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Linnéa Rowlatt:

Tenth Workshop on Early Modern Central European History
Conference Report

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Tenth Workshop on Early Modern Central European History, co-organized by the German Historical Institute London and the German History Society, and held at the GHIL, 26 Oct. 2012.

Words of welcome by Benedikt Stuchtey, Deputy Director of the German Historical Institute London, opened the tenth workshop on Early Modern Central European History, which brought together twenty-four historians from Australia, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, the USA, and the UK at the GHIL on the last Friday in October. Nine papers were delivered and discussed, ranging across topics as varied as the production and history of knowledge; trade and cultural representations; and religion, politics, and war. A common theme was the interrogation of the means, methods, and motives for the creation, dissemination, and instrumentalization of information in the early modern period, with a focus on the late eighteenth century.

After an introduction by organizers David Lederer (National University of Ireland, Maynooth) and Angela Schattner (GHIL), work began with a session exploring knowledge of, and resource management adaptations to, the environment of the late 1700s. Alexander Kästner (TU Dresden/National University of Ireland, Maynooth) presented two case studies demonstrating how a failure of social integration and medical knowledge resulted in mortality from exposure to extreme cold in Holland in 1799. Part of a larger project examining early modern understandings of cold and its implications, Kästner's paper highlighted the uncertainties of life in the context of a deadly threat. Claudia Stein (University of Warwick) employed Foucault's concept of biopower to analyse the introduction of the potato to Bavaria by Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford, arguing that the vegetable was central to reforms in agriculture, poor relief, and the military. Stein examined a discourse of contestation and cooperation centred on human nutrition at a time when underpopulation was a concern for government; it illuminated the relationship between individuals and society at the onset of the rationalization of the state, when processes of political transformation were structured to affect the individual's bodily behaviour.

Early modern production of science and knowledge was the focus of the second session. The first paper, by Kaspar von Greyerz (University of Warwick), examined the role of the potato in the early modern period. The full conference programme can be found under Events and Conferences on the GHIL's website <www.ghil.ac.uk>.

versity of Basel), outlined his forthcoming monograph investigating the areas, fields, and occupations in which early modern traditions of knowledge (often popular knowledge and science) came together. Starting with the view of knowledge as a 'gesunkenes Kulturgut', Greyerz gave a defence of the epistemological status of early modern religion within the context of the twenty-first-century historiography of knowledge. Following this, he used the 1644 treatise *Mechanischer Reißladen* by the Ulm architect and engineer, Joseph Furtenbach, to exemplify the relationship between mechanical knowledge and science. The presentation concluded with Greyerz tracing the development of the observational genre in late medieval and early modern medicine, and how it integrated personally warranted experience and book knowledge in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Gerhard Wiesenfeldt (University of Melbourne) gave the second paper, which looked at transformations in the understanding of Dutch culture within the German discourse, drawing examples from natural philosophy, natural history, and medicine. Instead of a narrative of diminishing Dutch influence, the paper presented Germany's integration of French and English scholarship as a strategy for the establishment of alternative models in an academic culture within which Dutch scholarship maintained a significant and influential presence. The morning concluded with Marita Huebner (California Institute of Technology, Pasadena) speaking on Samuel Simon Witte's *Universal Explanation of Persepolis and the Pyramids* (1789). This publication's suggestion that the ruins of Persepolis, the Egyptian pyramids, and other ancient monuments were products of volcanic activity provoked a fierce and occasionally venomous literary debate among German scholars. Arguing that Witte's theory was a sceptical attack on English and German concepts of universal history and Orientalism, Huebner illuminated Witte's rejection of the scientific value of travellers' accounts and his challenge to the new representation of the East in Western art and writing. The impact of Witte's publication on German academia was to widen the conceptual gap between history and philosophy, to expose the weaknesses of both when attempting to exceed their grasp, and to contribute to debates that would come to define the Enlightenment and Romanticism.

Considerations of trade and cultural representations of trade were the topic of the third session, with Anne Sophie Overkamp (Euro-

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pean University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder) sharing her research on four families from the Wupper valley in the Duchy of Berg (1760–1830). As all four were important merchant families in the textile business, Overkamp's conclusions from her exploration of professional and personal sources led her to propose a third category of bourgeoisie for German historiography in addition to the *Wirtschaftsbürgertum* and the *Bildungsbürgertum*: namely, the *gebildeten Stände*, a group analogous to the middling ranks of English society. In this new category, the cultural participation of these merchant families in activities of the *Gebildeten* is combined with on-going mercantile activity; group cohesion was demonstrated by the maintenance of regionally based, endogamous marriage patterns. This recognition of an educated mercantile class integrates changes and developments in Germany around 1800 into the context of an emerging global consumer society. Musicologist and music historian Elisabeth Giselbrecht (University of Cambridge) followed, looking at the uses of music books in early modern Germany. Pointing to the frequent assumption that these were first and foremost for performance purposes, Giselbrecht's research suggests more possibilities, including, among others, music books as gifts (both 'official' and 'unofficial'), devotional items, collected works, pedagogical tools, or as manifestations of social status and power.

The fourth and final session of the day focused on religion, politics, and war. Adam Marks (University of St Andrews) explored the Stuart crown's interventions in the German lands between 1603 and 1639, concentrating his paper on the participation of around 75,000 English and Scottish soldiers in the Thirty Years War. Points for discussion included the scope and nature of the war; the extent of mercenary motives on the part of the soldiers; their military, political, diplomatic, and social effect on the German lands; the impact of the Thirty Years War on developments in the English and Scottish public spheres; printing; taxation systems; religious tension; and any legacy of the above which may have contributed towards the British Civil Wars. The broader motives of individual soldiers could include loyalty to the Stuart crown, as represented by Elizabeth of Bohemia, which contributes to clarifying events during the Civil Wars, when former comrades-in-arms could find themselves on opposing sides at home. Christian Mühling's (University of Marburg/University of Paris Sorbonne) presentation, summarizing part of his Ph.D. research,

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investigated the impact of contemporary concepts of religious war on foreign affairs in early Enlightenment Europe. Anti-Protestant domestic policy on the part of Emperor Leopold I and Louis XIV, usually dismissed as a political motive after the Peace of Westphalia, was linked by Mühling with similar anti-Catholic policies pursued by English and Prussian leaders to show how late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European politics evolved within a framework heavily influenced by religious motives and concerns. Questions were raised about the propriety of the term 'war of religion' for this period of conflict; Mühling's research focus, however, is on contemporary discourse about the subject, where the phrase is explicitly used.

David Lederer (University of Ireland, Maynooth) chaired a general discussion to conclude proceedings. As in the Ninth Workshop, notice was taken of the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of historical research and the possibility was mentioned that this might be an emerging trend in historiography. Explorations of this included a concern about the indispensability of historical analysis, the opportunities and challenges of working with the volume of sources made available by digitization, and how changes in historiographical priorities and approaches may reflect changes in twenty-first-century culture. The eleventh Workshop on Early Modern German History will take place at the GHIL on 15 November 2013.

LINNÉA ROWLATT (University of Kent/Freie Universität Berlin)