

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

“OLD EMPIRES IN RECOVERY: LISBON TO MOSCOW,
1700s-1900s”



— Ah! mon pauvre Charles, si Germania te soigne, te voilà, comme moi, incurable.

Dessin de A. BARRÈRE.

Thursday, June 27 2024, 9:30 – 13: 00

Colégio Almada Negreiros, 2nd floor, room 219

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

“OLD EMPIRES IN RECOVERY: LISBON TO MOSCOW, 1700s-1900s”

Stretched across early modern and modern history, the Portuguese, Hispanic, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires experienced stress and even decadence before the liberal revolutions and the advance of capitalism. To survive in the midst of growing international competition, they had to imagine, design and deploy reform programs that combined innovation, selective adaptation of influences and the preservation of traditions considered idiosyncratic. This workshop offers an overview of some of the areas in which knowledge and institutional change interacted in the old empires between the 18th and 19th centuries.

Organizer: Exploratory project: Lisbon/Moscow (CHAM).

Sponsor: “Theory and methodology” Thematic line (CHAM).

PROGRAMME

9:20 Opening.

Pablo Sánchez León (Coordinator of “Theory and methodology” thematic line and IP of Lisbon/Moscow exploratory project)

9:30-9:50

A Different Economic Agenda: Portugal and Its Trading Partners during the Eighteenth Century

Miguel Alexandre Dantas da Cruz (ICS-University of Lisbon)

It is often believed that Portuguese international trade was completely intertwined with Great Britain. It is believed that, during the eighteenth century, a commercial alliance mirrored the Anglo-Portuguese political alliance. This is only partly true. The dominant position of the British economic interests in Portugal was often criticized by men who proposed alternative solutions. They did not argue for stronger ties with France, though. Instead, they argued for what can be called a diversification strategy. In this presentation,

I will examine the testimonies of some of the eighteenth-century authors who reflected at greater length on the advantages of diversifying trading partners. I will also show that their desires were in fact happening, although not necessarily due to their intervention. Political conflict and market forces redirected the interests of economic agents of other countries, changing the structure of Portuguese international trade and shipping.

9:50-10:10

Collective Somnolence as Decadence and the Cultural Effects of Reviving in the Early Bourbon Hispanic Metropolis

Pablo Sánchez León (CHAM - Universidade Nova de Lisboa)

This presentation reflects on the experience of overcoming the time of decadence in Hispanic culture between the 17th and 18th centuries. It focuses on the use of the trope of lethargy, from the Galenic medical tradition, to give meaning to the moral state of the Spanish metropolitan people, diagnosed as in a state of collective somnolence close to death. In particular, it addresses its metaphorical but also performative and critical usage by a famous publicist – Diego Torres Villarroel. In the first three decades of 18th century, Torres Villarroel published a series of renowned satires telling his experiences under the state of drowsiness, which allowed him to meet with a relevant figure of the Baroque period – Francisco de Quevedo – and show him the differences between the past of decadence under the Habsburg dynasty and the present state of the Hispanic metropolis with the Bourbon dynasty; at the same time, the author was staging a complete critique of the inherited medical knowledge on which the etiology of lethargy was based, proposing a new scientific anthropology appropriate to overcoming the collective evil of decadence.

10:10-10:30

Discussion

10:30-10:45

Break

10:45-11-05

Situating the 19th-Century Ottoman Moralists in the Context of Reforming Bureaucratic Institutions

Melis Hafez (Virginia Commonwealth University)

Until recently, the expanding bureaucracy of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire was predominantly analyzed as a measurement of “modernization,” often construed as a manifestation of Weberian rationalization in imperial governance. This perspective frequently highlighted the shortcomings of bureaucratic reforms and emphasized the role of high-ranking bureaucrats and reformers, interpreted through the “great men of history” paradigm.

Recent scholarship, however, has shifted focus towards examining various segments of the Ottoman bureaucratic classes from a multitude of perspectives, eschewing the assumptions inherent in modernization theory, and moving beyond the exclusive focus on high-ranking officials and pashas. The emergent approach foregrounds the analysis of bureaucracy not from an institutional history perspective but through the lens of cultural history. As employees of a reforming state, bureaucrats of all ranks were targets of widespread regulations and reforms as well as actors of change themselves. Many prescriptive books on social issues, particularly texts on morality, were written by mid-rank bureaucrats. In this presentation, I will share segments of my ongoing research, which concentrates on the Ottoman moralists of the long nineteenth century and delve into their experiences as state employees and/or of pursuing state employment. Juxtaposing archival records with autobiographies and morality texts will take us beyond a static and normative approach to morality and expose the social and material meanings of writing on morality in the final decades of the empire.

11-05:11-25

Navigating Identities: The Evolution of "Russianness" in Late Imperial Russia

Galina Durinova van der Hallen (Strasbourg University)

This presentation explores the development of the Russian national identity and “Russianness” during the late imperial period (1870-1900s), with a particular focus on the interactions between Russians and the native Asian peoples of Siberia. It examines the dual narratives that emerged during this period: the official ideology of a “big Russian family” embracing the native Siberians, and the complex dual identities experienced by these native populations. This analysis is situated within the broader context of citizenship evolution in the Russian Empire during its modernization phase in the late 19th century. A key aspect is the transition of the concept of citizenship in Russia from a French Enlightenment-inspired model to a more nationalistic and hierarchical one. This period saw the stratification of “Russianness” and the process of russification, where native Siberians were encouraged to adopt Russian cultural and institutional norms to achieve full integration into the Empire. The presentation adopts a Eurasian perspective, analyzing contributions from authors across both the European and Asian parts of the Russian Empire.

11:25-11:45

Discussion

11:45- 12:00

Break

12:20-12:40

Navigating the Watershed of Collapse: How Austro-Hungarian and Russian Imperial Agents Harvested Anti-Ottoman Knowledge and its Consequences on the Balkans/Caucasus

Isa Blumi (Stockholm University)

The Habsburg and Russian Empires adopted an array of contradictory policies towards their respective Muslim subjects scattered throughout the world and those eventually/potentially incorporated at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. As they managed often conflicting agendas that targeted Muslim polities maintaining still strong associations with the Ottoman Empire, a growing repertoire of intelligence gathering and academic “knowledge” production informed these relations. What remains frustrating over the years is the presentation of hierarchies assumed by empire in relation to the ontological subject/object of exploitation/revulsion these knowledge production schemes produced. This paper shares results from my studies on the evolution of these strategies, not as machinations of imperialist ideologies and imagined capacities formulated from the metropole, exclusively. Rather, “knowledge” produced in the form of ethnographic research, travelogues and/or diaries/testimonials, journalistic reportage etc. reflect complex relations of “recruitment” that go both directions. Key indigenous, regional, and already global socio-economic, cultural, religious, and political allies/rivals are implicated as imperial go-betweens, interlocutors and fraudulent sources of “operational” knowledge seemingly crucial at the Watershed of Imperial Collapse.

12:20-12:40

Discussion

12:40-13:00

Final remarks and closure