

## **Slave Revolts and (Anti)-Imperialism: From Antiquity to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: An Interdisciplinary Workshop at the German Historical Institute, London (4-5 March 2010)**

By now it has become almost a truism in slavery studies to emphasise the role of slave resistance for the overthrow of slavery. One of the problems with the concept of 'slave resistance', however, lies in its very broad scope. It encompasses extremely diverse forms of resistance, ranging from ubiquitous, everyday manifestations such as indolence, faked stupidity, insubordination etc. to the more exceptional (but still relatively frequent) instances of armed resistance.

While being conscious of the various other shapes of slave resistance and the often fleeting boundaries between them, this two-day workshop at the German Historical Institute in London (**4-5 March 2010**) aims to consider the most spectacular and often extremely violent examples of slave resistance: slave revolts. Records of slave rebellions reach back to antiquity and have affected nearly all societies in which the socio-economic system of slavery was practised. Drawing on the respective areas of expertise of the participants, we want to address the topic from a both global and long-term perspective, focusing in particular on the link of slave revolts to imperialism or anti-imperialism.

Most slave revolts throughout history (be it Spartacus' revolts in Rome or the Haitian Revolution) occurred in empires and the rebellious slaves usually came from a different ethnic or national background than their enslavers. Seen from that angle, one wonders whether slave revolts, besides having been powerful protests against exploitation and dehumanisation, could also be regarded as manifestations of resistance to imperialist violence? Did the respective slave revolts only aim at redressing particular grievances or could they be seen as a more general attack on the institution of slavery? Is Eugene D. Genovese correct when he, in his study of slave revolts in the Americas, asserts that any attempt "at overthrowing slavery as a social system [was] a magnificent object unknown to the slaves of the ancient world"? Are there any continuities between ancient and modern slave revolts, such as for instance the figure of 'Black Spartacus' suggests, who was prophesied to appear to avenge the wrongs done to the Afro-Caribbean slaves? What is the relationship between slave revolts and colonialism or anti-colonialism? Is there a connection between slave rebellions and abolitionism, radical movements in the metropolis and forceful slave resistance in the periphery? Did the 'Age of Revolution' (Hobsbawm) mark a decisive change in the nature of slave revolts? How are

literary and historical narratives of slave revolts constructed and how does the ideological stance of the narrator influence their representations? We seek to address and discuss these and other questions from a variety of angles across the disciplines, reaching from the political sciences and sociology over social and cultural history up to literary studies.

I would be delighted if you could attend this workshop. Please let me know if you would like to participate until **1 December 2009**. Please also send an abstract of up to 400 words for a 30-minute paper to **Raphael.Hoermann@uni-rostock.de**.

The German Historical Institute will reimburse your travel expenses: economy flight booked in advance online (for overseas flights up to 1,000 USD) or 2<sup>nd</sup> class UK rail travel only. The Institute will also pay for hotel accommodation of up to two-nights (3 nights for those travelling from overseas). Light lunches and coffee will be provided.