to create. This was done to secure local alliances and solidify their position and the position of Christianity in opposition to the perils they faced. In their narrative, the Maji movement was a lot more dangerous and displayed fanaticism; evidence of their close proximity to fighting which was probably not even related to Majimaji.

Their thought processes however were. While this happened only two months after the beginning of the war, due to the disconnectedness of the Ubena region, it took almost seven to eight months for this narrative to find its way to Germany and to the Missions-Berichte.

If the narratives of the Boxer uprising truly influenced later perceptions of Majimaji cannot be answered by this limited comparison of missionary writings. Despite their fundamental differences in location and circumstance, the narratives constructed by the Steyler Missionare and the Berliner Mission are very similar in their portrayals of magic, medicine and invulnerability in the context of colonial conflict. Their goals were similar, in that they used the conflicts as opportunities to justify their civilizing mission by dematerializing, dehistoricizing and depoliticizing the anticolonial opponents of the German Empire in these two specific cases, creating a picture of the "other" in separation of the "self."

Beyond just the German colonial context, the study of discourses on magic, medicine and invulnerability contexts of anticolonial resistance could be expanded onto different colonial contexts. As both cases examined in this study highlight, temporarily and locally highly differing phenomena of magic practice, medicinal use and invulnerability rituals connected to anticolonial resistance movements were amalgamated into a singular narrative. Especially the case of the Boxer Uprising has already briefly highlighted the globality of this narrative process beyond German actors. Further examples could shift this particular story beyond being a purely German one.

Leoleo and Fitafita.
Native Police as an Instrument and Challenge for Colonial Rule in German Samoa

ABSTRACT

In German colonialism, the rule of colonial difference aimed to establish a racial distinction between the colonizers and the colonized, thereby legitimizing and stabilizing colonial rule. Previous research has predominantly examined this phenomenon in the context of mixed marriages. However, this paper explores a different perspective by analyzing how the native police in German-Samoa collided with the rule of colonial difference and contemporary notions of what has been described in the literature as "salvage colonialism." As a key component of the exploitation system in the racially segregated colony, the somewhat autonomous native law enforcement system was inevitably bound to interact with racial conflicts. This paper argues that this rather unique institution within German colonialism operated as an instrument of colonial rule and simultaneously posed a threat to the racial hierarchization within and beyond the Pacific colony. Discussing the Samoan police as a specific challenge for the rule of colonial difference can therefore serve as an analytical probe to flesh out the internal, practical, and ideological contradictions within German colonialism.

BY

Leon Blohm

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leon Blohm holds a BA in History and Philosophy from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where he also co-founded the student journal Die junge Mommsen. After stints at the University of Edinburgh and National Taiwan University, he is currently completing his MA in Global History at Freie Universität Berlin. His research focuses are the history of German colonialism in China and the Pacific, as well as (post)colonial migration history. He is currently preparing a research project on migrant anticolonialism in Berlin during the Weimar Republic.

The German colonial administration in Samoa (1900–1914) pursued a violent divide-and-rule strategy to exploit and control the profits of the islands' plantation economy. To this end, Samoans along with imported Melanesian and Chinese laborers were racially segregated from one another to prevent cross-racial solidarity.[1] For the important disciplinary component of this system, which frequently included flogging and solitary confinement, the colonial administration relied heavily on the use of Samoan policemen, supervised only by a German chief of police and, later, a few German assistants.[2] In a racially segregated colony, however, the somewhat autonomous native law enforcement system was inevitably bound to interact with racial conflicts. Moreover, the special position of native policemen as law enforcers potentially threatened the racial hierarchy of the colony and in the German Empire as a whole, especially when police officers used force against white planters.

The German "rule of colonial difference" aimed at a racial demarcation between colonizers and colonized to legitimize and stabilize colonial rule.[3] The most prominent challenges to racial segregation were intermarriages and the children born of interracial unions, often called "half-casts," which have received much attention by researchers of German colonialism to date.[4] In recent years, there has also been a growing research interest in the category of local intermediaries, who were often indigenous people on whom the colonial state relied, such as translators. Linked to the figure of the frontiersman in the

---

1 Holger Droessler, *Coconut Colonialism: Workers and the Globalization of Samoa* (Harvard University Press, 2022), 169.

2 Hermann Joseph Hiery, "Die Polizei im deutschen Samoa: Deutsche Hoffnungen und samoanische Erwartungen," in *Barrieren und Zugänge: Die Geschichte der europäischen Expansion. Festschrift für Eberhard Schmitt zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Thomas Beck (Harrassowitz, 2004), 270.

3 Frank Becker, "Einleitung: Kolonialherrschaft und Rassenpolitik," in *Rassenmischehen, Mischlinge, Rassentrennung: Zur Politik der Rasse im deutschen Kolonialreich*, ed. Frank Becker, *Beiträge zur Europäischen Überseegeschichte*, Bd. 90 (Steiner, 2004), 14. The "rule of colonial difference" as a concept was first coined by Partha Chatterjee for the context of British colonialism in India. As a central concern of colonial discourse across empires, it is useful to utilize the concept to shed light on the demarcation between colonizer and colonized regarding German colonialism and Samoa. Partha Chatterjee, "The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories," *Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, History* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 16. For a utilization of this concept to the German empire see Minu Haschemi Yekani, *Koloniale Arbeit: Rassismus, Migration und Herrschaft in Tansania (1885-1914)* (Campus Verlag, 2019), 18.

4 For the discussion on "intermarriage" and "half-casts" in the context of Samoa Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, "The Samoan Women's Revolt: Race, Intermarriage and Imperial Hierarchy in German Samoa," *German History* 35, no. 2 (2017): 206–28, also Roland Samulski, "Die ‚Sünde' im Auge des Betrachters: Rassenmischung und deutsche Rassenpolitik im Schutzgebiet Samoa 1900 bis 1914," in *Rassenmischehen, Mischlinge, Rassentrennung: Zur Politik der Rasse im deutschen Kolonialreich*, ed. Frank Becker*, Beiträge zur Europäischen Überseegeschichte,* Bd. 90 (Steiner, 2004); Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, "The Threat of 'Woolly-Haired Grandchildren:' Race, the Colonial Family and German Nationalism," in "The Domestic Frontier: European Colonialism, Nationalism and the Family," *The History of the Family*, 14, no. 4 (October 26, 2009): 356–68.

European imagination, their existence "in between" blurred the boundary between colonizer and colonized.[5] Unlike translators, however, the specific challenge posed by indigenous police officers to the rule of colonial difference has hardly been considered in this discussion so far.

In historical research on German colonialism, which has tended to neglect the Pacific in comparison to other German colonies,[6] the studies on the Samoan police can be counted on one hand. The only more detailed discussion of the interaction of Samoan policemen with the underlying system of racial segregation in Samoa was recently presented by Holger Droessler.[7] His approach of analyzing the policemen's practices in relation to the underlying racial conflicts in Samoa is useful in contextualizing the deployment of native policemen as an instrument of colonial rule. However, Droessler is not interested in linking the police's entanglement in Samoa's social hierarchy to broader colonial discourses about racial hierarchies in the German Empire.[8]

This paper therefore examines how the Samoan policemen operated as an instrument of colonial rule and in what ways this institution then posed a challenge to the racialized social hierarchy of German colonialism within and beyond Samoa as a result.[9] Discussing the Samoan police as a specific problem for the social order in Samoa can thus contribute to a better understanding of the German ambitions for colonial domination and exploitation in Samoa. At the same time, the interaction between colonial discourse and the practices of this unique institution of indigenous law enforcement in German colonialism can serve as an analytical probe for the study of racist fear fantasies in the multi-ethnic German Empire.

---

5   Ulrike Schaper, "David Meetom: Interpreting, Power and the Risks of Intermediation in the Initial Phase of German Colonial Rule in Cameroon," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 44, no. 5 (2016): 752–76.

6   Sebastian Conrad, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte* (C.H. Beck, 2019), 10.

7   Droessler focuses more on the similar native police force in East-Samoa under US-dominion, although he also addresses German-Samoa. Droessler, *Coconut Colonialism*, 165–70.

8   Following Edward Said's approach to Orientalism as discourse, colonial and racial "discourse" is understood here in a broad sense, not limited to a particular group of professionals or intellectuals, but rather defined by its openness to a wide range of actors who had the power to influence the discourse. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Routledge, 1978). For the utilization of Said's Orientalism paradigm in the context of Samoa, George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 24.

9   The plea for an integrative research approach that analyzes colony and metropole as a whole was initially made by Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World,* ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (University of California Press, 1997).

The article is divided into two parts. First, the establishment of the two different police institutions, the *leoleo* and *fitafita*, will be contextualized in a wider discussion about German rule in Samoa as "salvage colonialism." Second, the delicate enforcement of German authority by Samoan policemen will be examined in different selected cases, ranging from the punishment of workers up to the arrest of white planters. The study draws on material from German archives, printed sources and selected newspaper articles from both the metropolis and the island colony.

Native Policy and Native Police

Wilhelm Solf, the former chairman of the German-British-American tridominion prior to 1900 in Samoa, and first Governor of the Pacific colony from the official beginning of German colonial rule in 1900, proudly presented his colonial government as a protector of indigenous rights and traditions.[10] In 1901, Solf declared to a group of Samoans that the German government wishes them not to be ruled, "according to white man's ideas [sic], but according to the Faa Samoa,"[11] the Samoan custom. Erich Schultz-Ewerth, Solf's protégé and successor, described the German rule as the, "preservation of the Samoan's customs and mores and their peculiar character per se."[12] This approach was related to contemporary observations of declining populations of so called *Naturvölker* throughout the Pacific. In colonial discourse, *Naturvölker*, as in the case of the Samoans, were usually understood as "still" living in a state of nature and whose existence was now becoming endangered through contact with modernity brought to them by *Kulturvölker*, like the Germans.[13] The idea of "salvaging" the Samoan people and their culture through colonial rule from this looming path to extinction had already been raised by some German writers in the proto-colonial era,[14] such as Augustin Krämer, who had idealized

---

10   For an overview of Solf's rule as governor in Samoa. Eberhard von Vietsch, *Wilhelm Solf: Botschafter Zwischen Den Zeiten* (Wunderlich, 1961), 59–102.

11   "Savai'i Fono, Minutes of Fono Held in Savai'i during Malaga," July 1901, BA Berlin, R 1001/3061, 57. Like in most communication with Samoans, Solf held the speech in English.

12   Schulz to Osbahr, March 8 1914, NZNA AGCA VI 28, 61, as cited in Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*, 319.

13   Conrad, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte*, 32. For an extensive overview of the terms "Naturvolk" and "Kulturvolk," see Klaus Grotsch, "Naturvölker/Kulturvölker," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie online* (Schwabe Verlag, 2017), https://doi.org/10.24894/HWPh.2703.

14   "Proto-colonial" refers to the time period since when Euro-American colonizers where encroaching Samoa, but before it got the official status of a colony in 1900. Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*, 324.

his exoticizing perception of Samoan culture during his travels to the islands.[15] To describe this specific colonial ideology and practice of rule, the historian George Steinmetz has coined the analytical term "salvage colonialism," which has often been used in historical research on Samoa since its introduction.[16]

Solf's approach of salvage colonialism had substantial consequences that produced a distinct native policy in Samoa compared to other German.[17] One of Solf's first actions as governor was to repatriate the exiled Mata'afa Josepho, who had fought against the German-supported faction during the proto-colonial era,[18] and inaugurate him as *ali'i sili* (often translated as "paramount chief") of Samoa. However, he was forbidden to hold the title of *tupu* (often translated as "king"). In addition, unlike in most other German colonies, Solf refrained from imposing forced labor on Samoans and strictly prohibited the use of flogging against them.[19]

In contrast with the more violent policy toward natives in other colonies, the native policy in Samoa has therefore led some historians to interpret it as simple preservationism, taking the contemporary rhetoric of salvage colonialism at face value.[20] This interpretation may underestimate the colonial hierarchy that Solf aimed to establish—not despite his concessions to *fa'a Samoa*, but through them. By seizing control over which benign traditions could remain intact, which were to be modified or reinterpreted, and which, like the title of *tupu*, were to be abolished altogether, Solf created a system of

---

15 Augustin Krämer, *Hawaii, Ostmikronesien und Samoa: Meine zweite Südseereise (1897-1899) zum Studium der Atolle und ihrer Bewohner* (Strecker & Schröder, 1906); Augustin Krämer, *Die Samoa-Inseln: Entwurf einer Monographie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Deutsch-Samoas* (Schweizerbart, 1902); also Otto E. Ehlers, *Samoa, die Perle der Südsee* (Paetel, 1895).

16 George Steinmetz, "The Uncontrollable Afterlives of Ethnography: Lessons from 'Salvage Colonialism' in the German Overseas Empire," *Ethnography* 5, no. 3 (2004): 264.

17 Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*, 321.

18 Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule*, 17f.

19 For a detailed discussion of Solf's concessions toward Samoan traditions and the meaning of certain titles, Ibid., 319–30.

20 The most prominent advocate of this branch of research is the German historian Hermann Hiery. For his interpretation as preservationist especially Hermann Joseph Hiery, *Das Deutsche Reich in Der Südsee: (1900-1921). Eine Annäherung an Die Erfahrungen Verschiedener Kulturen* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 312. In that book, Hiery follows the typical practice of colonial ethnographers to start with geography, flora and fauna before turning to humans. Ibid., 5. Also Hermann Joseph Hiery, ed., *Die deutsche Südsee: 1884-1914: Ein Handbuch* (Schöningh, 2001); Horst Gründer and Hermann Joseph Hiery, *Die Deutschen und ihre Kolonien: Ein Überblick*, 3rd ed. (be.bra Verlag, 2022), 112. John Moses comes to a similar conclusion, precisely that the colonial officials, "had determined that Samoa was to be administered primarily for Samoans, not the planters and traders." John A. Moses, "The Coolie Labour Question and German Colonial Policy in Samoa, 1900–1914," *The Journal of Pacific History* 8, no. 1 (1973): 101. For an early critic of this interpretation see Corinna Erckenbrecht, "Die Wissenschaftliche Aufarbeitung Der Deutschen Kolonialzeit in Der Südsee. Kritische Bemerkungen Zum Handbuch 'Die Deutsche Südsee, 1884–1914,'" *Anthropos* 97, no. 1 (2002): 163–79.

rule that promised less resistance and more authority than the more violent and weaponized colonial rule of his "predecessors" in the proto-colonial era.

In a more recent approach, the historian George Steinmetz has outlined a multilayered account of native policy in Samoa, placing its practices on an axis between "regulated custom" and "colonialism nonetheless."[21] However, by highlighting the ways in which the colonial government used traditionalism, sometimes with inventive ingenuity,[22] as a means of its own rule, Steinmetz's differentiation of salvage colonialism still discusses the degree to which this ideology was actually implemented in reality. In accordance with the aims of this study, namely examining the reciprocal effects between native police and racial hierarchy in colonial Samoa, salvage colonialism is more useful as necessary historical context when returning to the level of sources, even though the term itself was never used by contemporaries. In this way, it is not primarily seen as a possible interpretation or even normative judgment of native policy by the historian, but rather as a very central contemporary concept of thought, an idealized version of the actual rule in the minds of many different historical actors, which was used to make sense of, approve of, or resist the specific form of colonial rule in Samoa.

Contemporary references to Solf's policy as salvage colonialism in all their nuances are particularly central and useful for contextualization for two reasons: first, the integration of native policemen into colonial rule was inextricably linked to the general interpretation of Solf's government style as concessive towards the Samoans in accounts by historical actors; second, the underlying discursive juxtaposition of *Naturvölker* versus *Kulturvölker,* with the "salvation" of the Samoan "noble savage"[23] as a goal of colonization, contained a powerful differentiation of racialized groups in Samoa that deeply affected the practices of native policemen and could also be instrumentalized by others to protest against them.

---

21 Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*, 322. Recently, Matthew P. Fitzpatrick even tried to completely overturn the interpretation of Samoa as a comparatively peaceful colony and to point out the oppressive character of the colonial administration as having a high, though dormant potential for violence. According to him, the extent of anti-colonial resistance, particularly among the youth in Samoa, has also been underestimated so far. Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, "'Renegade' Resistance and Colonial Rule in German Samoa," *The Journal of Pacific History* 58, no. 4 (October 2, 2023): 325–47.

22 At least a certain amount of *lavalavas,* the "traditional" Samoan clothing, was manufactured in Germany. See also, Solf to Hunter, Apia, July 20, 1900, in Arthur J. Knoll, ed., *The German Colonial Experience: Select Documents on German Rule in Africa, China, and the Pacific 1884 - 1914* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2010), 89f.

23 A good example of the construction of the "noble savage" or *Edler Wilder* in the case of Samoa is Franz Albert, *Mataafa, der Held von Samoa* (Kreuz und Charitas, 1906).

The German colonial administration did not establish a *Schutztruppe* (colonial troops) in any of the Pacific colonies, nor did it station a regular marines corps permanently in those territories. Only in New Guinea and in other parts of Melanesia and Micronesia under German colonial control was there a larger number of so-called police-soldiers, who were frequently deployed for punitive and sometimes deadly expeditions.[24]

Initially, Samoa had only a small native police force (*leoleo*) stationed in Apia under the command of police officer Hugo Dietrich. As part of Solf's efforts to pacify the once armed conflicts on the islands, one of his first actions in office was to buy up all firearms owned by Samoans.[25] The few native policemen, who had been cautiously rearmed under German command between 1900 and 1914, were considered sufficient to maintain law and order in the colony.[26] In 1902, out of a budget for ten regular native policemen, only seven men were named on the payroll.[27] Apart from the enforcement of law in the colony against criminal offenses and misdemeanors, one of the most important tasks of the *leoleo* was to guard the prison in Apia.[28] As a condition of their appointment, they had to be fluent in English, which still remained the lingua franca in Samoa. They also had to pledge obedience to a code of conduct that reflected the administration's anxiety about potential conflicts, regulating that: "When dealing with the public, police officers are to behave in a courteous manner and avoid harshness that is not necessary for maintaining authority."[29] Often confused or equated with the *leoleo* in historiography, the *fitafita* were an altogether different native police corp.[30]

---

24   Heinrich Schnee, *Bilder aus der Südsee: Unter den kannibalischen Stämmen des Bismarck-Archipels* (Reimer, 1904), 57. For a detailed report of several punishment expeditions using native police-soldiers in Melanesia, Ernst von Hesse-Wartegg, *Samoa, Bismarckarchipel und Neuguinea: Drei deutsche Kolonien in der Südsee* (Weber, 1902).

25   Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*, 339.

26   However, this did not mean that concerns about the outbreak of violent uprisings within the colonial administration were over. However, in view of the military inferiority of the few German colonialists in Samoa in such a situation, Solf and his successor Schultz were determined to prevent violence before it broke out as much as possible.

27   The names were Nimo, Tatopau, Lotoma, Toloai, Malati, Laumatia, and Papalii. Hiery, "Polizei im deutschen Samoa," 265.

28   Hiery, "Polizei im deutschen Samoa," 268.

29   Geschäftsanweisung für den Poizeivorsteher und Polizeiassistenten, Apia, 01.08.1903, cited after: Ibid. If not said otherwise, all quotes are translated by the author. Original: "*Im Verkehr mit dem Publikum haben sich die Polizeibeamten eines höflichen Verhaltens zu befleissigen und Härten, die zur Aufrechterhaltung der Autorität nicht nothwendig sind, zu vermeiden.*"

30   Steinmetz speaks only of a "handful of native policemen (fitafitas)" and does not mention the *leoleo* at any point in his book on native policy. Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*, 328. Hiery correctly distinguishes the *leoleo* and *fitafita* in his article on police in Samoa from 2004. In his handbook published earlier in 2001 however, he misinterpreted the *fitafita* as *the* police in Samoa and sees the *leoleo* only as a mere *Dorfgendarm.* Hiery, "Polizei im deutschen Samoa;" Hiery, *Die deutsche Südsee*, 654.

Although Mata'afa agreed to cooperate with the colonial government in 1900, his attitude toward German rule remained ambiguous. He always sought to use what might be called an "agency in tight corners" to expand Samoan influence within the administration.[31] As early as 1900, he tried to persuade Solf to establish his own honor guard, which would be equivalent to his new position as *ali'i sili.* As a compromise, Solf agreed to establish such a corps, called *fitafita* (lit. "soldier"), but as a guard in his own service.[32] Of the 52 men hand-picked by Mata'faa to represent the districts of Samoa, 30 were eventually certified by government physician Bernhard Funk as meeting the requirements to join the *fitafita*. They were mostly sons of high-ranking *matai* and/or often so called "half-casts,"[33] children of both Samoan and European descent.[34] After their official inauguration on December 1, 1900, they received free rations and a salary of five dollars per month with the possibility of promotion.[35] Hermann Eckenweber was appointed as head of the corps or *taitai fitafita*, with the Samoan Tuaifaiva as sergeant.[36] Unlike the *leoleo*, the *fitafita* had de-jure no authority to enforce law, although de-facto they were often called for support by planters and colonial officers to discipline workers. The only regular duty officially assigned to them other than guarding was to deliver important mail. Other forms of physical labor were not assigned to them out of respect for their high status in Samoan society.[37] Despite the differences between *leoleo* and *fitafita* in form and practice, their institutions were informally linked. New *leoleo* members were usually recruited from among the *fitafita*, who had already worked with the German administration for several years and had proven themselves to be loyal, fluent in English, and trustworthy enough to become law enforcers. In this way, the *fitafita* served like a recruitment office for the *leoleo*, who thus shared a similar social structure of high-ranking Samoans.[38]

---

31 The phrase "agency in tight corners" is borrowed from John Lonsdale, "Editorial: Agency in Tight Corners: Narrative and Initiative in African History," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 13, no. 1 (2000): 6.

32 Hiery, "Polizei im deutschen Samoa," 269.

33 German sources sometimes referred to children of both Samoan and Euro-American ancestry as "Mischlinge," but more often used the English term.

34 German planter Fanz Reinecke also refers to policemen as "meist Halfcasts." Franz Reinecke, *Über die Nutzpflanzen Samoas und ihre Verwendung: Sitzung der Section für Obst- und Gartenbau vom 23. September 1895* (Barth, 1903), 251.

35 For their uniforms, Solf chose an almost identical outfit to that the British used for their colonial troops in Fiji. See also Thomas Morlang, *Askari Und Fitafita: "Farbige" Söldner in Den Deutschen Kolonien* (Christoph Links Verlag, 2008), 129.

36 *Das deutsche Schutzgebiet Samoa: Allgemeine Auskunft und Adressbuch 1903* (Apia: Luebke, 1903), 17, http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/dsdk/9020409.

37 Hiery, "Polizei im deutschen Samoa," 270. For the use of *fitafita* to discipline workers see chapter 2.1.

38 Ibid., 271.

In 1901, Mata'afa, who wanted the *fitafita* to become a unit capable of serving as a military force, called for Solf to expand the corps to 100 men, but his demands fell on deaf ears, ostensibly for cost reasons. Confidentially, Solf and other German officials worried about the potential danger of such a force to German rule, with one eye on the uncertainty that could follow the death of the loyal but aging Mata'afa.[39] Nonetheless, the *fitafita* were considered a very useful and reliable vehicle for native policy. In 1909, Vice-Admiral Carl von Coerper, head of the East Asia Squadron, wrote euphorically to the emperor:

They have developed an excellent esprit de corps, and their military bearing, zeal for duty, and conduct are impeccable. The Fita-Fita troop is one of the best means of popularizing Germanness [*Deutschtum*]; it helps better than anything else to familiarize the youth with the German spirit and accustom them to fulfilling their duties.[40]

In view of their alleged deep integration within the traditional web of meaning in Samoa, Hiery has interpreted the *fitafita* as a "sanctuary" for the "traditional, hierarchically structured, and oligarchic-male-shaped Samoa."[41] However, the quote by Coerper reflects the ambiguity of native policy, caught between the rhetoric of salvage colonialism as a concession to Samoan tradition and the strategic use of "traditionalism" as a tool in this case to spread "Germanness" in the world. The latter aim was not to be achieved by leaving traditions untouched, but on the contrary, by educating and transforming Samoans according to German interests. I argue, therefore, that the *fitafita* should be seen less as a kind of "sanctuary" for tradition than as an institutional tool of native policy designed to mediate its desired transformative effects on Samoan culture. In the context of this function, the behaviour and physical appearance of the police corps was symbolically charged, which exemplified the potential reach of this strategy within certain "racial limits." To what extent were Samoans deemed to be transformable? Lieutenant Reisner, who commanded the corps for a time, noted in a memorandum:

Tall and well-built, the Samoan has the appearance of a strapping, muscular soldier of whom the 1st Guard Regiment would not have to be ashamed of. […] It is a pleasure to be able to observe these neat brown sons of the South Seas in their service [...]. The intelligence of the Samoan, which in my

---

39 During the uprising lead by Lauaki in 1909, Solf ordered the German police commissioner to secretly remove all firing pins from *fitafita* rifles. Droessler, *Coconut Colonialism*, 167.

40 "Carl von Coeper to Wilhelm II," May 16, 1909, BA Berlin, R 1001/2673, 38. Original: "Es hat sich bei ihnen ein ausgezeichneter Korpsgeist herausgebildet, ihre militärische Haltung, ihr Diensteifer und ihr Benehmen sind tadellos. Die Fita-Fita Truppe ist eins der besten Mittel zur Popularisierung des Deutschtums, sie hilft besser als irgend etwas anderes, die heranwachsende Jugend mit deutschem Wesen vertraut zu machen und sie an Pflichterfüllung zu gewöhnen."

41 Hiery, "Polizei im deutschen Samoa," 270.

opinion far surpasses that of our average Polacks [*Durchschnittspolacken*], as well as the agility of his body, enable very rapid training in the various branches of service.[42]

Reisner's paternalization of the Samoans as "brown sons of the South Sea" echoes the topos of the "noble savage" Polynesian in Coerper's statement and illustrates his characterization with racialized features of body and mind. With the comparison to the Polish minority in the metropole, he further integrates the "noble" Samoan into a discourse on racial hierarchy within the empire, with which he could expect his readership to be familiar. Reisner goes further, however, and sets limits to the cultural development of these "*Naturmenschen*"*("Natural people")*:

> Unfortunately, upon closer examination, their suitability for service in the domestic army is very doubtful. […] In an emergency, however, the Samoans would fail primarily due to a lack of sense of duty; added to this is an inherent timidity, which I have often had occasion to observe. For these reasons, I consider the Samoan unsuitable for service in the domestic army.[43]

The strategic element of the native policy to transform Samoans, as exemplified by the *fitafita,* had clear boundaries. It was neither meant to "Germanize" the Samoans themselves nor elevate them to an equal level within the racial hierarchy. Instead, it aimed to let them get used to German rule and behave according to German interests as paternalized subordinates.

Although actors such as Solf, Coerper, and Reisner viewed the *fitafita* as a useful tool for their native policy, the corps was nevertheless a unique institution within German colonialism, as it was the only armed native corps that was interpreted by many contemporaries as a concession to indigenous traditions. This ambiguity was a key factor in the impact of native policemen's law enforcement on the complexly structured racial conflicts within the island colony.

---

42   Reisner, "Bericht Über Eine Eventuelle Verwendung Der Fitafita's in Der Heimischen Armee," n.d., BA Berlin, R1001/3063, 87f. Original: "*Groß und schön gebaut hat der Samoaner die Erscheinung eines strammen und muskulösen Soldaten, dessen sich das. 1. Garderegiment nicht zu schämen bräuchte. […] Es ist eine Freude diese adretten braunen Söhne der Südsee in ihrem Dienst beobachten zu können […]. Die Intelligenz der Samoaner, die meines Erachtens, die unserer Durchschnittspolacken [sic] bei weitem überragt, sowie die Gelenkigkeit seines Körpers ermöglichen eine sehr schnelle Ausbildung in den verschiedenen Dienstzweige.*"

43   Ibid., 88. Original: "*Leider ist ihre Tauglichkeit für den Dienst in der heimischen Armee bei näherem Studieren sehr anzuzweifeln. […] An Ernstfalle dagegen würden die Samoaner vor allem durch Mangel an Pflichtgefühl versagen; dazu kommt eine ihm anhaftende Furchtsamkeit, die ich häufig zu beobachten Gelegenheit halte. Aus diesen Gründen halte ich den Samoaner für den Dienst in der heimischen Armee für unbrauchbar.*"

Native Law Enforcement

The powerful *Handels- und Plantagen-Gesellschaft der Südsee-Inseln zu Hamburg (DHPG)*, the colonial government, and especially the private planters on small plantations saw the supply of labor to the colony as the main problem for economic development.[44] The *DHPG* had already begun to source labor from Melanesia in the proto-colonial era, mainly from the Gilbert Islands, New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands.[45] In the years after 1900, they were able to establish a monopoly on work contracts with Melanesians for their expanding plantations, resulting in over a thousand Melanesian workers arriving in Samoa by 1914.[46] Private planters also relied heavily on imported labor, but had to look elsewhere. Samoans were not considered for large-scale employment because, as many planters put it, their "natural state of life" would make them lazy, unreliable, and unfit for heavy labor. Eventually, planters turned to workers from China, which had a long history of labor export in the Pacific.[47] Plantation owners and colonial officials used a strategy of racializing workers to prevent solidarity or resistance among different groups of workers and to legitimize brutal disciplinary measures against them, involving flogging and solitary confinement.[48] As planter Frieda Zieschank noted in her memorandum:

> Black people are almost always harmless, good-natured (sometimes naughty) children. Their intelligence is limited, but they are usually loyal to their white masters. […] The one who can yell at them the loudest is the highest master. […] The Chinese are generally excellent workers and very intelligent. […] The Chinese respect quiet, serious dignity most of all. […] The coolie needs strictness, but unconditional fairness in treatment.[49]

Jürgen Schmidt's interpretation that there was "the same suspicion, antipathy, and racist ignorance" fostered by German planters toward both Melanesian and Chinese workers does not quite fit with Zieschank's position

---

44   Droessler, *Coconut Colonialism*, 60. See also Moses, "The Coolie Labour Question," 101.

45   Droessler, *Coconut Colonialism*, 60.

46   According to planter Frieda Zieschank, the *DHPG* had always 800-900 Melanesians ("black boys") employed. Frieda Zieschank, *Ein Jahrzehnt in Samoa (1906-1916)* (Haberland, 1918), 98.

47   Sebastian Conrad, "'Kulis' nach Preußen? Mobilität, chinesische Arbeiter und das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1890-1914," *Comparativ* 13, no. 4 (2003): 91.

48   Droessler, *Coconut Colonialism*, 169.

49   Zieschank, *Ein Jahrzent in Samoa*, 100. Original: "*Die Schwarzen sind fast durchweg harmlose, gutmütige (manchmal auch ungezogene) Kinder. Ihre Intelligenz ist beschränkt, aber sie sind meist ihren weißen Herrn treu ergeben. […] Wer sie am stärksten anbrüllen kann, ist höchster Herr. […] Die Chinesen sind im allgemeinen vorzügliche Arbeiter und sehr intelligent. […] Der Chinese respektiert am meisten ruhige ernste Würde. […] Der Kuli braucht Strenge, aber unbedingte Gerechtigkeit in der Behandlung.*"

in this quoted passage.[50] Rather, it shows how a more complex racial hierarchization in Samoa could unfold with momentous but very different consequences for workers. In maintaining the disciplinary regime of this racially segregated, exploitative plantation economy, planters frequently relied on the support by Samoan *leoleo*, especially when dealing with the frequent cases of worker escapes.

Workers

With the arrival of the first Chinese contract laborers in 1903, the jurisdiction of the *leoleo* was extended from the district of Apia to the entire island of Upolu.[51] In a regulation regarding the Chinese laborers, Solf's government declared, among other things that, "Workers found outside their workplace after this time [9 p.m.] are to be arrested by the police unless the reason for their prolonged absence is noted."[52]

The control of the Chinese workers became one of the main tasks of the *leoleo*, whose ranks were soon doubled to 20 in 1903, followed by further increases in the subsequent years.[53] The colonial administration kept a register of Chinese workers that gives an idea of the frequency of runaways from the workplace, although the documentation from this period overlaps with that of the New Zealand Administration after 1914. Over the course of 19 years, 847 cases were recorded.[54] The most common descriptors listed in the register were "returned to plantation," "fishing in the seaside," "arrested by policeman," "arrested by natives in the bush in Malua," "came to Chinese Commissioner's Office," and "sentenced for disobedience."[55] The deployments of *leoleo* and in many cases even *fitafita* to discipline workers were not rare, but were in fact central for the modus operandi of the disciplinary system in Samoa.

Apart from the punishment carried out directly by the plantation owners, any violation of the above regulation was typically enforced by native policemen.

---

50   Jürgen Schmidt, "Arbeit Und Nicht-Arbeit Im 'Paradies Der Südsee:' Samoa Um 1890 Bis 1914," *Arbeit-Bewegung-Geschichte. Zeitschrift Für Historische Studien* 15 (2016): 22.

51   Holger Droessler, "How Chinese Migrant Workers Resisted Coconut Colonialism in Samoa," *Asia-Pacific Journal* 20 (2022): 3. See also Hiery, "Polizei im deutschen Samoa," 268.

52   "Verordnung Des Gouverneurs von Samoa, Betreffend Die Chinesischen Arbeiter," January 6, 1912, R1001/5588, 47. The regulation from 1912 replaced similar regulation on Chinese laborers, dating back to 1903. Original: *"Arbeiter die nach dieser Zeit [9pm] außerhalb ihres Arbeitsplatzes angetroffen werden, sind von der Polizei festzunehmen, falls sie nicht auf dem Zweck des längeren Ausbleibens vermerkt ist."*

53   Hiery, "Polizei im deutschen Samoa," 268.

54   "Register, German Chinese Commissioner, 1913–1932," ANZ Wellington, SAMOA-BMO Series 2, box 3, item 12, cited after: Droessler, *Coconut Colonialism*, 84.

55   Ibid., 85.

A report in the *Samoanische Zeitung*, Samoa's only newspaper, dated July 27, 1907, details fights among Chinese workers far from their work sites. The article reported the planter's call for assistance from Samoan policemen and lamented the planters' "inability to keep track of their employees." According to the article, the policemen then came and settled the conflict.[56] Another article in the *Samoanische Zeitung* reported the arrest of multiple Chinese workers by *leoleo* in 1914.[57] Yet another article reported a fire alarm that was sounded by a *leoleo* on May 15, 1914. When other *leoleo* arrived at the location of the fire, they "first thought, a Chinese gambler's hub [*Spielernest*] was about to be raided," which suggests such action was not uncommon practice for the *leoleo*.[58] According to historian Ben Featuna'i Liua'ana, many Chinese workers feared imprisonment "as a judgement of hell" because of the "well-known" brutality of Samoan policemen.[59]

In what way did the use of *leoleo* against the Chinese workers interact with racial conflict? After 1900, many Samoans soon began to oppose the immigration of Chinese laborers, opening a conflict that was interpreted in racial terms and fueled by two main factors: firstly, the wage pressures of large-scale labor immigration did not go unnoticed by Samoans. In addition, some Samoan *matai* feared that the arrival of Chinese laborers might threaten their position in the islands' hierarchy.[60] Secondly, the status of underprivileged Chinese workers in relation to native Samoans violated the Chinese self-image of an ancient *Kulturvolk* as superior to the islanders. A book published by the Planter's Association commented on this sentiment, "The Chinese coolie, the ambitious and hard-working field laborer, the bearer of an ancient culture, is mistakenly placed below the native in social status, who also in his eyes is a wild and lazy slacker [*Faulpelz*]."[61] The author's implicit agreement with this perception ("mistakenly," "*also* in his eyes") is followed by an even more explicit statement "In this regard, too, it is therefore essential to demand that the Samoans be brought down a little from their position of superiority [*Herrenstandpunkt*], for it must be absolutely unacceptable to relax discipline

56   *Samoanische Zeitschrift*, July 27, 1907, 1.

57   *Samoanische Zeitschrift*, March 28, 1914, 2.

58   *Samoanische Zeitschrift*, May 23, 1914, 2.

59   Ben Featuna'i Liua'ana, "Dragons in Little Paradise: Chinese (Mis-) Fortunes in Samoa, 1900–1950," *The Journal of Pacific History* 32, no. 1 (June 1, 1997): 38.

60   Franz von Tyszka, *Dr. Solf und Samoa: Politisch-wirtschaftliche Skizze* (Berlin: Deutscher Kolonial-Verlag, 1904), 31. For the Samoan-Chinese conflict see Droessler, *Coconut Colonialism*, 168. See also Morlang, *Askari Und Fitafita: "Farbige" Söldner in Den Deutschen Kolonien*, 136.

61   Pflanzerverein, ed., *Pflanzungs-Betriebe auf Samoa: Auskunft über das Schutzgebiet* (Köln: DuMont Schauberg, 1910), 19. Original: "*Der chinesische Kuli, der strebsame und fleißige Feldarbeiter, der Träger einer alten Kultur, steht seiner sozialen Stellung nach fälschlicherweise unter dem Eingeborenen, der auch in seinen Augen ein wilder und träger Faulpelz ist.*"

among the Chinese coolies even more than has been the case up to now."[62]

Here, too, the planters sought to take control of the racialized hierarchy and to shape it to their own advantage. More importantly, corporal punishment was seen by Chinese representatives as the central issue of racial hierarchy in Samoa. For several years, their consul in Apia pushed for Chinese workers to be treated the same as Europeans, forbidding any of the corporal punishment so often inflicted by members of the "inferior" race of islanders. In 1911, he finally succeeded in his goal, and the colonial administration implemented a regulation to this effect.[63]

In Samoa's racially segregated plantation economy and disciplinary system, the problematic corporal punishment of Chinese laborers by *leoleo* became the flashpoint in what could be described as a struggle within the social hierarchy. This struggle was understood in racial terms by both Chinese laborers as well as by German planters and officials. The Germans sought to exploit the racial segregation but also had to be concerned about its potential for conflict that would undermine their mission or escape their control. This is not to say that corporal punishment executed by Euro-Americans was not also seen as an affront to the Chinese "racial prestige." However, disciplinary measures by Samoan policemen were not only more common and frequently violent, but they also challenged the self-identification of the Chinese as a superior *Kulturvolk* to a higher extent.[64]

Samoans' struggle within the social hierarchy of the colony was apparently also affected along the lines of racial segregation. In 1909, a rumor that all Samoan policemen were to be abolished and replaced by "black" Melanesian police-soldiers from New-Guinea became known to the *Samoanische Zeitung*, who anxiously proclaimed that this would lead to social conflict: "[T]he insult must seem even greater to them to see their places taken by a significantly lower race."[65]

In 1914, ten young Samoans, many of whom were sons of *matai* and educated in missionary schools, gathered for a secret *fono* (assembly) led by

---

62   Ibid. Original: "*Es ist also auch in dieser Beziehung unbedingt zu fordern, daß die Samoaner ein wenig von ihrem Herrenstandpunkt herabgedrückt werden; denn es muß absolut zu verwerfen sein, die Zucht unter den chinesischen Kulis noch mehr als bisher zu lockern.*"

63   Schmidt, "Arbeit Und Nicht-Arbeit," 23. See also Moses, "The Coolie Labour Question," 114.

64   In a complaint regarding the Chinese Workers in Samoa, the Chinese consul argued with the "dignity of the Chinese empire," but contrasts it with the "colored," thus racialized, native tribes. "Kaiserlich Chinesische Gesandtschaft, Treatment of Chinese, Samoan Island," December 23, 1910, BA Berlin, R 1001/5588, 2.

65   "Die Schwarze Schutztruppe," *Samoanische Zeitschrift*, May 8, 1909, 1.

Taio Tolo to discuss their relation to the Germans. A transcript in Samoan, which was translated into German by the colonial administration after the meeting was exposed, provides a critical Samoan perspective on the racialized hierarchy on the archipelago.[66] Under the heading "Why are the Germans and the Samoans not on equal footing?" a man named Paniani is quoted:

> It is true that we are not treated very well by the Europeans. In our office (post office) we are not regarded as civil servants, but in the eyes of the Europeans we are to a certain extent like servants or black contract workers. The white masters regard us with complete disdain in relation to our working relationship with them.[67]

Recently, historian Matthew Fitzpatrick referenced this *fono* to emphasize a rising anticolonial resentment among Samoa's youth against the German colonizers. However, he underexposes the more complex social conflict between the different racialized groups in Samoa like the Melanesian "black contract workers," with whom the youth do not want to be equated by the Germans. Furthermore, their status as "post men" can be read as an indication that at least some of those present were members of the *fitafita,* who were usually assigned this type of work. Given the common deployments of *fitafita* to discipline Chinese workers, it is not surprising that those present also saw their people's future fundamentally threatened by the Chinese presence. Under "Agenda item III: The cohabitation of Samoan women with Chinese" Paniani is again quoted, "This is completely unseemly, in future there will only be Chinese hybrids [*Mischlinge*] on our islands. This bad habit must be strictly prohibited and all Samoan women living with Chinese must be separated from them."[68]

Planters

The challenge of native law enforcement to the racialized hierarchy in Samoa was further complicated when the *leoleo* used violence against planters. The most prominent case occurred in December 1902. According to witnesses, the German Hermann Matzat, owner of a small cacao plantation and member of the *Pflanzerverein* (Planters' Association), had in a drunken state racially abused a

---

66 "Bericht über das Fono (Ratsversammlung) am Donnerstag den 5. Februar 1914, BA Berlin," R1001/2760, 174–184.

67 Ibid., 181. Original: "*Es ist wahr, wir werden von den Europäern durchaus nicht gut behandelt. In unserm Amt (Post) sieht man uns nicht wie Beamte an, sondern wir sind nach Ansicht der Europäer gewissermassen wie Knechte oder schwarze Kontraktarbeiter; die weissen Herren betrachten uns in Bezug auf unser Arbeitsverhältnis zu ihnen mit gänzlicher Geringschätzung.*"

68 Ibid., 184. Original: "*Die ist gänzlich ungehörig, in Zukunft wird es nur noch chinesische Mischlinge auf unseren Inseln geben. Diese Unsitte muss streng verboten und alle Samoanerinnen, die mit Chinesen leben, von ihnen getrennt werden.*"

leoleo named Fialii in Apia.[69] After a brief quarrel, Matzat had pushed Fialii and then went to a police station to report alleged police misconduct. Much to his surprise, he was arrested on his way to the station and taken to jail by other *leoleo* on order of police chief Fries. According to the latter, Matzat resisted when he arrived at the prison and was beaten by several *leoleo*.[70] After weeks of court hearings, Matzat was sentenced to one month in prison for resisting the authority of the state, represented in this case by the native policemen. After an appeal, the sentence was reduced to a fine of 100 Marks.[71]

The incident unleashed a wave of outrage that washed over the metropolis. Not satisfied with his sentence, Matzat wrote a complaint to the Foreign Office and informed German newspapers, many of which then reported on his case.[72] Even more prominent was the mention of the incident in the Reichstag by SPD parliamentarian Arthur Stadthagen during a budget debate for Samoa on April 23, 1904.[73] Although the SPD was generally considered critical of colonialism,[74] in his speech Stadthagen sided with the Samoan planters who had asked for his support. After describing the "scandalous incident," he exclaimed, "Planters come to Apia, and the result is that they are harangued [harangiert] by a black man who is paid with German money as a police officer […] They only come into contact with police officers and police soldiers in a negative way."[75] Remarkably, in Stadthagen's speech, the Samoan policemen suddenly became "black," in contrast to the established description of the Polynesian "race" as "brown" or "bronze" in colonial discourse. He goes even further while describing the wounds Matzat suffered in his prison cell at the hands of several native policemen: "He looks like he's been mauled by cannibals, but not with [sic] police officers."[76]

---

69   Tyszka, *Dr. Solf und Samoa*, 20. Matzat had already racially insulted another *leoleo* and former *fitafita* named Rapoli just a few weeks ago and was sentenced to a fine. See also Reichstag, Stenographische Berichte ("Stenographic Reports"), 1903/05, vol. 3, 23 April 1904, 2356.

70   Tyszka, *Dr. Solf und Samoa*, 20.

71   Ibid. Franz von Tyszka was another planter and like Matzat member of the *Pflanzerverein.* For another report of the incident see also "Reichstagsprotokolle, 1903/05,3," 2355.

72   Thomas Morlang, "'Prestige der Rasse' contra 'Prestige des Staates:' Die Diskussionen über die Befugnisse farbiger Polizeisoldaten Gegenüber Europäern in den deutschen Kolonien," *Zeitschrift Für Geschichtswissenschaft* 49, no. 6 (2001): 499. Thomas Marlang has briefly discussed the "Matzat case" as a trigger for a broader debate about the legal authority of native policemen in other German colonies. See also "Der Fall Matzat," *Koloniale Zeitschrift* 4, no. 11 (1903): 195–97.

73   "Reichstagsprotokolle, 1903/05,3," 2355–59.

74   Conrad, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte*, 27.

75   "Reichstagsprotokolle, 1903/05,3," 2356. Original: "*Es kommen Pflanzer nach Apia, und die Folge ist, daß sie von einem schwarzen Menschen, der mit deutschem Gelde als Polizeibeamter bezahlt wird, harangiert werden. […] In böser Berührung kommen sie nur mit den Polizeibeamten und Polizeisoldaten. […]*"

76   Ibid., 2357.

On the first level, Stadthagen's reinterpretation of the Samoans as belonging to the "black race," being potential "cannibals," shows the degree of outrage that could be provoked even among SPD parliamentarians by native violence, even or rather especially when legally exercised through the German legal system.[77] In this way, the unique case of law enforcement by colonized subjects against Europeans provides a useful analytical vehicle to outline the discursive fragility of white supremacy in the *Kaiserreich*.[78] However, Stadthagen's use of the term "cannibal" here should not be misunderstood as a mere racial stereotype toward Pacific Islanders in general. In ethnological discourse on "races" in the Pacific, the "noble," "superior," and "brown" Polynesian was often contrasted with the "brutal," "cannibalistic," and "black" Melanesian "race."[79] In order to emphatically rally behind the "small planters" against Solf and the "capitalist" *DHPG*, as Stadthagen expresses in his speech, he disregards the Samoan's positionality within the more common hierarchization of colonized groups in the Pacific and reassigns them to the "cannibalistic" faction.[80]

This "blackening" of Samoans was an unusual discursive practice even for members of the *Pflanzerverein* in Samoa. In a book that aimed to attract more planters to settle in Samoa and published only a few years earlier in 1901, Richard Deeken had painted a rather positive picture of Samoan policemen. He reported that the *fitafita* "made quite a good impression with their dressy [*kleidsamen*] white uniforms"[81] and considered the issuance of a traffic ticket for horse riding above the speed limit in Apia by a *leoleo* as a "joyful" sign for the establishment of "German order" in Samoa.[82] In this context, then, Stadthagen's speech shows how the Samoan "race" was a fluid category whose classification could vary significantly, with momentous consequences. The same policemen who had so "pleasantly" represented German law and order when issuing a rather

---

77   However, to claim an association of Stadthagen with right-wing politics would be rather unprecise. Clearly, Stadthagen saw the instrumentalization of the case rhetorically fitting a means for his criticism against law-and-order policies and police practices, represented here by a Samoan, but policemen of the German state nevertheless.

78   There were also some similar incidents reported in German East Africa. However, other than Samoa, no colony had fewer German officers in police service and therefore had to rely on such a great extent of native police autonomy. The Matzat case also triggered a vivid discussion about the authorization of native policemen against white settlers in all German colonies. See Morlang, "Befugnisse Farbiger Polizeisoldaten,"

79   Samulski, "Rassenpolitik im Schutzgebiet Samoa," 333.

80   For the relation between the terms "noble savage" and "cannibal" in colonial discourse see Dirk van Laak, "Die deutsche Kolonialgeschichte als Fantasiegeschichte," in *Deutschland Postkolonial?: Die Gegenwart der imperialen Vergangenheit*, ed. Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst and Joachim Zeller (Metropol, 2021), 125.

81   Richard Deeken, *Manuia Samoa!: Samoanische Reiseskizzen Und Beobachtungen* (Stalling, 1901), 21. The book had a remarkable impact on the German public, drawing many new planters to Samoa. See also Moses, "The Coolie Labour Question," 103.

82   Deeken, *Manuia Samoa!*, 68.

harmless speeding ticket could become "black cannibals" when autonomously enforcing the law against Europeans. With strong echoes in the political heart of the metropolis, the outrage over such actions could potentially lead not only to a budget cut or even the abolition of the *leoleo*, but also to a fundamental challenge to Solf's "salvage colonialism" approach.[83]

The wave of outrage unleashed by the Matzat case also had an impact among the members of the *Pflanzerverein*. In 1904, planter Franz von Tyszka published a short book titled "Dr. Solf und Samoa," in which he indignantly describes the incident and uses it as the basis for a demand on Solf's colonial government for the, "Reduction of the fifteen Samoan police officers to seven, but with one more white police officer. […] It must be demanded in the strongest terms that police officers of color only be deployed against people of color, and that only white police officers be deployed against white people."[84] He also called for the complete abolishment of the *fitafita*, who, "thanks to their military training," would "undoubtedly serve as leaders in the event of an uprising."[85] As the title already implies, Tyszka wrote the book as an inflammatory speech against the rule of the governor. Solf's restriction of land to the belt around Apia, the increase in import duties, his close ties to the *DHPG* with their monopoly on Melanesian labor, and his inclusive approach to the remaining English and American planters had already made his rule unpopular for some planters. Above all, they objected to Solf's policy of salvage colonialism toward the Samoans. The use of native policemen against white planters was seen as a telling example of the allegedly misplaced priorities of Samoa's colonial administration.[86] In 1909, planters took an unsuccessful rebellion by a Samoan faction around the *matai* Lauaki Namulauulu Mamoe as an opportunity to start a campaign for the abolishment of the *fitafita* and *leoleo,* including a petition to the Reichskolonialamt in Berlin.[87]

---

83   Despite his critics, Solf achieved enough support within the *Reichskolonialamt* and Reichstag to get himself enough freedom for his salvage colonialism approach.

84   Tyszka, *Dr. Solf und Samoa*, 33. Original: "*Reduzierung der fünfzehn samoanischen Polizisten auf sieben, dafür ein weißer Polizist mehr. […] Mit aller Schärfe muss gefordert werden, daß farbige Polizisten nur gegen Farbige, gegen Weiße aber nur weiße Polizisten zur Anwendung kommen.*"

85   Ibid. Own translation. Original: "*Dank ihrer militärischen Ausbildung würden sie bei einem etwaigen Aufstande zweifellos als Anführer dienen, umsomehr als die Zahl der militärisch geschulten Leute durch stetige Rekrutierung von Jahr zu Jahr wächst.*"

86   For a discussion of the conflict between Solf and the planters see Stewart Firth, "Governors versus Settlers: The Dispute Over Chinese Labour in German Samoa," *New Zealand Journal of History* 11, no. 2 (1977): 155–79. Based on planters' reports, the *Koloniale Zeitschrift* wrote in an article in 1903: "Diese Fälle sind fast typisch für die Verhältnisse in unserer Kolonie Samoa. Dieses Haschen nach der Gunst der Farbigen, selbst zum Schaden der Europäer." "Der Fall Matzat," 197.

87   "Das Jubilierende Samoa," *Leipziger Tageblatt*, November 13, 1909, 1.

The supposed nexus between native police and misguided native policy was attacked even more furiously by the planter's advocates in the German press than any measures taken by the planters themselves.

The previous pampering of the natives and the whole native self-government charade [*Selbstverwaltungszauber*] borders on the undignified in its current form. […] The native prestige troop, the Fita-Fita, […] is the characteristic result of the pampering of the natives [*Eingeborenenverhätschelung*] there. It must be replaced by a white troop. […] A healthy native policy can only be based on strict racial separation and the unconditional supremacy of the white race.[88]

In historical research on this anxiety of an endangered "white supremacy," many historians have focused on the role of Euro-Samoan "intermarriages."[89] According to their findings, two main challenges were posed by intermarriages and the children resulting from them. On a practical level, they were undermining attempts of clear-cut classifications of people by the colonial administration, especially in legal matters. Moreover, intermarriages were conflicting with eugenic ideologies of white supremacy, most prominently substantive in the fear of "racial degeneration."[90] The rather neglected case of Samoan law enforcement against white planters was also part of this puzzle. The inversion of the colonizer/colonized dichotomy through the use of violence by Samoan policemen was understood as a threat to the "prestige" of the "white race," which for many contemporaries had to be defended at all costs. In a book on Samoa, the German publicist Hermann Fiedler wrote: "The rule of white people must be justified in such a way that their prestige vis-à-vis the natives is maintained in all cases."[91] While some toned down their criticism of the Matzat incident in comparison to Stadthagen, all subsequent speakers from various parties agreed with Fiedler's view in the Reichstag debate.[92]

---

88   "Was ist Koloniale Eingeborenenpolitik?," *Leipziger Tageblatt*, March 21, 1909. Original: "*Die bisherige Verhätschelung der Eingeborenen und der ganze eingeborene Selbstverwaltungszauber grenzt in seiner jetzigen Verfassung ans Würdelose. […] Die eingeborene Renommiertruppe, die Fita-Fita, […] ist der charakteristische Ausfluß der dortigen Eingeborenenverhätschelung. An ihre Stelle muß eine weiße Truppe treten. […] Eine gesunde Eingeborenenpolitik kann sich nur auf reinliche Rassenscheidung, unbedingte Vorherrschaft der weißen Rasse gründen.*"

89   Fitzpatrick, "Samoan Women's Revolt;" Samulski, "Rassenpolitik im Schutzgebiet Samoa."

90   For the fear of "degeneration" see the influential work Ann Laura Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule," in *The New Imperial Histories Reader* (Routledge, 2010), 189. For the context of German Colonialism see Fitzpatrick, "The Threat of 'Woolly-Haired Grandchildren.'"

91   Hermann Fiedler, *Regierung und Nutzbarmachung der Samoanischen Inseln* (Süsserott, 1906), 11.

92   "Reichstagsprotokolle, 1903/05,3," 2358f.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that it was precisely through their particular role as law enforcers of German state authority that Samoan policemen became a threat to the colonial racial hierarchy in Samoa and beyond. Initially, corporal punishment inflicted by Samoans on Chinese workers in Samoa provoked the "racial prestige" of members of an "ancient Chinese *Kulturvolk.*" If Samoans exercised state power even against white planters, as in the Matzat case, they threatened the rule of colonial difference between colonizer and colonized not only within the social hierarchy of Samoa, but in German colonialism in general. This study can thus serve as a further path in the discussion of the threat to the rule of colonial difference posed by intermarriage, which researchers have already addressed in greater detail. In the case of the Samoan police, however, the threat was neither "racial degeneration" nor merely the blurring of a clear boundary between rulers and ruled, but rather a radical inversion of those roles, expressed most offensively in the use of force.

In colonial discourse, as in Stadthagen's speech in the Reichstag, this also had repercussions for the placement of Samoans in the racial hierarchy. The same Samoan police officers who in other contexts were paternalistically orientalized and idealized as "brown sons of the South Seas" could become "black cannibals" when they used violence against whites. The study of the Samoan police can thus also shed light on the often-contradictory knowledge production of racist colonial discourses, in which racial classifications were far from stable.

Finally, the study highlights a latent conflict in German colonialism between state authority , represented by the controversial Samoan policemen, and a "white supremacy" that had to be preserved at all costs but was threatened when these policemen used state power against white planters.

The Development of Birth Control Campaigns in a Colonial Context (1920–1967)

ABSTRACT

In the twentieth century, birth control became a widespread topic in both imperial and colonised countries. In line with global concerns about a rising population in the Global South, demographers, neo-Malthusian thinkers and eugenicists campaigned in favour of birth control, especially amongst poorer populations. This paper explores the extent to which the practices and laws around contraception in Britain and metropolitan France influenced the development of birth control campaigns in three of their colonies in the Caribbean: Jamaica and the French West Indies (Martinique and Guadeloupe). While each case has been studied individually, no comparative research has been done yet. Combining the historiography of these five territories highlights the transnational nature of birth control campaigns as ideologies and practices spread across borders. This article argues that early birth control advocacy began in imperial countries and based itself on eugenicist and neo-Malthusian views on demography. However, in each of the studied countries, the campaigns developed at their own pace, both for legal and political reasons, but also in response to the different reactions and initiatives by local actors.

BY

Greta Marie Stripp

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Greta Marie Stripp graduated from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam with a BA in history and international studies. She is currently enrolled in a law bachelor at Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne. Her research interests lie in legislative history, focusing on the colonial context in which birth control campaigns developed in the twentieth century.

Introduction

In 1925, the Cambridge Women's Welfare Association was formed with the aim of opening a birth control clinic. An English journalist writing for the *Eugenics Review* documented this event and praised the presence of scientists on the association's Council, as it would ensure the improvement of contraceptives. This last part seems of particular importance to the author who, in a statement with clear eugenic undertones, highlights that "it is unfortunately true that the existing methods are often beyond the competence of just the stupidest and therefore the most undesirable members of society."[1] He was far from the only one with this view. In Britain and across the world, birth control advocates combined eugenic, neo-Malthusian, and arguments in favour of women's liberation. When looking at their discourses, a complex history of birth control emerges, at the intersection of racial and class biased demographic concerns and feminist campaigns for women's liberation.

Using the case of two European colonial powers (Britain and France) and three Caribbean islands (Jamaica, Martinique and Guadeloupe) from the 1920s to the 1960s, this paper studies birth control in a colonial context. This comparative approach allows me to highlight the discrepancies between the discourses and campaigns surrounding birth control in the metropole and their Caribbean colonies. On one hand, this research argues that, even though Britain and metropolitan France had different laws and attitudes towards birth control, both the British and the French colonial authorities shared similar stances when it came to birth control in their colonies. On the other hand, this paper highlights that the pace at which the measures promoting birth control were implemented depended on the practices in the respective metropoles, and the response by local actors to the pro-birth control arguments.

During the early twentieth century, birth control was illegal both in imperial countries and their colonies. The time frame for my research spans from 1920, when the first law against anti-conception propaganda was passed in France, to 1967, when birth control was legalised in both France and Britain. Using legislative changes as a time frame highlights that even though the legalisation of birth control happened at the same moment in France and Britain, the extent to which the anti-birth control laws were applied in the decades preceding the legalisation differs. It is therefore necessary to look at cultural and political factors which could explain the difference in the pace at which the campaigns developed. Britain was one of the first European countries to publicly engage with the birth control debate and, even though illegal, contraceptives became

---

1   "Cambridge Women's Welfare Association," *Eugenic Review,* 3 (1925):188–195. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2942719/?page=8. (accessed May 8, 2024).

widely available and the bans on distribution unenforced. France, on the other hand, was marked by restrictive laws, encouraged by a strong pro-natalist mindset. The pro-natalist ideology, which advocates for a higher birth rate in response to a declining population, was present in France from the nineteenth century on, but grew stronger after World War 2 and the publication of demographic studies showing the decline of the French population.[2] The debates around birth control therefore only started in the 1950s, three decades after Britain.

However, in their colonies in the Caribbean, both countries strongly encouraged the spread of birth control, convinced that overpopulation was the main reason behind the islands' economic problems. This view was in line with concerns about a rising population in the Global South, arguments which were put forward by demographers, neo-Malthusians and eugenicists of imperial countries.[3] Neo-Malthusianism is an actualisation of the eighteenth-century writings by Thomas Malthus, who defended the idea that the world population is increasing at a faster pace than available resources.[4] Eugenics was employed to defend the belief that behavioural characteristics are inheritable. In the context of birth control advocacy, this meant that the fertility of those who were considered "unfit" needed to be limited. The "fit" were mainly considered to be the White elite, while the poor and non-White population were referred to as "unfit."[5] These two schools of thought were dominant amongst the elite of imperial countries.

For this study I will focus on three colonies in the Caribbean. Firstly, Jamaica, which was the largest British colony in the Caribbean and a place where birth control campaigns expanded early and at a fast pace. Secondly, Martinique and Guadeloupe, which were under French control and part of the island group often called the French West Indies. Even though both islands have their own history, context, and set of actors, all laws that were passed applied to both islands and most of the primary sources and secondary sources used in this article address them jointly, I will therefore do the same. These three islands were chosen for their size, geographical proximity and the amount of data and research available on them. The findings reached in this paper can only be applied to the above-mentioned places. Further research could focus on other French and English colonies in order to draw broader conclusions.

---

2   Melanie Latham, *Regulating Reproduction, a Century of Conflict in Britain and France* (Manchester University Press, 2002), 27.

3   Nicole Bourbonnais, *Birth Control in the Decolonizing Caribbean: Reproductive Politics and Practice on Four Islands, 1930-1970* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 9.

4   Ibid.

5   Ibid.

Comparing French and British colonies allows me to explore the extent to which colonial relations shaped birth control campaigns in the Caribbean. In both cases, the initial pro-birth control campaigns were encouraged by the colonial administration. However, the local context and the agency of local actors should not be undermined, as the way in which they responded to the birth control campaigns strongly influenced the pace at which they would be implemented.

This paper connects existing research about birth control campaigns in the early twentieth century in France, Britain, Jamaica and Martinique and Guadeloupe. While there have been studies of each individual case or combining two of them, there has been no joint study, a gap this paper seeks to address. With the aim of writing a legislative history of birth control in its colonial context, this research combines the historiography of these places in order to show how ideologies and practices spread across borders. Comparing the different cases reveals similar patterns and highlights elements which have so far been understudied. This comparative approach gives a more accurate understanding of the several factors — such as the dominant views on natality, the influence of the Church as well as the reactions by local actors — which influenced the development of birth control campaigns across the world. For this study I mainly rely on a wide range of secondary sources which I integrate within a comparative discussion. Primary sources are analysed for illustrative purposes, but I do not draw new conclusions from them.

The historiography on birth control campaigns in Britain is wide, and includes research on the ties between birth control advocates and eugenic societies as well as a transnational perspective on them, even though the existing literature mainly focuses on comparisons between Britain and other English-speaking countries.[6] The French campaigns have also been thoroughly studied, from a legal and ideological perspective.[7] Finally, Melanie Latham compared the case of France and Britain by studying the context and actors

---

6   On this topic see Richard A. Soloway, "The 'Perfect Contraceptive:' Eugenics and Birth Control Research in Britain and America in the Interwar Years," *Journal of Contemporary History* 30, no. 4 (1995), http://www.jstor.org/stable/261086; Jane Carey, "The Racial Imperatives of Sex: Birth Control and Eugenics in Britain, the United States and Australia in the Interwar Years," *Women's History Review* 21, no. 5 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2012.658180.

7   On this topic see Janine Mossuz, "La régulation des naissances: les aspects politiques du débat," *Revue française de science politique* 16, no. 5 (1966), https://doi.org/10.3406/rfsp.1966.392962; Virginie de Luca Barrusse, "The 'Denatality Complex:' The Demographic Argument in the Birth Control Debate in France, 1956-1967," *Population (English Edition)* 73, no. 1 (2018), https://doi.org/10.3917/popu.1801.0009; Maude Anne Bracke, "Family Planning and Reproductive Agency in France: Demography, Gender, and Race, 1950s-1970s," *French Historical Studies* 45, no. 4 (2022), https://doi.org/10.1215/00161071-9933021.

who influenced the laws around contraception.[8] However, none of the above research mentions the colonies. This paper seeks to address this gap by comparing the literature about the metropole with the work on the birth control campaigns in the Caribbean.

The evolution of Britain's views on family structures and demography in Jamaica, from the abolition of slavery until the 1930s, has been studied by a variety of authors, showing how these topics influenced policies passed in the 1930s.[9] The emergence of birth control campaigns from the 1930s on are studied by scholars such as Jill Briggs and Nicole Bourbonnais who conducted extensive research and analysis of primary source documents.[10] The historiography on the colonial relation between metropolitan France, Martinique and Guadeloupe since 1946 is wide. Scholars have studied the way in which the *départementalisation* process unfolded, the shifts in policies and the dissatisfaction of locals.[11] The colonial nature of family welfare and family planning programs are thoroughly studied by several authors, as well as the legal and ideological background of the birth control campaigns.[12]

---

8   Melanie Latham, *Regulating Reproduction, a Century of Conflict in Britain and France* (Manchester University Press, 2002).

9   Laura Putnam, "Global Child-Saving, Transatlantic Maternalism, and the Pathologization of Caribbean Childhood, 1930s-1940s," *Atlantic Studies* 11, no. 4 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2014.935638; Joan French, "Colonial Policy Towards Women after the 1938 Uprising: The Case of Jamaica," *Caribbean Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1988), http://www.jstor.org/stable/40653706; Karl Ittmann, "The Colonial Office and the Population Question in the British Empire, 1918-62," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 27, no. 3 (1999), https://doi.org/10.1080/03086539908583073.

10   Jill Briggs, "'As Fool-Proof as Possible:' Overpopulation, Colonial Demography and the Jamaica Birth Control League," *The Global South* 4, no. 2 (2010), https://doi.org/10.2979/globalsouth.4.2.157; Nicole Bourbonnais, *Birth Control in the Decolonizing Caribbean.*

11   In 1946, four French colonies transformed into *departements*, a process through which they gained the same legal and political status as the *departements* in the metropole; Elise Lemercier et al., "Les Outre-mer français: Regards ethnographiques sur une catégorie politique," *Terrains & Travaux* 1, no. 24 (2004), https://doi.org/10.3917/tt.024.0005; Jacques Dumont, "La quête de l'égalité aux Antilles: la départementalisation et les manifestations des années 1950," *Le Mouvement Social* 1, no. 230 (2010), https://doi.org/10.3917/lms.230.0079.

12   Kristen Stromber Childers, "Politique familiale aux Antilles en 1946: Etudes démographiques et stéréotypes raciaux," *Mondes* 4, no 2 (2013), https://doi.org/10.3917/mond.132.0145; Arlette Gautier, "Les politiques familiales et démographiques dans les départements français d'outre-mer depuis 1946," *Cahier de Sciences Humaines* 24, no. 3 (1988), http://pascal-francis.inist.fr/vibad/index.php?action=getRecordDetail&idt=11776277; Stephanie Condon, "Continuité coloniale et gestion démographique des Antilles françaises, 1950-1980," *Migrations Société* 32, no. 182 (2020), https://doi-org.acces.bibl.ulaval.ca/10.3917/migra.182.0043; Michelle Zancarni-Founrel, "Contraception et avortement dans les Antilles françaises (Guadeloupe et Martinique, 1964-1975)," *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 50, (2019), https://doi.org/10.4000/clio.17067; Francis Sanseigne, "L'Etat contre lui-même: Contraception et illégalismes d'Etat de la métropole aux DOM," *Genèses* 4, no. 121 (2020), https://doi.org/10.3917/gen.121.0052.

In this paper, I mainly reference primary sources, including legislative texts, governmental and non-governmental (for example from family planning clinics and associations) reports, newspaper articles, journals, and auto-biographies by local actors, in order to illustrate and clarify some of the arguments made. While there are numerous databases online that allow easy and open access to a multitude of resources, I encountered two key limitations. Firstly, the lack of access to certain key sources, for example records of the colonial office kept in the United Kingdom National Archives or the records from *La Maternité Heureuse* stored by the French association *Archives du Féminisme,* which were only accessible on location. In order to take into account this material, this research relied upon the work of scholars who travelled to the locations to access these archives. Secondly, the archives accessed online are curated, either by contemporary curator but also by historical figures themselves or people who worked closely with them. This is the case of Edith How Martyn's travel journal in which she gathered newspaper clippings and pictures of her travel to Jamaica. Her journal, and other writings and correspondence were guarded by Eileen Palmer, who worked closely with Edith How Martyn and later published the curated collection after her death. Thus, this journal should be regarded in order to study of How Martyn, as a Western feminists, perceived herself within the birth control movement.[13]

Comparing the different regions allows for a more nuanced understanding of the several factors which influenced the internationalised development of birth control campaigns. The stance imperial countries had on birth control influenced the way the process would unfold in the metropole, but the agency of local actors, religious and political figures as well as women's rights activists, also influenced how birth control campaigns spread in the early twentieth century. In this paper, I follow Albert Bandura's definition of agency, and more precisely collective agency. Bandura names four key properties of human agency: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness.[14] Collective agency describes the collective action of together skills, knowledge and resources in order to work towards a common goal as a group.[15]

This paper is divided in three parts, each focusing on a specific region. Firstly, I will focus on Europe, comparing France and Britain in order to show how the practices and reactions towards birth control unfolded at a different pace due to different ideologies and attitudes towards natality. Secondly, I will

---

13   Bethan Holt, "'Round the World for Birth Control:' Imperial Feminism and the Birth Control Movement, 1930-1939," (Undergraduate diss., University of Bristol, 2019), https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/history/documents/dissertations/2019_Holt.pdf.

14   Albert Bandura, "Toward a psychology of human agency," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 1, no.2 (2006), 164-165, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40212163.

15   Ibid., 165.

concentrate on the case of Jamaica in order to show how, even though Britain encouraged the debate about birth control, it had only a limited influence on the later steps of the campaigns. Finally, the third part focuses on Martinique and Guadeloupe. Even though the islands did not hold the formal status of colonies anymore, the differential approach to birth control compared to the metropole reveals an ongoing colonial relation. The conclusion will highlight the discrepancies in the attitudes towards family planning in imperial countries and their colonies and the impact they had on the spread of birth control.

Birth Control Campaigns in Britain and France (1920s–1967)

In France, in 1921, Jeanne Humbert was condemned to two years of prison for having violated the law of July 1920, which forbade the dissemination of any information about birth control.[16] The same year, Marie Stopes opened the first birth control clinic in Britain, without any repercussions, even though the law forbade the distribution of contraceptives just as in France. How can these differences in attitudes towards birth control between France and Britain be explained? Answering this question is key to understanding how the differential approaches in the metropoles would influence the development of approaches to birth control in the Caribbean colonies.

In 1917, American birth control activist Margaret Sanger was sentenced to thirty days in prison for running the United States' first birth control clinic, thus breaking the law which forbade the sale and advertisement of contraceptives. Sanger appealed this case on the basis that "the law is unconstitutional," a claim which the Court of Appeals rejected.[17] Even if this judgment was a loss for Sanger, it resulted in a legal victory for the overall pro-birth control movement as the ruling stated that doctors were exempt from certain laws and could, therefore, advise and provide contraception for health-related reasons.[18] In response to this judgment, Sanger opened another birth control clinic, this time with doctors as part of the staff.[19] These pioneering steps brought much attention to the birth control movement and led to the spread of ideas and practices on an international scale, in particular through the international conferences Sanger organised. While she spent her early years working with anarchist and feminist movements, the conferences marked a shift as most attendees were part of

---

16 Jeanne Humbert, *Le Pourrissoire (Saint-Lazare): Choses vues, entendues et vécues* (Editions Prima, 1932), 17.

17 New York v Sanger, 222 NY 192, 118 N.E. 637 (Court of Appeals 1917).

18 Ibid.

19 Wardell Mlitt, "Margaret Sanger," 741.

neo-Malthusian and eugenic societies.[20] Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the debates about birth control became closely associated with the ones about demography, as a generalised fear of overpopulation started to grow in the academic and political circles of the western White elite. These worries were based on research conducted by demographers across Western countries, often incomplete and marked by a strong racial bias, which argued that the White population was declining, and the poor Black population increasing.[21] Birth control therefore became a more widely and publicly discussed topic, but the early feminist arguments in favour of women's right to control their own bodies were replaced by arguments in favour of "racial progress."[22]

Building on Sanger's pioneering steps, the first birth control clinics opened in Britain in the 1920s. While there was no law explicitly forbidding them, the law against immorality and obscenity was applied in certain cases in order to prohibit the spread of information about contraception. For example, a pamphlet by Sanger on birth control was considered obscene and prohibited.[23] Throughout the 1930s, laws were gradually passed that extended the usage of birth control in cases where the pregnancy would be detrimental to women's health (1931 Memorandum by the Ministry of Health), or even mental health (1938 R. v. Bourne judgment). These cases made birth control increasingly accessible as it confirmed that doctors were exempt from certain laws in cases where women's (mental) health was endangered. The next major legislative shift occurred in the 1960s. In 1961 the National Health Service (NHS) made the hormonal birth control pill available to married women on therapeutic grounds, and in 1964 private clinics extended this availability to social grounds. Finally, in 1967 the National Health Service Act was passed; legalising birth control without any restrictions on grounds of age or marital status was achieved.[24]

In France the laws were stricter than in Britain, and the evolution towards the acceptance of birth control advanced at a much slower pace. In 1920, a law was passed which made supplying information about contraception a criminal offence, without any exemption on grounds of maternal health.[25] This law was repeatedly enforced and remained widely unquestioned until 1956, when French gynaecologist Marie-Andrée Lagroua Weill-Hallé created the association *Maternité Heureuse* (Happy Motherhood) where she openly distributed

---

20   Myriam Paris, "'Nous qui versons la vie goutte à goutte:' Féminismes et économie reproductive: une sociohistoire du pouvoir colonial à La Réunion" (PhD diss., Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2018), 289, https://doi.org/10.4000/sdt.42238.

21   Ibid., 291.

22   Carey, "The Racial Imperatives of Sex," 747.

23   Latham, *Regulating reproduction,* 25.

24   Ibid., 34.

25   Ibid., 27.

information about contraception, starting a wider discussion within France's political and public sphere.[26] Finally, after years of political campaigns, the *Loi Neuwirth* was passed in 1967, making contraception legal. However, the law was still more restrictive than the one passed the same year in Britain as "anti-natalist" propaganda remained illegal and the law included the production of an annual report on the demographic situation in France.[27]

One major influential factor explaining the differences in Britain and France is each country's stance regarding natality rates. Dominated by eugenic societies, Britain's main worry in the 1920 was *race deterioration*, as statistics of that time were showing that working class women gave birth to more children than the elite. The elite thus claimed that uncontrolled working class fertility would lead to social problems.[28] France on the other hand had a strong pro-natalist policy, motivated by the fear of population decline, a rhetoric which had become increasingly prevalent since the end of the first world war and its high human casualties.[29] As a result, the government implemented strict anti-birth control laws, but also pro-natalist family policies such as increased family allowance and compulsory teaching in schools about the "demographic problems" in France, meaning the declining natality rates,[30] this difference in attitude towards natality rates would influence how the birth control campaigns would unfold in the colonies. Indeed, the measures the government pushed for had to be consistent, or at least seem consistent to the general public, with the laws and ideologies that shaped the discourse in the metropole.

A second important actor is the Church, as both in Britain and France the Catholic Church was firmly opposed to birth control. Even though a minority in Britain, the Catholic Church played an important role in influencing individual's opinions about sexuality and birth control.[31] However, the position by the Church of England, who had more members, differed from that of the Roman Catholic Church. As early as 1930, a Church of England report declared that birth control should be used amongst married women if it could lead to the

---

26   Mossuz, "La régulation des naissances," 925.

27   France, Assemblée Nationale, *Loi relative à la régulation des naissances et abrogeant les articles L. 648 et L. 649 du code de la santé publique,* Loi n° 67-1176, 28th of December 1967, article 5 and article 8, https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000000880754/1967-12-31/.

28   Soloway, "'The Perfect Contraceptive,'" 639, 641.

29   de Luca Barrusse, "The "Denatality Complex," 14.

30   Latham, *Regulating Reproduction*, 28; France, Assemblée Nationale, *Code de la famille et de la natalité françaises,* Décret loi, 29th of July 1939, article 142, https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/download/securePrint?token=@oMEyvEsax$WMeiEkzef

31   Alana Harris, "Reframing the 'Laws of Life:' Catholic Doctors, Natural Law and the Evolution of Catholic Sexology in Interwar Britain," *Contemporary British History* 34, no. 4 (2020): 537, https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2020.1780125.

reduction of abstinence and the protection of women's health.[32] In France, on the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church still held considerable power and influence and condemned "all artificial methods of contraception" as it "endangers the human person."[33]

Due to the difference in attitudes towards natality, as well as the limited influence of the Roman Catholic Church, tolerance towards birth control in Britain emerged two decades earlier than in France. As a result, contraceptives were distributed and discussed in Britain, while any mention of it was severely reprimanded in France, even though both countries had laws forbidding it. These differences in attitudes in the metropole would influence the way birth control campaigns developed in their colonies in the Caribbean.

The Emergence of a Birth Control Movement in Jamaica (1938–1940s)

Colonised by the British Empire in 1655, Jamaica developed an economy which relied heavily on the production of sugarcane, and thus, the work of enslaved people on the plantations. While little importance was given to birth rates during the eighteenth century, as plantation owners relied on the slave trade to gain more workers, a shift occurred after 1807 and the abolishment of the Atlantic slave trade. From this moment on, plantation holders relied solely on enslaved women's fertility in order to maintain the economy. However, despite their efforts, birth rates remained low.[34]

The abolition of slavery in 1838 brought a new challenge to the Jamaican plantation-based economy, which almost entirely relied on field workers. British officials expected that freed slaves would continue working on the plantations, but most freed people either started cultivating their own land or emigrated.[35] The economic concerns caused by the declining working population led the British colonial officials to have the first debates about demography and reproduction, and to conduct the first population census.[36] These early efforts of population control would shape the way birth control debates unfolded during the early twentieth century.

---

32   Latham, *Regulating Reproduction,* 62.

33   Bracke, "Family Planning and Reproductive Agency in France," 687; "Family Planning Organisation, Correspondence and Papers," The Times: "Birth control aids condemned," https://wellcomecollection.org/works/gms8vmzx/items?canvas=18.

34   Barbara Bush-Slimani, "Hard Labour: Women, Childbirth and Resistance in British Caribbean Slave Societies," *History Workshop* 36 (1993): 88, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/36.1.83.

35   De Barros, *Reproducing the British Caribbean,* 23.

36   Bourbonnais, *Birth Control in the Decolonizing Caribbeans,* 17.

In the years after 1838, Jamaica was shaped by strong economic inequalities. Even though the society was not formally segregated, racial discrimination still shaped everyday life, as most power was in the hands of British-appointed governors and a large part of the population did not have the right to vote as there were restrictions on grounds of age, literacy and income, which disproportionately affected Afro-Jamaicans.[37] This generated a wave of Afro-Jamaican led strikes and protests in 1938.[38] The West Indies Royal Commission started to investigate the causes of the unrest and asked local actors about their views regarding the social and economic situation on the island. The statements made by teacher and women's rights advocate Amy Bailey and the way they were interpreted by the Commission highlights the biases of the report. While she did state that illegitimacy rates and lack of education were a problem for Jamaica, she made sure to emphasise that these problems were caused by the economic situation, not vice-versa.[39] The West Indies Royal Commission report took into account the elements highlighted by the local actors, but its conclusion identified family structure as the main cause for poverty, the opposite of the conclusion put forward by Amy Bailey.[40] The British government thus followed the neo-Malthusian narrative that, in order to stabilise the Jamaican economy, the population size needed to be regulated through a government intervention within the domestic sphere.[41]

On what statistics or research did colonial officials rely when making these overpopulation claims? There was indeed a demographic shift in Jamaica beginning in the 1920s as the population increased due to various factors such as declining mortality and the repatriation of emigrants who had left Jamaica. It is important to note that the population statistics of that time should not be considered a fully reliable source, as they were mainly speculative estimates made by untrained colonial officials. These reports are therefore not an indicator of the actual demographic picture of the island, but an illustration of the lack of scientific support behind the claims that overpopulation was due to high-working class fertility.[42]

---

37   Electoral Commission of Jamaica, *History of the Electoral Commission of Jamaica,* 2014, 7, https://ecj.com.jm/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ECJ_History_Report.pdf.

38   Kirwin Shaffer, A *Transnational History of the Modern Caribbean: Popular Resistance Across Borders* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 104.

39   Putnam, "Global Child-Saving," 502.

40   "West India Royal Commission 1938-1939:" *Statement of Action Taken on the Recommendations*, London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, June 1945. From University of Florida Digital Collections https://original-ufdc.uflib.ufl.edu/AA00089848/00001/2j (accessed May 10, 2024).

41   Putnam, "Global Child-Saving," 508.

42   Bourbonnais, *Birth Control in the Decolonizing Caribbeans,* 53.

In 1938, shortly after the riots and the reports by the West Indies Royal Commission, birth control appeared within the public sphere as the only solution to the social, and therefore economic problems of Jamaica.[43] The different parties— such as government officials, doctors, and women rights' advocates—expressed their views in letters to newspapers or editorials, or by organising conferences. Most agreed on the claim that birth control could be used to reduce social and economic problems and based their arguments on this premise. The arguments used in 1938 can be divided into three main categories. Firstly, some campaigners, mainly the Colonial Office and White Jamaican-born doctors, acknowledged that economic and social reform was necessary but that it could not be implemented as long as population growth was not under control.[44] Secondly, some birth control advocates used eugenic arguments and applied them to the Jamaican context. This can be seen in letters sent to national Jamaican newspapers. For example, in a letter sent to the *Daily Gleaner,* a reader expressed his fear that the high illegitimacy rate and the inability of the working class to control their reproduction would lead to*,* "the ignorant, the immature, the under-nourished, the criminal, the diseased and the feeble-minded" part of the population to outgrow the educated one.[45] In contrast, Jamaican feminists, such as Amy Bailey and Maymie Aiken, also joined the birth control debate and pushed to give "the right to every woman of voluntary parenthood" as it would allow women to attain a better socioeconomic position, and thus better the conditions of the children that were born.[46]

Even though the British Colonial Office wanted to publicise the campaign and pushed for its spread, it did not offer any practical forms of support out of fear that it would increase racial tensions. Pro-independence Black labour leaders, such as St. William Grant and J.A.G. Edwards, had already positioned themselves as opponents to birth control, arguing that it was an attempt to reduce the Black population.[47] The Colonial Office did not want to spark any further conflicts and offered little practical support to the setting up of birth control campaigns.[48]

---

43   Ibid.*,* 52.

44   Ittmann, "The Colonial Office and the Population Question in the British Empire," 66; Briggs, "'As fool-proof as possible,'" 161.

45   Bourbonnais, *Birth Control in the Decolonizing Caribbeans,* 55.

46   Courtney Desiree Morris, "Becoming Creole, Becoming Black: Migration, Diasporic Self-Making and the Many Madame Maymie Leona Turpeau de Mena," *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* 4, no. 2 (2016): 188, https://doi.org/10.5406/womgenfamcol.4.2.0171.

47   Bourbonnais, *Birth Control in the Decolonizing Caribbeans,* 91-94.

48   Ibid.

The main efforts and initiatives were started by locals, and especially by Jamaican women. Alliances were created, as can be seen in the case of the Jamaican Birth Control League (JBCL) which was founded on the initiative of May Farquharson. The League was composed of both the Black middle class and the White elite, of which Farquharson was part of. This shows that, while this alliance marked an overcoming of racial boundaries, it did not surmount boundaries set by class, or gender-based boundaries.[49] Indeed, the creation of the JBCL and this unlikely alliance was due to the fact that some of the key aforementioned Black Jamaican women's rights activists, Amy Bailey, Maymie Aiken, and Alma La Badie, did not find support within their circles. All three were part of the *Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League* (UNIA), a Jamaican born pan-Africanist organisation whose male members regularly expressed opposition to birth control as they considered it a strategy to decrease the Black population and distract the population from the actual causes of poverty.[50] Bailey, Aiken and La Badie maintained their involvements within the UNIA and kept responding to the arguments, which sometimes took the form of personal attacks, made by male members. The women's rights activists responses mainly centered around the health and social conditions of women, thus putting emphasis on the issue of women's liberation instead of seeing it from a racial standpoint.[51]

Even though local women's rights activists were at the forefront, the indirect influence of British imperialism on the development of these campaigns should not be overlooked. The three-month long trip of British feminist Edith How-Martyn to Jamaica in 1939 is illustrative of the indirect ways in which British ideas infused the birth control debate in Jamaica. Her well documented travel, both by herself in the form of diaries and by Jamaican newspapers, is a showcase of a successful collaboration between White European and Black Jamaican feminists.[52] Still, her arguments in favour of birth control differed from those put forward by Black Jamaican women. Although she did not directly refer to eugenics or overpopulation, she showed a lack of recognition in regard to the role colonialism played in causing poverty. Instead, she promoted the idea of birth control as a tool to ensure "the preservation of civilisation" as it would create "better babies, a higher standard of life."[53] These arguments align with the eugenics-based ideology suggesting that population control is necessary in order to solve economic and social problems. Even though How-Martyn's practical contributions were minor, her visit attracted much attention

---

49   Briggs, "'As fool-proof as possible,'" 166.

50   Bourbonnais, *Birth Control in the Decolonizing Caribbeans,* 63; Ibid., 69.

51   Bourbonnais, *Birth Control in the Decolonizing Caribbeans,* 71-72.

52   *Wellcome Collection,* https://wellcomecollection.org/, 'Edith How-Martyn: international birth control tours, Jamaica Tour' [PP/EPR/C.5].

53   Ibid., 25.

from Jamaican and British politicians and newspapers. This will to amplify the voice of a British feminist instead of one of a Black Jamaican advocate shows the attempts to undermine the voice and agency of local birth control campaigners. Even after her visit, British ideas continued to influence the JBCL and the overall birth control movement. JBCL leader May Farquharson, who herself studied and worked in London for several years, maintained close connections with How-Martyn and also British eugenics movements, which shaped her views on the campaigns in Jamaica.[54] This shows how, on one hand, certain racial barriers were overcome through the creation of an organisation whose members included both Black and White Jamaicans. On the other hand, the imperial context and racial inequalities continued to influence the views and motivations of different members, thus maintaining an ideological divide between the White elite and the Jamaican Black middle class, even within the organisation.

The Introduction of Birth Control in Martinique and Guadeloupe (1946–1967)

In 1946 four French colonies, including Martinique and Guadeloupe, opted for the "*départementalisation*" of the islands: the transition from a status of colony to a *département*, which meant the adoption of the metropole's laws and political administrative structures. Since the abolition of slavery in 1848, the inhabitants of Guadeloupe, Guyane, Martinique and la Réunion had already acquired French citizenship, but they did not have access to the same rights as metropolitan French citizens. When given the choice in 1946, *départmentalisation* seemed to be an option which would improve the economic situation of these four islands due to the already existing colonial relation with France, but also the high levels of poverty on the islands.[55] However, the process did not bring the expected equality and social relief. After 1946 racial and class hierarchies remained entrenched in the departments which continued to be dominated by the wealthy and White inhabitants of the islands, while the indigenous population continued to live and work in precarious conditions.[56] In some cases, Martiniquean and Guadeloupean civil servants were replaced in their posts by civil servants from the metropole due to new rules which required qualifications that could only be acquired in the metropole.[57] The social welfare reforms too were not applied as promised, and the French government justified this choice with the overpopulation

---

54 Briggs, "'As fool-proof as possible,'" 166-167.

55 Lemercier, "Les Outre-mer français," 13.

56 Dumont, "La quête de l'égalité aux Antilles," 82.

57 Ibid., 90.

argument.[58] The head of the social security office came to state that, due to the fact that "the families of the départements have too many children,"[59] France would not be able to cover the costs of such demographic growth.[60] The focus therefore shifted towards birth control as a more cost-effective way to improve the economic situation on the islands.

As in Jamaica, population growth had always concerned French colonial officials. During the times of slavery and years directly following its abolition, the economy relied first on enslaved people and later on foreign workers, which led to a population increase.[61] It was only after the *departementalisation* that concerns about overpopulation started to emerge. Between 1957 and 1960, the *Haut Comité de la Population et la politique de population de la France* (High Committee on Population and politic of population of France) published a series of reports about the population in all the territories under French control. In line with neo-Malthusian views on population, these reports concluded that the rapidity of demographic growth in the West Indies was worrisome and would lead to pressure on the available land.[62]

The social uprisings in Fort-de-France (Martinique) in 1959 marked a turning point in the social and economic development policies in the West Indies.[63] The French government considered the uprisings a wake-up call in light of a disastrous economic situation. However, in a report published in 1965 by the *Commission centrale du Plan des DOM,* the working group on health and social action considered that "no valid solution could be proposed, no means of action considered, without weighing in the consequences the particularly alarming demographic factors will have upon them."[64] Following a discourse similar to the one that had already been defended in Jamaica a decade before, the French government considered that overpopulation was the main obstacle to the implementation of any effective social or economic reform.[65]

---

58   Paris, "'Nous qui versons la vie goutte à goutte,'" 157-158.

59   Original quote in French: "les familles de ces départements faisaient trop d'enfants."

60   Dumont, "La quête de l'égalité aux Antilles," 86-87.

61   Lemercier, "Les Outre-mer français," 9.

62   Pierre George, "Review of L'évolution de la population dans les départements français d'outre-mer et dans les pays africains d'expression française: Rapports du Haut comité consultatif de la population et de la famille,Paris, La Documentation française, 1958-1960," *Annales de Géographie* 71, no. 387 (1962): 533-536, https://doi.org/10.3406/geo.1962.16265.

63   Zancarini-Fournel, "Contraception et avortement dans les Antilles françaises," 90.

64   Original quote in French: "aucune perspective sérieuse ne pouvait être arrêtée, aucune solution valable proposée, aucun moyen d'action envisagé sans que soient pesés dans leurs conséquences, des facteurs démographiques particulièrement alarmants." Quoted in Sanseigne, "L'Etat contre lui-même," 63.

65   Sanseigne, "L'Etat contre lui-même," 63.

In order to counter the problem of overpopulation, French officials started to study West Indian family structures and sexual practices. These topics were among the ones that had already been researched in the 1950s by French ethnographer Michel Leiris on behalf of UNESCO.[66] His report, the result of years of field work, offered a detailed and precise analysis of life and culture in Guadeloupe and Martinique, engaging with themes such as interracial relations and their impact on hierarchies within society.[67] However, these studies were widely ignored by French government officials, who instead made use of Anglo-American studies which did include a questioning on racial issues but, on the contrary, relied on racist stereotypes.[68] In addition, these studies applied to a totally different context and lacked the precision of Leiri's study. French government officials had strong prejudices concerning the sexual practices of the inhabitants of Martinique and Guadeloupe, which they believed led to the high birth rates and prevented them from fully integrating *French values*, even though they had obtained citizenship.[69]

These views paved the way for the French government to take on a differential attitude towards Martinique and Guadeloupe, in comparison to the metropole, concerning family and social policies, and eventually contraception. Due to the instability of marital unions and high illegitimacy rates, demographers and scientists concluded that it would not be appropriate to pursue the French pro-natalist attitude in the West Indies.[70] As a result, from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s, the French government experimented several strategies in order to address the overpopulation problem without compromising the natalist laws which were still enforced in the metropole. This included emigration campaigns which encouraged young men and women to permanently settle in the metropole.[71] However, the campaigns did not meet the expectations of the French government as they did not lead to a high enough population reduction and by 1965 it was decided that the focus should shift from migration campaigns to birth control campaigns.[72]

However, as discussed earlier, the 1920 law, which forbade any spread of information on birth control or the distribution of contraceptives still applied in the metropole. French officials had to find a way to circumvent it in the West Indies even though, since the *départementalisation* in 1946, laws had to

---

66 Michel Leiris, *Contacts de civilisations en Martinique et Guadeloupe* (UNESCO-Gallimard, 1955), http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1522/030092220

67 Stromberg Childers, "Politique familiale aux Antilles en 1946," 147.

68 Stromberg Childers, "Politique familiale aux Antilles en 1946," 146.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., 151.

71 Condon, "Continuité coloniale et gestion démographique des Antilles françaises," 48.

72 Sanseigne, "L'Etat contre lui-même," 63.

be applied equally in the metropole and in the DOM.[73] Several ministerial and inter-ministerial meetings happened between 1962 and 1965 in order to discuss ways to make birth control accessible in the DOM but not in the metropole. For example, in the confidential inter-ministerial meeting of March 1965 a legislative approach was taken, as the cabinet of the Prime Minister asked for the publication of a decree making contraceptives accessible in pharmacies. This proposal was eventually rejected as the risk of questioning the 1920 law in the metropole was too high.[74] Eventually, no public statement was made and it was decided to send internal notes to customs ordering them to let modern, and illegal, contraceptives pass the borders.[75] Even though there was a proposal for an early application of the 1967 law in the DOM, it was rejected by the prefects as they feared local opposition. Contraception therefore became legal and openly available only from 1967 on, when the *Loi Neuwirth* passed and legalised birth control in France, despite efforts by the government to allow birth control distribution from earlier on in the DOM, in contradiction with French law.[76]

How did the locals in Martinique and Guadeloupe react to the attempted family planning campaigns? Both islands received the same instructions from the French government to set up family planning associations, but their response differed. Guadeloupeans set up private initiatives while the associations in Martinique worked closely together with the prefecture.[77]

In 1964, the *Maternité Consciente* (Conscious Maternity) was founded in Guadeloupe with a board composed of Guadeloupean doctors and teachers, both men and women. The organisation distributed contraceptives, such as the hormonal birth control pill. However, the distribution of birth control, or even sharing of information about it, stayed limited to hospitals. This is reflected in a fictionalised autobiography by the Guadeloupean midwife and co-founder of the "Maternité Consciente," Jacqueline Manicom who describes how the director of the hospital she worked in strongly opposed her talking about contraception to patients.[78] Another obstacle was the lack of resources. Although local actors played an important role in setting up the first family planning organisations, their impact stayed limited due to the difficulty in accessing contraceptives. This changed in 1966 through the unofficial collaboration with the prefect,

---

73 Ibid., 62.

74 Sanseigne, "L'Etat contre lui-même," 64.

75 Ibid., 65.

76 Zancarini-Fournel, "Contraception et avortement dans les Antilles françaises," 94.

77 Gautier, "Les politiques familiales et démographiques," 393.

78 Jacqueline Manicom, *La Graine: Journal d'une sage-femme* (Presses de la Cité, 1973), https://excerpts.numilog.com/books/9782258187719.pdf.

Pierre Bolotte, who supervised the import of illegal contraceptives himself.[79]

In Martinique on the other hand, the prefect, Pierre Lambertin, was less willing to encourage the creation of clinics and the spread of contraceptives as he feared that the religious, social and political opposition would be too strong.[80] Nonetheless, early initiatives were set up by local doctors. In 1965, Dr. Yoyo, a pro-independence doctor politically affiliated with the socialist party, founded the *Centre d'Etude, de Documentation et de Formation* (Centre of Study, documentation and training), the first family planning association in Martinique. Dr. Yoyo argued not wanting to limit, but rather regulate births.[81] French officials did not engage with this association in the long-term but rather encouraged the creation of a family planning clinic at the maternity ward of Fort-de-France in 1967, directed by Dr. Fouché, who received training and supplies of contraceptives from the metropole.[82] This shows how, even though there was some sense of agency from local doctors who set up their own clinics, their scope of action depended on the willingness of the French government to provide support. Pro-independency doctors were pushed aside, replaced by others who accepted the collaboration with the metropole. This was a way for the government to ensure that family clinics would stay under indirect government control.

In addition, on both islands, the effectiveness of the locally set up family planning associations strongly depended on the willingness of the prefects to collaborate. Even though they were supposed to represent the French state, their choices were also influenced by actors, in particular religious ones, at the local level. The Catholic Church represented a strong opposition group, as it still played an important role in people's everyday life in France, and in particular in Martinique and Guadeloupe. This limited the prefect's power, as can be seen in a note sent in 1966, where Pierre Bolotte, prefect of Guadeloupe, declares not having been able to apply the family planning measures ordered by France because of the hostility of the bishop.[83] When an early application of the 1967 law was discussed, the Church presented strong opposition, which eventually led to the retraction of this plan.[84] Opposition voices highlighting the colonial nature of the birth control campaigns remained scarce in the West Indies, or at least poorly documented. There is record of statements by catholic doctors, and a catholic judge, who denounced the difference in family planning politics in the metropole and the DOM, and highlighted the need to tackle economic

---

79   Sanseigne, "L'Etat contre lui-même," 69.

80   Ibid., 70.

81   Zancarini-Fournel, "Contraception et avortement dans les Antilles françaises," 99.

82   Sanseigne, "L'Etat contre lui-même," 70.

83   Zancarini-Fournel, "Contraception et avortement dans les Antilles françaises," 87.

84   Ibid., 94.

problems.[85] However, these anti-colonial critics of birth control remained a minority, partly due to the fact that the French government published its decisions and intentions in circulars and internal communications, ensuring low publicity.

Even though Martinique and Guadeloupe formally became part of France in 1946, the differential approach to natality and measures surrounding birth control show that the colonial power dynamics persisted. While the French government was worried about a population decline in the metropole, it feared overpopulation in the DOM and thus proposed birth control as a solution. However, the birth control campaigns needed to be implemented in a way which would not challenge the French pro-natalist laws and attitudes. These legal obstacles, as well as opposition from local actors led to the fact that contraceptives were only spread on a small scale before 1967, despite prior efforts by both the French government and certain local actors to open family planning clinics.

Conclusion

Through a comparative historiographical approach, this research has shown how, despite differing stances towards birth control, both France and Britain promoted it in their colonies in the Caribbean during the period preceding its legalisation in the metropole. Yet, the campaigns unfolded at a different pace, due to the respective laws and practices in the metropole, but also in response to the different reactions by locals.

Even though both France and Britain legalised birth control at the same time, in 1967, the level of acceptance in the years prior to this shift strongly differed. France's pro-natalist attitude and moral opposition, fuelled by the influence of the Catholic Church, contrasted with eugenic positions common in Britain, who feared that the birth rate of the poor would surpass that of the wealthy. As a result, laws were flexible in Britain, and birth control started to be freely distributed from the 1920s on, while in France it was still actively prosecuted.

While their views on natality differed in regard to the population of the metropole, both British and French colonial authorities shared similar concerns about the overpopulation of their colonies in the Caribbean. Both governments identified overpopulation as the main cause of economic problems and proposed birth control as the solution. In Jamaica, although the initial discourses were motivated by neo-Malthusian and eugenicist ideologies,

---

85   Zancarini-Fournel, "Contraception et avortement dans les Antilles françaises," 96.

local feminists rapidly started to establish their own initiatives and were at the forefront of the first birth control campaigns. By 1939, the first birth control clinic was distributing contraceptives while this started only much later in the French territories of Martinique and Guadeloupe, in the 1960s. It would only be after the legalisation of contraception in the metropole that birth control clinics would be run on a large scale. This was not due to a lack of political will, as both the French government and local doctors set up initiatives throughout the 1960s in order to popularise contraceptives. However, the French pro-natalist attitude and the strict laws of the metropole limited the possibilities to take practical steps. Unlike in Jamaica, Guadeloupeans and Martiniqueans had gained the same rights as citizens of the metropole, and the French government was putting much effort into ensuring that they considered themselves as such.

This discrepancy in the way Britain and France saw the people in the Caribbean was a key element which influenced the pace at which the campaigns unfolded. In Martinique and Guadeloupe, birth control advocates and politicians had to ensure that the measures were, or at least appeared to be, aligned with the strict laws of the metropole. In contrast, the Colonial Office could implement specific regulations more freely in Jamaica. Still, in both cases officials feared local opposition and therefore opted for more discrete means of influence, leaving local actors at the forefront of the campaigns. British officials did not want to spur racial tensions, in a time when anti-colonial voices were becoming more widespread. In Martinique and Guadeloupe, the Catholic Church, as well as anti-colonial politicians, expressed their opposition to birth control, which delayed the implementation of practical measures. This shows how, even though the birth control campaigns started off from eugenic and neo-Malthusian discourses on overpopulation, the agency of local actors in the Caribbean cannot be undermined. The first birth control clinics emerged as a reaction by local doctors and women's rights activists to the need for women to be able to space out births. This would lead to an improvement of health, and, in combination with social reforms improve the overall economic conditions of the poor population. The first half of the twentieth century was a time when Britain and France saw their imperial power declining, as decolonial thought was spreading across the colonies. The worry about the increasing fragility of their power is visible in their reaction to oppositional voices. Aware of the influence of religious and political opposition leaders, both Britain and France distanced themselves from the population debate once it had been taken over by locals, limiting their interventions to written contributions without providing any practical support.

This paper has focused on three islands in the Caribbean: Jamaica, Martinique and Guadeloupe. While the comparison of these three islands gives an insight into the impact laws and practices in the metropole have had on their

Caribbean colonies, more detailed and accurate conclusions could be drawn by integrating the case of other places, including on other continents, colonised by France and Britain. Furthermore, it is notable that the amount of historical research undertaken on birth control in the British Caribbean far exceeds work focused on the French West Indies. An in-depth study of Guadeloupean and Martiniquean newspapers is still to be done, as well as research on the reaction of local women to the introduction of birth control. This could be done through the study of written sources, but also by conducting oral history interviews with women and doctors who experienced the opening of the first clinics and the introduction of the 1967 *Loi Neuwirth*.

II.
CONFERENCE
REVIEWS

Eighth Global History Student Conference, Berlin, June 7–June 10, 2024

REVIEWED BY

Imogen Sadler

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Imogen Sadler trained and worked as a Secondary School teacher in New Zealand, where she was born. Passionate about both teaching and learning, Imogen moved to Berlin to undertake an MA in Global History, which she completed in 2025. She has also been teaching history at an International School in Berlin for the past four years.

Every day the present slips into the past. So where are we really living? And how does the past creep back to greet us in our present lives? The Eighth Annual Global History Student Conference, held in Berlin, provided fertile ground to discuss and debate these very questions, and to cultivate many others.

Friday

The conference was opened with a keynote lecture by Frederik Schröer from the Max Planck Institute for Human Development. His talk, entitled *The Non-Linearity of Scale Emotional Geographies of Nature in Global History*, was as stimulating as it was challenging.[1]

Schröer showed how The Botanic Garden in Berlin is profoundly tied to colonialism, which for Germany began in the 1880s. Simultaneously, the original site housing Berlin's first botanical collections at Kleistpark had become too small: both Germany and The Garden both required space for expansion. Germans supposedly grew into colonial owners, but as a Professor of the History of Emotions Schröer wondered, what brings you to feel like that?

The first director of The Botanic Garden, Adolf Engler, whose 1889 concept for the space was to create, *Die Welt in einem Garten* (the world in one garden), displayed the global variety of plants in a hierarchical structure geographically and scientifically.[2] As Schröer noted, feelings are not spontaneous, they have to be produced. Just as the garden is cultivated, it also plays a key role in constructing a colonial feeling. Schröer referenced early 20th century botanist Franz Ledien's comment that "Germany was beginning to feel like a colonial owner," reflecting both the growing sense of entitlement over colonies as repositories of resources (including knowledge) to be extracted, and the role of the Botanical Garden in that exploitation.

We were then taken on a journey of what Schröer called 'an excursion to the dark side of Geography:' Friedrich Ratzel, a German geographer recognized for coining the term 'lebensraum' (which was used in his bio-geographical study in much the same way as the Nazis who later appropriated the term), argued that nations behave like biological organisms that need space to grow in order to thrive.[3] Here, Schröer explained how geography is used as a manual for imperialism, and how Ratzel's ideas are used as an intellectual justification of colonialism.

---

1   Frederik Schröer, "The Non-Linearity of Scale – Emotional Geographies of Nature in Global History," delivered at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin Hauptgebäude, June 7th, 2024.

2   Ibid.

3   Friedrich Ratzel, *Der Lebensraum – Eine biogeographische Studie (1901)*, (Neudruck, 1966).

The appropriation of frontier land and labour was then discussed in the context of Jason Moore's theory of "Cheap Nature."[4] The colonized, like exotic plants in the garden, were objects to be cultivated and exploited for their usefulness. However, huge investment went into making nature cheap: The Botanical Garden experimented with colonial crops and techniques to increase yield, but these projects rarely generated economic returns. The Botanical Garden therefore mirrored Germany's fruitless colonial pursuits.

At this point, Schröer referenced Linda Tuhiwai Smith's influential publication entitled *Decolonising Methodologies,* where she argued that "research is a dirty word," because it was used as a device by colonial powers to exploit and control indigenous peoples.[5] The idea that research itself (especially of a scientific nature) can act as a tool of imperialism recurred throughout the conference. The argument is that science enables extraction, but does history do the same? Can history itself be measured, quantified, put in order and artificially imposed?

Schröer projected an artwork (see Figure 1) of Alexander von Humboldt in Ecuador and noted that despite reliance on indigenous guides and local knowledge, the painting keeps indigenous figures in the dark, separate from the enlightened Humboldt in the foreground. Just as the painting seemingly excises indigenous presence, so too did naming conventions: flora and fauna were stripped of their native names, as specimens (for example the *tomato Humboldtii*, collected in Venezuela) were cultivated in the Botanic Garden.

[Figure 1: Friedrich Georg Weitsch, Alexander von Humboldt und Aimé Bonpland am Fuß des Vulkans Chimborazo, 1806, Oil on Canvas, © Stiftung Preussische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin]

---

4   Jason W. Moore, "The Rise of Cheap Nature," In *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?,* ed. Jason W. Moore, (PM Press, 2016), 78-115.

5   Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (London: Zed Books, 2012).

The very aesthetic spaces of The Botanical Garden reflected such colonial prejudices and hierarchical classification systems, echoing Martina Löw's argument that spaces (like feelings) are socially produced and reproduced.[6] Space is actively arranged through a process of ordering, thus space orders the social and the social orders space. Space, then, especially with regard to the Botanical Garden, is not a neutral entity but rather a complex layered construct. The aesthetic spaces of the garden are ordered in such a way that display colonial prejudice and hierarchical classification systems. The colonial stereotyping inherent in the physical arrangement and very experience of the garden reflects on and is reflected in society, further perpetuating imbedded power dynamics and cultural narratives.

In his conclusion, Schröer then reviewed how space orders experience, and how humans are central in creating and consuming their spaces. The Botanical Garden itself is found to be profoundly colonial, created to enact a particular kind of natural order, but more than that the space of the Botanical Garden acts as both a container for and a creator of memory, structured to reinforce of Germany's colonial ambitions and social hierarchies.

However, is the space of the garden today still eliciting the same experience of making Germans "feel colonial?" Do we continue to perpetuate marginalization or are there opportunities for decolonial intervention? And can these feelings be switched so quickly? History is, after all, context (it both creates it and depends on it), what you are surrounded by obviously influences your experience, providing clear links between society and culture. But how do we then as individuals or societies decide on what matters? Can history be neatly arranged like the garden?

Schröer's recommends that we must reckon with the colonial past, and historians must complicate these narratives, not uproot them. His advice? "Stay Angry."

Saturday

Many panelists across the four panels connected their discussions to the previous day's keynote lecture. *The Global Histories of Science* panel made these links most clearly and effectively.

Beginning with Mariana Ladrón de Guevara Zuzunaga's (Pablo de Olavide University) presentation on colonial medicine in the Andres, she examined

---

6   Martina Löw, *The Sociology of Space: Materiality, Social Structures, and Action*, trans. Donald Goodwin (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

efforts by colonial authorities to prevent indigenous deaths in colonial Peru, in particular Matías de Porres, a Spanish physician. Xiaoping Xue (Tsinghua University) discussed how science, cultural hierarchies and global exchange all intersected in the contested context of the Qingdao Observatory's passage from German to Japanese to Chinese administration in the twentieth century. Lars Dickmann (University of Heidelberg) explored how Swiss entomologists acted as proxy imperial agents in Dutch Sumatra and experimented with pesticides in ways impossible in Europe, revealing how colonial spaces enabled risky scientific practices. Abdud-Dayyaan Badroodien (University of Cape Town) showed how the 19th-century invention of the Bantu language family in South Africa merged European linguistic and racial hierarchies, shaping both anthropology and colonial governance.

These presentations highlighted one of the lesser addressed aspects of global history; the often hyped aspect of connection and flows, which ignores the power and objectives of those controlling the flows. Ladrón de Guevara showed how de Porres investigation into indigenous foods and effort to reconcile them to Hippocratic-Galenic medical logic was not just science in the service of colonialism, but was itself a cultural imperialism Xue's work showed the opposite perspective of those under colonial rule, as Chinese scientists sought to use local knowledge to reclaim "meteorological sovereignty," in competition with Japanese scientists. In summation, *The Global Histories of Science* panel did not just look at examples of science and scientific discoveries world wide, but rather explored the tensions of science in a colonial context.

The Student Salon

This year's Student Salon continued the tradition of discussions organized by students focused on issues faced by students. In particular the idea of "Resistance in Academia," that is, discussions about how students can deal with the challenges and difficulties faced within institutional frameworks.

It began with a wonderful meditation led by Sarah Wullbrecht, which helped everyone get into a state of mind to have open and honest discussions. The discussion leaders; Margaret Slevin, Evan Liddle, Carla Schmidt, Somer Mengqing Zhang, Monalisha Mallik, and Phoebe Ng, led the discussions in two parts the first one explored a number of specific topics, such as students sharing experiences about how student organized unions or sharing experiences of difficulties faced by individuals studying in a foreign context. Complemented by snacks and drinks, it was 90 minutes of productive conversation, insightful questions and occasional laughter.

Sunday

The second day of the conference provided attendees with more exciting research and presentations. There were a number of different presentations from different panels which continued to explore the ideas from the previous day.

Thahir Jamal Kiliyamannil (University of Hyderabad) from the *Negotiating Borders, Networks and Identities* panel shared his research on the Indian Ocean. His lecture explored how sovereignty was negotiated and experienced on the Malabar Coast in southwest India during the early-modern and colonial periods. Kiliyamannil's work disrupted conventional sovereignty models and instead focused on how autonomy within the port city such as Calicut was shared and layered between hereditary rulers, merchant councils, and religious authorities. Malabar's inhabitants also navigated forms of sovereignty through other strategies such as pledging allegiance to the Sultan as a counterweight to Portuguese colonialism.

Nilab Saeedi's (Austrian Academy of Sciences and İbn Haldun University) presentation on Muslih al-din al-Lari, a prominent Persian scholar in exile and his relationship with rulers, in the *Transcultural Mobilities and Identities* panel. This illustrated the connections between politics, people and ideas that generate both integration and exclusion/disconnections, particularly for religious minorities or other "outsiders." The scholar al-Lari fled Safavid Persia for religious reasons and sought refuge at different times in the Mughal and Ottoman Empires. His path serves to illustrate Saeedi's point about how rulership led to cycles of inclusion and exclusion, but also that the fruit of such tension came in the form of broader perspectives and universal histories. al-Lari drew on various stories from different perspectives to create imagery and poetry works on a larger scale.

One panel in particular, *Power, Control, and Women's Bodies* combined work on diverse yet interconnected topics on the history of gender, sexuality, race, medicine, and colonial power.

Sanmeet Kaur's (University College London) research highlighted the 1979 Heathrow virginity testing scandal, where South Asian women arriving in the UK were subjected to sexually invasive tests by immigration authorities who sought to verify their marital status. Charmain Chan's (University of Hong Kong) lecture on birth control known as the Lippes Loop in Taiwan explored how state-sponsored birth control was linked to education and class. Vipin Kumar (Banaras Hindu University) showed how the experience of women and children in the Kosi River delta, recorded in flood songs (played during the panel) is

shaped not just by geography and old colonial policies, but gendered work expectations. Finally Justin Jung (Free University of Berlin) demonstrated how the construction of the "prostitute's body" in 19th century Europe represented a prime example of epistemological surveillance.

If global history is about connections across time and space, these presentations found in different times and locations, all focused on the idea of a sort of test or criteria for different perceptions of femininity, based on racist and/or sexist assumptions about faith and purity, undergirded by old Orientalist ideas. While some of the presented work has been denounced such as the virginity testing, as clarified by Kaur, other ideas remain more firmly rooted, such as Jung's point about female prostitutes not being seen as fully feminine.

Conclusion

The whole group took a walk to the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Platz, where a few of the organizing team took time to ask participants to reflect on their experiences and how the presentations and their conversations together had expanded their perspectives on their research and interests. Broken into small groups, the conversations were intimate and thoughtful.

On Monday 10 participants took part in the city tour in Mitte which discussed the critical-colonial history of Berlin, led by a former student, Reuben Pierrepoint. This included stopping at the oft visited *Führerbunker* location, but also pointing out that nearby was the site of the 1884 Congo Conference which partitioned African territory among imperial powers. This conclusion to the conference was appropriate, a corollary to Schröer's keynote lecture, about the manifold nature of spaces and their creation. The conference itself provided a space in which young and budding researchers transformed with discussions and debates about how global history continues to shape our world today.

European Social Science History Conference, Leiden University, March 26–29, 2025

REVIEWED BY

Phoebe Ka Laam Ng and Evan Liddle

ABOUT THE REVIEWERS

Phoebe Ka Laam Ng is completing her Master's in Global History at Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Having finished her editor role at *Global Histories*, Phoebe is pursuing her career in museums, with a primary focus on (post)colonial networks, history of science, and East Asian history.

Evan Liddle graduated from the University of California Santa Barbara with a BA in History and Geography and later received a master's in education. He is currently enrolled in the Master's in Global History at the Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Evan is interested in epistemologies and the history of science and technology.

Introduction

As the former and current editors in chief of *Global Histories*, we were honoured to be invited to the latest biannual European Social Science History Conference (ESSHC), which took place from March 26–29, 2025, hosted by the International Institute of Social History (IISH) in Leiden University, to join other distinguished history journal editors on the discussion about the role of journals in shaping the field of global history. Begun in 1996, this year ESSHC celebrated its fifteenth iteration, and around 1500 scholars gathered in Leiden to share their latest research. Aiming to provide a platform for scholars that use social science methods to analyse historical phenomena, the conference comprised twenty-seven thematic networks, each featuring ten to fifteen panels, totalling 370 sessions. Focusing on panels themed on global history, this review includes discourses on the latest and upcoming research topics that are raising interest in global history, and most importantly, our dialogue with other journal editors reflecting on our work's significance in moulding the discipline.

Panel Series: Reconstructing the Slave Trade in Asia

One of the major questions within global history is how the field can advance when most scholarship focuses on materials written in languages of the Global North. With this question in mind, Phoebe joined the panel series, "Reconstructing Slave Trade in Asia," which explored potential solutions to limitations in global history. Mostly using Asian language sources, the initial collection of presentations disclosed the slave trade in fifteenth- to nineteenth-century China (Claude Chevaleyre), the Dutch-indigenous collaboration on slave trade in seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Papua and Maluku (Hans Hägerdal), and piracy and human trafficking along the sixteenth-century Chinese coast (Barend Noordam). The later session then focused extensively on projects based on European language sources and suggested potential institutional collaborations; Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, on behalf of IISH, introduced their latest project, *Exploring Slave Trade in Asia* (ESTA), followed by Pascal Konings, who demonstrated the current-in-production ESTA digital database supported by the Team/Individual Data Entry System (TIDES). Additionally, Giuseppe Marino revealed how the Portuguese Jesuits were connected to the slave trade during the Imjin War in the late sixteenth century, which involved Japan, Korea, and China. Meanwhile, Philipp Huber, also from the ESTA team, detailed the global slave trade network that operated from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century in Portuguese Macau.

This panel series was intriguing as it offered a model to accomplish global history projects through international institutional collaboration. The ESTA project aims to identify and reassess the slave trade networks connecting the

Indian Ocean, Indonesian Archipelago, and South China Sea, which involved Asian and African actors and the Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish Empires. Although the database is still in production and currently focuses on sources written in Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish, this digital model, which records different voyages with open access, demonstrates potential for including sources in other Asian and African languages in the future.

The panel was organised precisely as a platform for scholars with different language skills and regional focuses to gather around and exchange knowledge. Panellists from the first session contributed based on Asian materials, while the second group added to the discussion with European literature, and together they produced a fruitful discussion on each project. This kind of insightful knowledge exchange can only be accomplished by international collaboration, and it could be a way forward for global historians with limited language abilities.

Panel: Radical Global Histories

Evan attended the panel "Radical Global Histories," a critical examination of the global history frameworks of "mobilities" and "connections." The panel ranged from an analysis of various radical utopian communities (Robert Kramm), the role of women as partners to mobile anti-colonial activists (Joanna Simonow), to the examination of individual lives, such as the work of anti-fascist Inôcencio da Câmara Pires (Sara Camacho Felix) and philosopher-activist Tran Duc Thao (Dominique Ankoné).

Fundamentally, each presentation focused on one way in which traditional global history paradigms failed to fully capture the radical nature of activists and their communities in the twentieth century. Kramm's presentation examined utopian communities and their common responses to early twentieth-century capitalism and imperialism. Felix's examination of Pires' life reflects silences in archives. In histories of anarchism, Pires is deracialised, his Africanness is invisible, or he is described by the nationality of his wife; while in Angolan national histories, he is deradicalised so that his anarchism is invisible. This panel offered not only a global reach, but also differences in scale, switching from the macro-scale (Kramm and Simonow) to the micro-scale (Felix and Ankoné).

Additionally, these presentations all highlighted the difficulties of study- ing marginal and mobile figures and the need to look beyond archives. Both Simonow and Felix relied on marginal sources: notes, travel documents, and photographs. Felix pointed out how a large part of Pires' life is known through notes he wrote on the back of photographs, a source which very easily could

have been lost. Answering questions about his intention to study disconnected radical communities, Kramm offered the analogy of fungus or mushrooms as a decentralised network and a way for future scholars to square the circle of studying marginal groups without placing them in grand or national narratives, suggesting his "associative global history" as a possible framework. In short, these presentations offered new and exciting ways of examining global history beyond existing methodologies.

Journals and the Shape of Global History

To encourage collaboration and discuss the future of history journals in the field of global history, Giorgio Riello chaired a roundtable question and answer discussion. We were glad to be included as representatives from *Global Histories: A Student Journal* (GHist) and join the chief editors of major professional journals, namely Laura Mitchell from the *Journal of World History* (JWH), Elisabeth Leake from the *Journal of Global History* (JGH), and Anne-Isabelle Richard and Cátia Antunes from *Itinerario: Journal of Imperial and Global Interactions* (IT). Riello set the tone of this discussion by noting that global history connects otherwise isolated fragments into a fairer, more inclusive narrative.

Riello then invited responses in terms of how journals have been shaping, or gatekeeping, global history. The panellists agreed that "global history," as its criteria should remain broad and inclusive, provided that the article is a well-written piece that goes beyond national history and presents a novel or innovative methodology or unorthodox sources. Additionally, the presenters from IT asserted that history journals should never remain neutral on contemporary problems. Publications, when engaging with these issues, can offer alternative ways of thinking about both the present and the historiography. By publishing special issues based on different regions or languages, IT's publications reflect this standpoint on broadening historiography.

The roundtable then moved onto concerns on balancing academic and commercial considerations and the question of inequalities of access by authors and readers. The professional editors from JGH, JWH, and IT all acknowledged that publishers have imposed financial restraints, which contributed to the problem of inequalities. For example, the additional fees to publish articles in open access impact author visibility and the ability to get published. While all the journals present invite submissions from around the globe, they cannot provide language editors or translators for non-native English authors. Thus, when scholars are independent researchers or come from institutions with minimal funding, language barriers—compounded by extra publication fees— often discourage them from submitting to international journals which mainly publish in English. As a student-run journal, GHist receives university funding

to provide open access publication for our student authors. However, GHist still shares the issue of regional imbalance with most submissions coming from the Global North.

Inspired by this, an audience member inquired about "the pyramid," or the system by which publication standards are set. Acknowledging that the Global North currently sets the standards for knowledge production, there was much discussion of the barriers to scholars from the Global South and ways to encourage more submissions from the region, including mentorship and closer relationships between authors, editors, and peer reviewers. However, Mitchell from JWH pointed out that the pyramid is constrained by financial resources, noting that any instant changes without in-depth consideration would harm the journals' production and finances. This highlights the struggles of professional journals in balancing academic and commercial factors. However, all journals ultimately called for more active participation from the Global South.

Audience members then raised several other concerns. One particularly interesting topic was the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools as a possible aid to reduce inequality. All editors agreed that existing AI technology does not meet publication standards in terms of accuracy and sensitivity in translations. The presenters from IT pointed out that some concepts in Asian and African languages simply do not exist in English, and their translation risks spreading misunderstanding of historic phenomena. As Antunes from IT said, "Some things are untranslatable, and that's okay!" It was also pointed out by the panel that popular translation technologies are a microcosm of this issue, as they are often poorly designed for translating many African and Asian languages. Nevertheless, several panellists remained optimistic that in the future, AI tools might be able to help with submissions and publications.

To wrap up the panel, the chair asked for visions on the future of publication in global history and advice for potential authors. Topic-wise, JGH encouraged more submissions on early modern and medieval history. Social and cultural history, microhistory, the history of commodities, and environmental history are also welcome in both JGH and JWH. IT highlighted their eagerness for good conceptual articles concerning time and space, with a rich diversity of sources. Yet, all journals struggled similarly in finding peer reviewers outside of the Global North. For GHist, the reviewers are limited to the current master's programme students, while for the other journals, the editors must stretch their choices from reaching out to published authors to "stalking" scholars from their work cited on Google Scholar. As institutions often do not share their scholars' emails on their webpages for internet security, it is difficult for editors to reach out to specialists. Although IT mentioned their attempt to overcome this challenging search for peer reviews by keeping a pool mixed of

junior and senior scholars, all editors agreed and emphasised the importance of responsiveness and communication. Thus, it is essential for authors to keep their online profiles up to date and be patient as the editing process can take up to a year to get reviewed. In return, the journal editors provide active support by sharing access to literature, enabling potential writers from underrepresented regions to have their work published.

For one of the last questions, an audience member inquired about the future of the "journal issue" as a concept and whether a collection of articles on similar topics remains worthwhile when there are search engines that can easily find a particular subject. The panellists agreed that the "journal issue" should remain. As opposed to publishing articles individually, collating similar articles into issues can provide context for research and put authors in dialogue, despite the extra effort and time it takes to edit and organise. Though research might not begin by consulting issues, as a resource for scholars, journal issues will always remain an essential tool.

Concluding remarks

Global history as a field is constantly in flux. This conference provided fascinating insights into how global history not only continues to ask important questions of scholars and sources but also expands and evolves itself. The effort to publicise understudied connections, such as the slave trade in Asia, and the attempt to tell global stories of marginalised communities, reflect this ongoing process.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Laura Mitchell from JWH, who initiated and organised this special panel with Giorgio Riello, for inviting us to join this inspirational discussion on journals and global history. It was an exceptional opportunity for our team to gain insights from professional history journals and promote the efforts of our student contributors. We believe this panel marks a starting point for *Global Histories* to further collaborate with other journals in the future.

III.
BOOK
REVIEWS

Steel Town Adivasis: Industry and Inequality in Eastern India by Christian Strümpell, Social Science Press, 2023. ISBN: 9789383166572

REVIEWED BY

Ankit Chowdhury

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Ankit Chowdhury holds a BA in History from the Scottish Church College in India and an MA in Dependency and Slavery Studies from the University of Bonn, where he will begin as a pre-doctoral fellow in January 2026. His current research, centred on "Cold War dependencies," which compares steel towns in India and Brazil established during the Cold War to examine how labour, technology, and ecological transformations became intertwined in ways that produced enduring asymmetries and continue to shape present-day inequalities. Furthermore, he is particularly interested in the labour, urban history as well as the history of science and environment

In his book *Steel Town Adivasis,* anthropologist Christian Strümpell has exposed how a flagship project of postcolonial development in India has reshaped an entire region by transforming land, labour, identity, and power. Further, it reveals that industrial progress did not dissolve caste and ethnic hierarchies but rebuilt them in new forms. Through the rich ethnography of Adivasi,[1] populations across generations, the author has shown how displacement, union politics, stereotyping, and neoliberal reforms produced shifting class divisions within Adivasi communities. He has analysed how the identity of Adivasis, "impinges on their class position and vis-à-vis" intersect with class and caste over time.[2] Therefore, by examining these dynamics, the book forces us to confront the human costs of development and rethink what industrial modernity has truly meant for India's marginalized citizens.

Strümpell's extensive ethnographic investigation, conducted from 2004 to 2019, focused on a public sector steel plant built in 1959 in Rourkela, which is located in the eastern Indian state of Orissa (Odisha since 2011).[3] In particular, the monograph stands as a rare lens into how the indigenous population navigated industrial modernity in India, which means the dream of progress that steel plants symbolised in the Nehruvian era and the reality of its unequal outcomes. Hence, this compelling work is an addition to the ongoing literature on Indian steel towns and to global labour studies. For instance, in his study on Bhilai steel town, anthropologist Parry focused on the shifting nature of labour as it reveals that the line dividing secure wage labour from insecure ones, transcends the conventional divisions between manual and non-manual workforce, which is an important indicator of variation within the industries of India, rather than multiple gradations. Including that, one of Parry's main hypotheses was that working-class politics had not emerged in Bhilai because its labour force was deeply divided by class.[4] Similarly, anthropologist Sanchez's work on the private sector Tata Iron and Steel plant in Jamshedpur has led us to consider how corruption is rooted within economic negotiations between political figures, entrepreneurs, industrial corporations, and violent actors. He asserted that labour discourses raise uncertainties about whether economic liberalisation from the 1980s has resulted in a more open and meritocratic society. Additionally, he argued that the endemic corruption found in the plant is a perceptual example of political consciousness that surmounts the divisions

---

1   In Odia, *Adivasi* means "original inhabitants," where *Adi* means beginning or first and *vasi* means dweller. It is also a term used in collective reference to indigenous people in some parts of Indian subcontinent – mostly the central and eastern belt of India.

2   Christian Strümpell, *Steel Town Adivasis: Industry and Inequality in Eastern India* (Social Science Press, 2023), 11-13.

3   Ibid., 27.

4   Jonathan Parry, *Classes of Labour: Work and life in a central Indian Steel Town* (Routledge, 2020), 13, 118, and 302.

between workers who are employed permanently and those who are not.[5] Conversely, where Parry focuses on working-class moral life and Sanchez on political and criminal economy, Strümpell synthesises these concerns but roots them in the Adivasis' experience of displacement, marginalization, and uneven incorporation into modern industry. Conversely, while Parry's scholarship gives us a deep moral anthropology of steel works, Strümpell gives an ethnography of inequality, ethnicity, and class formation, and while Sanchez foregrounds corruption and political violence as an everyday practice in his study, Strümpell foregrounds historical structural inequality and the reproduction of ethnic hierarchy within an industrial town.

After that, one of the key themes of the book is how the caste and class intersect to play a broader divisional spectrum in the workplace of Rourkela Steel town (RSP). According to Strümpell, the industrial labour in Rourkela was not merely in a process of economic modernisation but also a contradictory space of identity formation and socio-political struggle. Furthermore, the monograph is structured around four interrelated foci, where the first is on displacement and dispossessions, in which the author has shown that the primary protagonists, Adivasis, were left out of the early phase of the plant's land acquisition process, and their exclusion simultaneously has changed the overall course of Rourkela's socio-political paradigm.[6] Thus, it systematically highlights the long-term effects of land alienation on livelihoods, social mobility, the shortcomings of public compensation schemes, and the systematic and institutional marginalization of displaced populations.[7]

The second part concentrates on the issues of class and caste, where the author provides examples of the deeply ingrained caste-based disparities in the workplace, where the upper-castes who came from various parts of India have generally taken on skilled, managerial, and technical roles, while the Adivasis have been moved to the lower echelons of the workforce. This comparison showcases how formal employment in the public sector has led to internal class stratifications, and the book critically analyses the diverse class trajectories under this framework. For instance, it shows how they were embedded in precarious contract-based employment as well as how they were often seen as *"jungli"* (wild and uncivilized) and prone to drunkenness by their so-called upper counterparts.[8] Conversely, these stereotypes were challenged over time. As Santosh, an Adivasi worker, prided himself on countering the derogatory

---

5   Andrew Sanchez, *Criminal Capital: Violence, Corruption and Class in Industrial India* (Routledge, 2016), 6-8.

6   Strümpell, *Steel Town,* 3.

7   Ibid., 25.

8   Ibid., 103 and 125.

remarks from upper-castes by illustrating his competence and cultural pride.[9] His sister and son undertook vocational training and higher studies, which was a deliberate attempt to challenge this top-to-bottom stereotyping, and it also shows the broader consciousness to claim middle-class respectability in the township.[10] Additionally, the Jharkhand movement in the 2000s also provided direct platforms to Adivasi workers by advocating for labour rights and ethnic recognition, which perpetuated their rightful place in industrial society.[11] Therefore, the monograph carefully demonstrates a dual process of how structural inequality ensured that negative stereotypes remained influential in shaping Adivasi identity in postcolonial industrialization, despite showing that their agency acted against such prejudice.

In line with this, the third part is based on resistance and political mobilization, where Strümpell illustrates how Adivasis have participated in a variety of resistance to counter their marginalised positions in the region as from wider political mobilization to trade union practices. Further, he offers a detailed investigation of labour conflicts by highlighting the protests and strikes of the 1970s and 1990s, which indicate both changes and continuity in collective actions.[12] Nevertheless, these agitations achieved limited effectiveness by securing fundamental demands like better wages and job security for selected workers but were undermined by ethnic divisions, managerial resistance, and the weakening of trade unions.[13] This pattern again highlights the marginalization based on class, which eventually cracked the solidarity of labour in the post-independence development of India. In this context, the author used a metaphor to better crystallise this situation, as he suggested that the social nature of the RSP township has evolved into more of a "salad bowl," where every element retains its uniqueness rather than a "melting pot."[14] This pattern not only shows a break from the Eurocentric perceptions of labour but also reflects how the residents continued to have connections and interactions within their ethnic and caste-based community as part of their narrow social lens.

Then, the last part is based on the concept of space. Here, Strümpell has carefully demonstrated how the urban space (township and *basti* [slum]) in the region is structured along class, caste, and ethnic lines, which not only illustrates the material inequalities but also showcases their "life-worlds and social imaginaries." Likewise, the author also discussed how colonial bureaucracies

---

9   Ibid., 200.

10   Ibid., 201 and 217.

11   Ibid., 127-130.

12   Ibid., 212 and 275.

13   Ibid., 149-150 and 309.

14   Ibid., 261.

in planning logics were still embedded in postcolonial steel town planning.[15] In line with this, he shows how these spaces were used as a disciplinary mechanism to regulate the agencies of those inhabiting them. Additionally, these forms of trajectory were also contested over time; for instance, Strümpell has observed how disposed villagers settled in unauthorized slums as a form of resistance and negotiation with the authority. This finds similarities with Lefebvre's construction of the "representational space," which suggests how the multifaceted meaning the space takes on in daily social interaction.[16]

After that, another fundamental reason for this monograph's contribution to the scholarly discussion lies in its intensive approach to the interdisciplinary methodology. Strümpell's employment of participant observation, coupled with interviews and data collection, provides rich qualitative insights into the lived experiences of the RSP workforce. Meanwhile, this study goes beyond Rourkela's uniqueness to contribute to more general conversations in global labour studies. The study challenged the prevailing Eurocentric discourse, which frequently ignores how indigenous and subalterns navigated the power structures, especially in a postcolonial context. While comparing the challenges of indigenous people in Africa[17] and Latin America,[18] the study adds to the comparative discussion on extractive economies, displacement as a showcase that the pattern of Rourkela was not a solely isolated scenario.

Finally, only one major issue that remains insufficiently answered in this, otherwise rich ethnography, is the unresolved tension between Adivasis' agency and structural constraint. As throughout this book, the author brilliantly shows how Adivasis were the backward other of industrial modernity, who contested these structures through union politics, educational strategies, and everyday practices of resistance. However, the analysis never fully explains why these acts of resistance failed to produce any significant collective reordering of power, especially considering the moments when Adivasis achieved upward mobility and numerical majorities in certain strata of the society. Nevertheless, the study offers an inclusive advocacy which incorporates the indigenous community, especially, illustrating that when freedom arrived in India in 1947, the concept of that freedom still differed for decades to come. In this way, the book serves as a gentle reminder to those working with steel towns or those interested in the study of labour, Adivasis, subaltern etc., of the significance of consistently exploring the history of industrial growth from the perspective of the under-represented and marginalized in the archives and the subalterns

---

15   Ibid., 20-21.

16   Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space.* trans. by Donald Nicholson Smith (Blackwell, 1984), 38-39.

17   Strümpell, *Steel Town,* 6 and 333.

18   Ibid., 248 and 345.

in the societal paradigm — thus, this book has achieved that objective as the author wishes to do and will be invaluable for a range of scholars from diverse discipline.

Ελληνικός Κομμουνισμός: Μια διεθνική ιστορία (Greek Communism: A Transnational History (1912–1974) by Kostis Karpozilos, Athens: Antipodes, 2024. ISBN: 9786185267827

REVIEWED BY

Vasilis Plaitis

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Vasilis Plaitis graduated from the University of Crete in Rethymno in 2024, with a Bachelor's degree in History and Archaeology. He is currently a student in the Master's of Global History, jointly run by Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. His field of research is modern Greek history, whereas he is also interested in the history of nationalism and of everyday life.

Kostis Karpozilos' approach in the study of Greek communism, as it is delineated in his book *Greek Communism: A Transnational History (1912–1974)*,[1] is a refreshing addition to the lengthy corpus of studies on the phenomenon. After receiving his doctorate from the University of Crete in 2010, Kostis Karpozilos served as director of ASKI (Contemporary Social History Archive) from 2016 to 2023, which houses a significant part of the archival material the author references. The book serves as a culmination of the author's previous research, which has mostly focused on the history of Greek communism and its international/global aspects, such as the Greek-American communist workers in the early 20th century.[2]

The history of Greek communism is a contentious topic in Greek historiography, with its examination being largely connected to the Greek Civil War (1946–1949). The defeat of the military wing of the Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος (*Communist Party of Greece*, KKE) by the US and UK-supported Greek state led to the establishment of anticommunist policies in the next 25 years.[3] With the dawn of the politically liberalizing *Metapolitefsi* (regime change) era (1974–1985) and the subsequent legalization of the KKE, there was a flurry of new works concerning the party, mainly focusing on the (also flourishing field of research at that time) history of the Civil War.[4] These works, important in their own right for the study of communism in Greece, do have an internationalist focus, but it's one that is mostly restricted to the imposition of Soviet influence on KKE and the role of the Yugoslav government in the Greek Civil War.[5]

The book's stated aims are to move beyond the aforementioned methods of examination in making the globality of the communist phenomenon in Greece more multipolar. This globality is also one that is not located in the contacts of KKE to the International or of the USSR, but also in the lives of communist activists themselves. This is reflected in the structure of six chapters set in chronological order, which begin with a personal story highlighting trends that

1   Kostis Karpozilos, Ελληνικός Κομμουνισμός: Μια διεθνική ιστορία (*Greek Communism: A Transnational History (1912-1974)* (Antipodes, 2024).

2   Kostis Karpozilos, *Red America: Greek Communists in the United States, 1920-1950*, trans. Panagiotis Kechagias (Berghahn, 2023).

3   Antonis I. Liakos and Nicholas Doumanis, "The Edinburgh History of the Greeks, 20th and Early 21st Centuries: Global Perspectives" *Edinburgh History of the Greeks* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 246-262.

4   For an overview of the research conducted on the Greek Civil War, see Polymeris Voglis and Ioannis Nioutsikos, "The Greek Historiography of the 1940s. A Reassessment," *Comparative Southeast European Studies* 65, no. 2 (2017): 316–33.

5   Influential studies in English have been the following: Nikos A. Marantzidis, "Under Stalin's Shadow: A Global History of Greek Communism" *NIU Series in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies* (Cornell University Press, 2023); Thanasis D. Sfikas, "War and Peace in the Strategy of the Communist Party of Greece, 1945–1949" *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3, no. 3 (2001): 5–30; Peter J. Stavrakis, *Moscow and Greek Communism, 1944-1949* (Cornell University Press, 1989).

are laid out in the rest of the chapter. The author uses biographical sources and references extensively in order to highlight the main themes of the book. In the book's prologue, the author states that the aims behind the study were to present a more global narrative for the history of Greek communism, following similar shifts in the study of communist parties elsewhere and to investigate the interplay between national ideology and the internationalist allegiances of the communist activists.[6]

The book begins with "Jewish Socialism," which covers the two most prominent articulations of the communist ideal during the Balkan Wars and World War 1, one based on prewar Greek conceptions of socialism and the other on the multicultural syndicalist tradition of Salonica.[7] The multiethnic character of the Salonica faction helped designate communism as an anti-national force by nationalists and antagonizing socialists alike, a rhetoric which remains relevant throughout the period that concerns the book.[8] The Salonica faction was integral in forming the Σοσιαλιστικό Εργατικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος (*Socialist Labor Party of Greece*, SEKE) in 1918, which was reformed as KKE in 1922. At that time, the party sought tighter ties with the Soviet Union, a process completed by predominantly young refugees from the lands of the former Ottoman and Russian empires. The activity of the refugee communists is detailed in the second chapter, "Refugee Communism," when KKE grew from a marginal party in the 1920s to an influential (and, to the eyes of the state, dangerous) political party.

The next two chapters focus on issues that took place outside of Greece but significantly influenced the policy of KKE. The third chapter, titled "The Socialists of the International," is set in the interwar period and references the participation of Greek communists in international communist networks, such as the Third International and the communist universities of the USSR (KUTV and KUNMZ),[9] which accepted prospective communist activists from around the world. The chapter concludes with the end of the Third International, during the Great Purge of 1937, which also signified a more violent crackdown of "foreign agents," including lots of Greek immigrants and students. Afterwards, "War and Revolution" documents the revolt of Greek Army units in Palestine and Egypt during the Second World War. Karpozilos argues that the revolt, later derided as "counterrevolutionary" and "useless" by party sources, followed a similar

---

6   Karpozilos, *Greek Communism*, 20-21, 32-34.

7   Ibid., 43-136.

8   Ibid., 131-134.

9   The abbreviations stand for Коммунистический университет трудящихся Востока имени Сунь Ятсена (*Communist University of the Toilers of the East,* KUTV) and Коммунистический университет национальных меньшинств Запада (*Communist University of the National Minorities of the West,* KUNMZ).

ideological trajectory (from antifascism to revolutionary communism) to the resistance movement in the Greek mainland, a much more famed example, while at the same time it incorporated anticolonial arguments, due to the participation of Greek-Egyptians active in the Egyptian communist movement. [10]

The final two chapters discuss the postwar reality of the Greek communist movement, after the defeat at the Civil War. The fifth chapter is concerned with the operation of KKE in the Eastern Bloc in the 1950s and is titled "International Socialists." A big part of the chapter is dedicated to the everyday lives of the refugees of the Civil War, who mostly lived in Tashkent and gradually became integrated in the local community, as well as with the organizational structure of the party, mostly located in Tashkent and Bucharest. The chapter concludes with the ousting of the Stalinist leadership of KKE in 1956, in accord with the official USSR policy at the time. The last chapter, entitled "The Riddle of Democracy," entails the discussions of the leftist movements during the seven-year Dictatorship of the Colonels (1967–74). The preeminence of KKE in the communist movement became severely disputed, as intellectuals influenced by the ideas of postcolonialism, Eurocommunism and the international movement of 1968 sought independent modes of action. As a result, a multitude of new leftist/communist parties were created, with suggestions for alternate political solutions, such as the participation in a liberal political framework. The book concludes with a small reference on the history of KKE during the *Metapolitefsi* era, when it was ultimately accepted as an essential and legitimate part of the political sphere.[11]

The book is successful in making a significant contribution to the existing historiography of Greek communism, by making its globality more salient. More specifically, the book provides information on the contacts and interactions of the communist movement in a multitude of contexts, ranging from Malaysian anticolonial activists in the 1930s[12] to the loss of KKE's preeminence in Western Europe,[13] instead of being restrained in a binary international analysis between the Soviet Union's decisions and KKE's actions. The width of these transnational interactions and contexts does not, however, represent the adoption of an exclusionary narrative by the author, where globality in itself is the only motor of change. Rather, by choosing to omit the resistance and the Civil War, extremely important in most analyses of KKE, the author provides a different narrative, which aims to shift the existing depictions. Additionally, globality is not presented as a signifier of "progress," as evidenced by the first

10   Karpozilos, *Greek Communism*, 416-424.

11   Ibid., 619-630.

12   Ibid., 176.

13   Ibid., 519-551.

and the last chapter, where different kinds of global interactions contribute to different results. Other than that, the use of personal stories and anecdotes doesn't just make the story more interesting, but additionally serves as an exemplary way to highlight the author's points, namely the transnational experiences of the actors portrayed in the book and the role of them in them becoming communists, a trend more prominently seen in the second chapter and the description of the lives of various interwar-era communists.

However, there are also shortcomings on the author's account. Barring the fifth chapter, the gender aspect is almost entirely ignored, an absence especially salient when the narrative of the book is mostly based on personal stories. While this could be partly attributed to the dearth of archival material of the interwar period, KKE and the communist movement was the only political space of the time, in which women were theoretically legitimate political actors, and the discussion of the gendered aspect would greatly enrich the analysis of the book. Some details are also left unexplained, such as the moving of Greek communist students from the KUTV to the KUNMZ. While the book accounts why, at first, Greek communists were considered as actors coming from an eastern and backwards state,[14] the change of Greece's status to a "Western" (and therefore "progressive") country is left unexplained. Lastly, while KKE was undoubtedly the most important political actor in the communist movement during the timeframe of the book, a more elaborate reference on other strands of the 20th century communist movement (such as the trotskyist Archeiomarxist movement of the interwar period) would have enriched the narrative of the book, an absence not clarified in the book.

In conclusion, *Greek Communism* provides a different outlook to the one usually employed for the analysis of the Greek communist movement. It does so without any allusions of grandeur, and, despite its shortcomings, is a fascinating and interesting read.

---

14   Ibid., 175.

Studies of European Mercenaries (1350–1800) by Xu Erbin, The Commercial Press, 2024. ISBN: 9787100234313

REVIEWED BY

Han Yutong

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Han Yutong is an undergraduate student at Capital Normal University, affiliated with the Department of History Education in the School of History. Her research interests focus on the military history of Europe from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, with particular attention to the military histories of Italy, the German lands, Switzerland, and Scotland.

Studies of European Mercenaries (1350–1800),[1] authored by Xu Erbin—professor of European military-social history at Xiamen University—examines mercenaries as a lens for Europe's socio-military transformations. A specialist in late medieval and early modern warfare-society dynamics, Xu's prior works include *Military Revolution in a Changing Society: Military Innovation and Social Transformation in Europe from the 14th to 17th Centuries* (*Biandong shehui zhong de junshi geming:14-17 shiji ouzhou de junshi gexin yu shehui biange* 变动社会中的军事革命：14－17世纪欧洲的军事革新与社会变革).[2] His methodology integrates Western "new military history" frameworks to analyze how mercenary systems shaped broader societal changes.

The book's intellectual context follows twentieth century shifts: James Harvey Robinson's "new history," which called for a more interdisciplinary approach to history, was later incorporated by the French Annales School's structural analyses. Post-1950s, these paradigms catalyzed "new military history," which reoriented focus from battlefield tactics to the relationship between war and society. While complementing, not replacing, traditional military history, this approach underpins Xu's synthesis of macrostructural forces and micro-dynamics in mercenary studies.

Over the past three years, Chinese scholars have advanced European historical research through interdisciplinary methodologies and localized theoretical frameworks. Key works integrate political-cultural discourse analysis—exemplified by *The French Style: Political Culture of the Great Revolution*'s (*Falanxi fengge; da geming de zhengzhi wenhua* 法兰西风格：大革命的政治文化)[3] systematic examination of revolutionary mentalities—and literary deconstruction, as seen in Liu Xiaoman's "Reconstructing the Dark History of Europe in *The Phantom Companion*" ("*Youling lvban* zhong heise ouzhoushi de chonggou"〈幽灵旅伴〉中黑色欧洲史的重构).[4] which investigates European history through classical literature. These approaches explore themes like institutional evolution and ideological tensions, notably Qian Chengdan's *Winds Rise and Clouds Soar: Qian Chengdan on the Rise of Great*

---

1   Xu Erbin 许二斌, *Ouzhou guyong bing yanjiu (1350–1800)* 欧洲雇佣兵研究 (1350–1800) [Studies of European Mercenaries (1350–1800)] (Shangwu yin shuguan 商务印书馆, 2024).

2   Xu Erbin 许二斌, *Biandong shehui zhong de junshi geming:14-17 shiji ouzhou de junshi gexin yu shehui biange* 变动社会中的军事革命：14－17世纪欧洲的军事革新与社会变革 [Military Revolution in a Changing Society: Military Innovation and Social Transformation in Europe from the 14th to 17th Centuries] (Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe 黑龙江人民出版社, 2008).

3   Gao Yi 高毅, *Falanxi fengge; da geming de zhengzhi wenhua* 法兰西风格：大革命的政治文化 [The French Style: Political Culture of the Great Revolution] (Shanghai shudian chubanshe 上海书店出版社, 2024).

4   Liu, Xiaoman 刘晓蔓, "'Youling lvban' zhong heise ouzhoushi de chonggou"〈幽灵旅伴〉中黑色欧洲史的重构 [Reconstructing the Dark History of Europe in "The Phantom Companion"], *Wenxue jiaoyu* 文学教育 no. 3 (2023): 106-109.

Powers (fengqiyunfeiyang: Qian chengdan jiang daguo jueqi 风起云飞扬：钱乘旦讲大国崛起),[5] which comparatively traces the trajectories of nine major powers since the fifteenth century. Such scholarship innovatively fuses macro-philosophical inquiry with micro-case rigor, reshaping European historiography through critical dialogue with Western scholarship and academic pluralism.

While Western scholarship (e.g., Li Lanning) traces mercenaries' macro-historical trajectories, Chinese studies, though limited, offer distinct method-ologies: Chen Zhiqiang's analysis of Byzantine "loss of control" and Xu Erbin's *Studies of European Mercenaries (1350–1800)*. The latter uses administrative archives to reveal institutional evolution between 1350–1800 in Europe. Together, they enrich historiography through localized cases and cross-era comparisons.

This book examines European mercenaries from the mid-fourteenth to late eighteenth century—a period of frequent warfare and social transformation across the continent. Adopting the framework of Philippe Contamine, French historian of the Middle Ages, which defines mercenaries as professional soldiers driven primarily by personal gain (rather than political loyalty), it outlines their historical context and analyzes key cases: free companies, Italian condottieri, military contractors, German landsknechts, Scottish overseas service, Swiss mercenaries, the Hesse-Kassel system, and German troops in the American Revolutionary War.[6] Xu employs a dual micro- and macro-level analysis to build a case for the crucial role of mercenaries in history. This approach integrates the examination of mercenary demographics and dissection of specific, but typical, case studies, enabling comprehensive exploration of the mercenary phenomenon.

---

5   Qian Chengdan 钱乘旦, *Fengqiyunfeiyang: Qian chengdan jiang daguo jueqi* 风起云飞扬：钱乘旦讲大国崛起 [Winds Rise and Clouds Soar: Qian Chengdan on the Rise of Great Powers] (Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大学出版社, 2024).

6   Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones (Basil Blackwell, 1984), 99.

During Europe's transition era (1350–1800),[7] frequent wars and the limits of the feudal system drove demand for mercenaries, sourced from materially or economically struggling regions. The structures of mercenary formations evolved from small bands to fifteenth-century contractors, later transitioning to state-leased units after the Thirty Years' War in the seventeenth century. Private recruitment was increasingly regulated from the sixteenth century, but was in decline by the 1800s due to conscription, moral stigmas against mercenaries, economic shifts, and state bans on the practice.

The author argues that mercenaries' societal impact transcended military utility: amplifying war's destructiveness, reshaping politics, accelerating social change, fostering regional ties, and mitigating population imbalances. The study stresses contextual historical evaluation over modern ethical judgments.

A key argument in the book challenges the famous view in Machiavelli's *The Prince*, that mercenaries are both useless and disloyal.[8] Due to Machiavelli's influential status, many sources have accepted his position.[9] He holds that mercenaries do not fight wholeheartedly, that their leaders harbor political ambitions, and that they ultimately betray their employers. Xu here critiques each of these claims: mercenaries do, in fact, fight earnestly. Machiavelli cites

---

7   Scholarship conventionally designates the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries as the "late medieval" period and the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries as the "early modern" era. While the year 1500 is a conventional divide, significant continuities persisted. Given the uninterrupted evolution of mercenary institutions, this study treats 1350–1800 as a coherent unit, adopting the term "transition era" for its analysis. Scholars diverge in conceptualizing this era's defining features, with some characterizing it as a shift from medieval to modern society, and others as a transition from a traditional agrarian to a modern industrial society. Academic consensus largely places the endpoint of this transition in the late eighteenth century, but views on its starting point vary considerably, ranging from the early sixteenth century back to the thirteenth. For key interpretations of this transition, see:
Zhu Xiaoyuan 朱晓远, *Ouzhou niepan: Guodu shiqi Ouzhou de fazhan gainian* 欧洲涅槃：过度时期欧洲的发展概念 [European Nirvana: Developmental Concepts in Transitional Europe] (Xuelin chubanshe 学林出版社, 2002), 2–3; Hou Jianxin 侯建新, *Shehui zhuanxing shiqi de Xiyou yu Zhongguo* 社会转型时期的西欧与中国 [Western Europe and China during the Social Transition Period] (Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe 高等教育出版社, 2005), 1. For an overview of the scholarly debate on the period's inception, see Wang Qinrong 王勤榕, "Xiou cong fengjian shehui xiang ziben zhuyi guodu shiqi hunyin xingtai de ruogan bianhua" 西欧从封建社会向资本主义过渡时期婚姻形态的若干变化 [Changes in Marriage Patterns in Western Europe during the Feudal-to-Capitalist Transition], Shijie lishi 世界历史 4 (1996): 77–84; Zhu Xiaoyuan 朱晓远, *Ouzhou niepan: Guodu shiqi Ouzhou de fazhan gainian* 欧洲涅槃：过度时期欧洲的发展概念 [European Nirvana: Developmental Concepts in Transitional Europe] (Xuelin chubanshe 学林出版社, 2002), 2–3; Hou Jianxin 侯建新, "Guanyu xiyou jindai shehui zhuanxing qishi niandai de xinguandian" 关于西欧近代社会转型起始年代的新观点 [New Perspectives on the Starting Date of Modern Social Transition in Western Europe], Shijie lishi 世界历史 4 (2014): 12–15.

8   Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

9   The most frequently cited phrase regarding Swiss mercenaries is: "Point d'argent, point de Suisse" (No money, no Swiss). This line originates from Les Plaideurs (The Litigants), a 17th-century play by French dramatist Jean Racine. This serves as compelling evidence of the deep-rooted prejudice surrounding perceptions of mercenary loyalty in historical contexts.

mercenaries' preference for capturing rather than killing enemy combatants as evidence that they do not want wars to end. However, the author counters that this conclusion is unfounded. During the transition era, mercenaries developed a strong sense of collective identity and sympathy for one another. They would show mercy to fellow mercenaries who are on opposing sides of the conflict. Also, knights—who were a significant source of early mercenaries—also had a tradition of taking prisoners instead of killing enemies on the battlefield. Therefore, the author finds it illogical to conclude that mercenaries refused to fight seriously simply because they avoided killing. Unlike the popular scholarly work by Michael Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters*,[10] which focuses on Italian condottieri, Xu's work systematically compares mercenary systems across Europe, revealing transnational patterns of state-mercenary symbiosis. The Renaissance writer Francesco Guicciardini's contemporaneous account[11] corroborates Xu's view, noting that Florentine mercenaries "fought as fiercely as citizens when their pay was secured."[12]

Machiavelli's condemnation of mercenaries in *The Prince* stemmed from witnessing Florentine military defeats and condottieri betrayals, driving his advocacy for citizen militaries to unify Italy. His critique sidestepped employer contract breaches, relied on inaccurate casualty data, and reflected ideological bias rather than objective analysis.[13]

The book challenges military historian David Parrott's traditional timeline attributing mercenary decline to post-French Revolution fiscal-military states.[14] Contrary to this paradigm, the book argues that while individually recruited mercenaries declined after the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, state-leased mercenary forces (e.g., German troops contracted by Britain) persisted until their viability eroded following the American Revolutionary War. This distinction refines the chronology of mercenarism's demise by decoupling two distinct institutional forms. By analyzing German mercenaries in the American Revolutionary War, Xu distinguishes two mid-seventeenth to late eighteenth-century categories: state-leased troops (government-contracted institutional units) and individually recruited soldiers (voluntary foreign enlistees). The study reveals state-leased mercenaries persisted beyond the French Revolution, but

---

10   Michael Mallett*, Mercenaries and Their Masters* (Pen & Sword Books, 2019).

11   Francesco Guicciardini, *The History of Italy,* (Prentice Hall, 1984).

12   Xu Erbin, *Studies of European Mercenaries,* 41-42.

13   Ibid, 65-82.

14   This work challenges the established scholarly consensus that the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars marked the definitive turning point in the decline of mercenarism. Key studies representing this view see Janice E. Thomson "State Practices, International Norms, and the Decline of Mercenarism" *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (March 1990): 31, and Deborah Avant "From Mercenary to Citizen Armies: Explaining Change in the Practice of War" *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 43.

lost viability after the American Revolutionary War due to shifting geopolitical and economic dynamics. This reframes their decline as a gradual process tied to post-1776 institutional obsolescence, not abrupt post-Napoleonic collapse.

Xu's book pioneers systematic analyses of late medieval Italian mercenaries, introducing the "military contractor" concept (entrepreneurial commanders blending recruitment and battlefield roles) to explain their influence during Europe's transition (1350–1800).[15] Additionally, the work fills gaps in studies of German Landsknecht which are lacking systemic overviews, Scottish overseas soldiers which have been limited to fragmented cases, Swiss mercenaries by reassessing origins and decline, and Hesse-Kassel troops (often campaign-specific). Through macro-micro integration, diverse sources, and global perspectives, it maps each group's development, management systems, and socio-military impacts, offering a cohesive framework for understanding mercenaries' transformative roles.

Besides examining the influence of European mercenaries within Europe itself, the book also pays special attention to mercenaries in the American Revolutionary War of Independence, particularly the German contingents. Although these troops have been studied extensively, their precise nature remains controversial. Some scholars such as Brady Crytzer, argue that the German troops in the American Revolutionary War were mercenaries.[16] Other scholars, for example Maximilian Hake argue that the German troops in the American Revolutionary War were not mercenaries, as the soldiers were merely victims sold by German princes to Britain.[17] Moreover, existing research typically focuses on the forces as a whole rather than on individual soldiers. By situating them in their historical context, Xu considers both their essential characteristics and their significance in European military history. The book contends that German units in the American Revolutionary War of Independence comprised voluntary and involuntary troops; those who enlisted willingly can be classified as mercenaries, while the conscripted were victims of coerced recruitment practices. Accordingly, the author supports the definition of mercenaries advocated by scholars such as Philippe Contamine, arguing that these German forces should be viewed as a form of government-leased mercenary force. Examining the case of German forces through a historical rather than modern legal lens, for example the contracts of the Hessians, provides a more nuanced understanding of early modern mercenaries.[18] This perspective

---

15 Xu Erbin, *Studies of European Mercenaries (1350–1800)*, 267.

16 Brady J. Crytzer, *Hessians: Mercenaries, Rebel, and The War for British North America* (Westholme Publishing, 2015).

17 Maximilian Hake, *Deutsche Truppen im Amerikanischen Unabhängigkeitskrieg. Die "Hessians" als Söldner?* (Grin Verlag, 2018).

18 Xu Erbin, *Studies of European Mercenaries (1350–1800)*, 220-224.

rejects moralistic judgments, revealing through the institutional legitimacy of mercenaries within pre-modern state governance. Through such an approach, mercenaries emerge as contractual actors within historically specific systems; their loyalty founded on reciprocal obligations. Concurrently, it clarifies that their decline stemmed from structural transformations like conscription and nationalism, not inherent deficiencies. Such contextual analysis furnishes comparable frameworks for studying modern private military forces while challenging teleological narratives. By liberating scholarship from presentist biases, it offers historically grounded insights into warfare and sovereignty.

While earlier studies of mercenaries in Europe's transformative period remain fragmented focusing on specific eras, regions, or individuals, this book redefines them as a unified phenomenon tied to broader social change. Integrating macro-level analysis with micro-case studies, it establishes rigorous empirical links between mercenary systems and societal transformation.

The study's reliance on secondary sources and scarcity of primary administrative documents (e.g., state payrolls, treaties) limits analytical rigor, particularly for 1350–1600. While incorporating mercenary diaries and memoirs, their subjective nature risks bias without official records to balance perspectives. Critical gaps persist in economic contextualization—e.g., analysis of German Landsknechte wages lacks data on contemporary monetary systems and price conversions, undermining real-income conclusions. Additionally, the study relies exclusively on archival sources in English, French, and German, languages inadequate to comprehensively cover the diverse European regions under examination. Its episodic approach, linking landmark cases to trace mercenary evolution, sacrifices narrative continuity. Though valuable for framing broad trajectories, specialized studies remain essential to address inevitable omissions.

Shifting Sovereignties. A Global History of a Concept in Practice by Moritz Mihatsch, Michael Mulligan. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2025. ISBN: 9783111446561

REVIEWED BY

Bela Hubenstorf and Natalie Tongue

ABOUT THE REVIEWERS

Bela Hubenstorf holds a BA in History and Slavic Studies, as well as a BA in Philosophy from the University of Freiburg im Breisgau. He is currently enrolled in the Master's programme in Global History at the Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Bela is interested in the history of truth, media and the diversity of human experiences.

Natalie Tongue graduated from the University of Exeter with a BA in History and is currently enrolled in the Masters of Global History at the Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Natalie's research interests focus on nationalism and identity, with a specific focus on gender and disability in anticolonial contexts.

As right-wing movements gain increased traction globally, advocating for tighter border control and displaying skepticism of global institutions, the concept of sovereignty has returned to the forefront of public discourse. Canonically political theory offers us two ways to interpret these developments: With Carl Schmitt we could return to the "great man theory"[1] and locate sovereignty in the authority that "decides on the exception," interpreting it as the present power of sovereign rulers.[2] Conversely, Michel Foucault urges us to "cut off the King's head,"[3] and decentralize sovereignty into a multitude of historically fluctuating practices of rule. These definitions operate around a range of dichotomies: Is sovereignty a stagnant concept which takes one form of rule or is it defined through multiple temporalities? Is sovereignty the direct ability of governing people to influence the world or are they controlled by the system they operate in? These questions are at the heart of *Shifting Sovereignties: A Global History of a Concept in Practice*. Written in 2025 by Moritz Mihatsch, a historian of nationalism, and Michael Mulligan, a historian of international law, the book problematizes existing histories and political theories of sovereignty. Using a global history approach, the authors examine how sovereignty has been exercised and conceived from pre-history to the contemporary world, highlighting the fluctuating practice of this notion.

Older accounts identify sovereignty as a European invention of the Thirty Years' War that solidified the indivisible command of rulers over a fixed territory in the Westphalian system,[4] which then spread throughout the world,[5] tying it to the emergence of the modern nation-state. This reaffirms Schmitt's notion of sovereignty as the central command of the sovereign. Since the interventions of postmodernism, it has become commonplace to methodologically reflect on the historical fluidity of the units of scientific analysis. Global history itself is an attempt to decenter the unit of the nation-state to counter the present methodological nationalism of the humanities.[6] Is the conception of the sovereign nation state not precisely what we as global historians seek to question?

---

1   For a critical reflection see: Daniel Schönpflug and Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger "Große Männer," in *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte*, vol. 17, no. 4 (2023).

2   Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (University of Chicago Press, 1985).

3   Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (Pantheon Books, 1980): 121.

4   Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Problem of Sovereignty Reconsidered," in *Columbia Law Review* 48, no. 3 (1948): 341–65.

5   For Example: Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (Routledge, 1992); Daniel Philpott, "Sovereignty: An Introduction and Brief History," in *Journal of International Affairs* 48, no. 2 (1995): 353–68, especially 365–66.

6   Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton University Press, 2016), 3.

Recent research calls for a revision of the Westphalian chronology of sovereignty. Andreas Osiander questioned the presence of the central principles of sovereignty in the treaty to begin with.[7] More recently and with a focus on state sovereignty in Central Europe, Natasha Wheatley traces this development into the mid-nineteenth century.[8] Similarly, the spread of the idea of sovereignty has to be placed in a more multidirectional framework that accounts for the influence of global processes such as colonialism[9] and its appropriations through decolonial movements.[10] Sovereignty conceptualized as the complete and uniform control of a ruler over its territory has simply not been a thing. Research following the "New Imperial History" paradigm emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between the center and periphery to dethrone a "monolithic" conception of empire.[11] Lauren Benton concludes that imperial rule was "uneven, disaggregated, and oddly shaped."[12] Similarly, scholars of the nation-state argue that they are political systems prone to the subversion and differentiation within their systems of rule.[13]

Building on this line of thought, Mihatsch and Mulligan utilize an anti-nominalist approach built around a decentering of a Eurocentric perspective on sovereignty in favor of a process-oriented and practice theory perspective. Conclusively, the focus is on the actual application of sovereignty and its changing nature, rather than analyzing it through an investigation of changing principles of law or abstract theoretical legal concepts. Centering their definition of sovereignty around the notion of legitimacy, they define sovereignty as "an attempt to organize power in a way perceived as legitimate and able to solve the central challenges of an era."[14] This adapts existing notions of sovereignty to account for its historically changing nature in relation to challenges to the political order and centering on legitimacy as the basis of sovereignty. The authors propose two frameworks to examine this.

---

7   Andreas Osiander, "Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth" in *International Organization* vol. 55, no. 2, (2001): 251-287.

8   Natasha Wheatley, *The Life and Death of States: Central Europe and the Transformation of Modern Sovereignty* (Princeton 2023).

9   Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6.

10   Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton University Press, 2019).

11   Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper "Between Metropole and Colony. Rethinking a Research Agenda" in *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (University of California Press, 1997), 6.

12   Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty. Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge, 2014), 2.

13   Quinn Slobodian, *Crack-Up Capitalism. Market Radicals and the Dream of a World Without Democracy*, (London, 2023), 13-37.

14   Moritz Mihatsch and Michael Mulligan, *Shifting Sovereignties: A Global History of a Concept in Practice* (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2025), 8.

First, for the authors sovereignty is not isolated within the borders of the nation-state, but rather is entrenched within "sovereignty regimes." Such regimes exert power beyond the borders and unevenly within certain regions of the territory. A sovereignty regime is defined by the authors as the underpinning rationality of power and its era-specific legitimation, be it dynastic sovereignty or national self-determination.[15] This approach challenges the importance of the Treaty of Westphalia 1648 refocusing on the ascension of state structures after the Vienna Congress of 1815 based around the sovereignty regime of "dynastic legitimacy."[16] Decentering Europe in the development of sovereignty, the book traces common frameworks of sovereignty adopted in the Arab, Indian, and Chinese empires. Through these case studies, Mihatsch and Mulligan identify common concepts of state legitimacy within state formation. Their concept of sovereignty regimes therefore facilitates a global approach to sovereignty throughout history, distinct from the earlier concept of "sovereignty regimes" posited by John Agnew.[17]

Second, they conceptualize these regimes as being developed and managed by "institutional frameworks" which form their second major concept, "system sovereignty." One example they give is the United Nations which provides a systematic framework for different sovereignty regimes to form their legitimacy from within this system. The authors interrogate how the principles of sovereignty in the Cold War and postcolonial era were legitimized, highlighting different "logic[s] of legitimization."[18] For example they posit that "the West" drew their legitimation largely from the conception of state sovereignty, whereas "the Soviets" drew their legitimation from what they call "workers sovereignty," referencing "the communist transformation of society."[19] International institutions of governance, were a site for clashes and cooperations of power. The authors posit that the current failures of existing system sovereignties to react to the crises of today, resulted in the revitalization of the nation-state as the model of sovereignty through global right-wing movements. Through an interrogation of the history of sovereignty, the authors discuss how sovereignty can be utilized to form a better global society in the future.[20]

Nonetheless, it is at times unclear how useful these categorizations of sovereignty regimes and sovereignty systems are and how far they would aid

---

15   Ibid., 12.

16   Ibid., 85.

17   John Agnew, "Sovereignty Regimes: Territoriality and State Authority in Contemporary World Politics," in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95, no. 4 (2005): 437–61.

18   Mihatsch and Mulligan, *Shifting Sovereignties*, 226.

19   Ibid.

20   Ibid., 339.

future histories of sovereignty. Within the book there are moments where the boundaries between regimes and systems become blurred and are hard to distinguish for the reader. System sovereignty as organizational principles and sovereignty regimes as sovereignty can be interlinked in practice. Further, these concepts focus on sovereignty as a matter of state policy, its implementation in international order, and state reactions despite arguing for the transcendence of territorial boundaries.[21] The only non-state actors the book examines in depth are so called "micro-sovereignties," communities that reject the sovereign state in place of their own visions of sovereign statehood.[22] In this sense, the book takes a predominately top-down approach to histories of sovereignty which undermines the presence of multiple experiences of sovereignty within one society that may be affected by gender, class, race and disability.

At the heart of sovereignty, for the authors, is legitimacy. The authors repeatedly refer to the significance of legitimacy to the concept of sovereignty, arguing that "once sovereignty loses legitimacy it is no longer sovereignty, but merely power."[23] This begs the question, in which contexts and to whom should power be legitimate? The basis for their conception of legitimacy relies on Max Weber's canonical definition which undermines their fresh approach to the field. Weber imagines legitimacy as a force that is experienced similarly by people within one political system emanating from the ruler.[24] Drawing on the research cited above, one could argue that the diffusion of legitimacy, as well as its public reception, depends on a multitude of factors that are unaccounted for when legitimacy is used as a solely emanating force in a Weberian tradition as the authors do. Often the authors propose that a sovereignty regime is adopted by rulers of one system and implemented to rule an area, without analyzing how these concepts were diffused and perceived by the people under them. Conclusively they do address the changing and at times paradoxical nature of legitimacy throughout history, yet the role of power is insufficiently unpacked. For example, they analyze the concept of the divine Mandate of Heaven (Tianming) utilized by the rulers of Qing China after their ascension to power in 1644. Did the people of Qing China accept Tianming as legitimate as the authors suggest, or was it just a form of power they were subjected to?[25] As the authors say, the concept was utilized to justify imperial intervention, but that does not mean that it was perceived as legitimate. This points to a tension on how they understand practice theory. For them practices are predominantly legal and ideological practices of sovereignty regimes and their utilization in

---

21   Ibid., 324.

22   Ibid., 287-288.

23   Ibid., 329.

24   Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf* (München/Leipzig, 1919) https://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/view/weber_politik_1919?p=1 (Accessed September 10, 2025).

25   Mihatsch and Mulligan, *Shifting Sovereignties*, 30-33.

the establishment of power structures. They fail to account for the different personal experiences that people can have within one legitimized sovereignty regime and thus do not sufficiently analyze sovereignty as a power in practice.

At the same time *Shifting Sovereignties* offers fresh takes for historiographical research. Refocusing the chronology of sovereignty, the authors argue that it has a pre-history, traced around the ancient and medieval world showing that sovereignty systems and regimes existed before modernity.[26] Similarly, they decenter the Westphalian perspective through a global history approach. Highlighting the ascendancy of state-sovereignty as a global development from the 16th to 19th century, this becomes the norm of government only after the Congress of Vienna in 1815.[27] Sovereignty is thus neither a fully primordial nor modern concept.

Exploring sovereignty as a praxis, the authors show how sovereignty in empires depended highly on local circumstances. Through the analysis of "recognition," "extraterritoriality," and "civilization" they show how empires interfered into other existing sovereignties.[28] For example, the recognition of nation-states through other nation-states made the status of nation a desirable quality of political formations. Regarding decolonization, they expand their alternate chronology into the 20th century, arguing that decolonization was not a straightforward process of birth of new sovereignties, but rather a complex process of "self-protection" and "compromise" around neo-colonial economic relationships.[29]

In conclusion, *Shifting Sovereignties* is a valuable addition to historiographies of sovereignty, demonstrating the value of a global history approach to dismantle Eurocentric portrayals of the development of political ideologies of states and international organizations. While its big history approach is not without pitfalls in regard to analyzing differing experiences of sovereignty, the authors manage to navigate the immense literature and theoretical debate on the topic with ease. *Shifting Sovereignties* is an important methodological groundwork for scholars interested in empire, the nation-state, and the history of global governance and economy.

---

26   Ibid., 25-51.

27   Ibid., 117.

28   Ibid., 119-152.

29   Ibid., 218.