S-45 – Science and Empire: New localities - New circulations

Science and Empire Commission

Organizers:
1) Niklas Thode Jensen, (Danish National Archives - Rigsarkivet, Denmark), ntj@sa.dk
2) Jahnavi Phalkey, (The India Institute, King’s College London, United Kingdom), jahnavi.phalkey@kcl.ac.uk

Abstract:
We propose a symposium consisting of two sessions (slots) with connected themes but different formats. The first session will be a thematic panel of 3 papers focusing on localities and circulations of scientific knowledge in the colonial world, c. 1450-1950 (see description below). The second session will be an open plenary session that revisits the history of SCIEMP in order to identify new ways to study Science and Empire such that it now includes Empires beyond Europe and to consider histories of the American, Chinese, Japanese and Soviet Empires as well.

Further description of session 1:
The main objective of the session is to use the connected concepts of locality and circulation to address the general theme of the congress: “Science, Technology and Medicine between the Global and the Local”. Recent research in the history of science has changed its focus from local practices within a narrowly defined and usually western community – such as a lab, a natural history collection or a hospital – to a global scope that investigates both local practices of science anywhere on the planet and the circulation of scientific knowledge, individuals and objects between global localities. Central to these investigations is the view that science is neither a uniquely European phenomenon, nor diffused exclusively from Europe to the rest of the world. On the contrary, science is locally created through complex social processes of accommodation and negotiation, and the dissemination of science to other localities in order to render it universal is only possible through processes of the same kind and complexity. This perspective is particularly interesting to SCIEMP, which brings together researchers interested in the ways that science, technology and medicine has intersected with colonialism, imperialism, and postcolonialism.

On this basis, this symposium will investigate the concepts of locality and circulation of scientific knowledge in the colonial world c. 1450-1950 through two sets of connected questions starting either with locality and moving towards circulation or with circulation and moving towards locality:

• Locality: How were knowledge, practices and objects of science constructed in colonial localities c. 1450-1950 in the encounter between different localities and communities? How were they negotiated and reconfigured in the face of resistance and asymmetric power relations? How were this local knowledge, practices and objects of science transformed in order to facilitate circulation to other localities?
• Circulation: How did knowledge, practices and objects of science travel in the colonial world c. 1450-1950? How were they transformed as they encountered knowledge, practices and objects of colonial localities and communities? How were they negotiated and reconfigured in the face of resistance and asymmetric power relations?

Keywords: Empires (non-european and european) – Colonies – Localities – Circulations – New approaches.
Participants:
- Cristiana Bastos
- Angelica Agredo Montealegre
- John Mathew
- Rachel Koroloff
- Dr. Madhwi
- Patrick Petitjean
- Marion C. Thomas