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A great deal of world history is imperial history. The Mediterranean in particular was strongly affected by empires across the ages. Some of them, like the Roman, remained "long-lasting reference points for later empire-builders" worldwide, while others, such as the Umayyad caliphate or Habsburg Spain, had a global impact as well.¹ Thus the region seems to be a good starting point to rethink imperial space. Although the Roman Empire has been researched extensively, the 'new Mediterranean studies' have neglected the topic of empire so far² and the post-Roman Mediterranean has been no privileged area of investigation for imperial history. Against this background, our workshop compares trans-Mediterranean empires that had a firm basis in the region but also transcended it. Since empires are large political bodies, they are fundamentally challenged by spatial distance.³

Therefore, we will focus on the imaginary geographies and spatial practices of trans-Mediterranean empires in order to understand how imperial space within and beyond the region was conceptualized, shaped and remembered. We will do this with a threefold aim:

(1) By contrasting distinctions between 'cores and peripheries', or 'metropolises and colonies' that are well established in theories of empire, with alternative forms of political organization such as the 'municipality', the 'commonwealth', or the 'nation-state', we wish to sharpen our understanding of imperial space.⁴

(2) By comparing pre-modern with modern empires⁵, we try to overcome the narrow time range of the 'new Mediterranean studies' that often exclude the modern age or relegate responsibility to anthropologists when the latter is concerned.⁶

(3) By focussing on empires that all transcended the region, we wish to intensify the dialogue between Mediterranean and global history.⁷

¹ Burbank and Cooper 2010, p. 4. On the history and theory of empire, see also Darwin 2007; Münkler 2007.

² The Mediterranean paradigm itself was "born of imperialism" (Horden and Purcell 2006, p. 725). On the imperial genealogy of the concept, see Bourguet et al. 1998. On the impact of French Algeria on Braudel, see Borutta 2016. Entries on empire are missing in Horden and Purcell 2000 and in Horden and Kinoshita 2014, and there is no comprehensive study of Mediterranean empires from ancient to modern times. For an introduction to this topic, see Grenet and Rappas 2016. On empires in the modern Mediterranean, see Borutta and Gekas 2012; Rappas 2016; Borutta 2020.

³ Braudel 1949, p. 541: „Mais toujours et partout [...], la distance est l'ennemi. Elle use les hommes, les états, plus encore les empires. Ceux-ci sont parfois vaincus, paralysés par l'espace, aux extrémités de leurs territoires, dans de vastes zones marginales où ils ne peuvent rien ou presque rien, où leur faiblesse éclate.“

⁴ On the spatial categories of imperial history, see Howe 2002, pp. 13–22. On municipalities, see Freitag and Lafi 2014; Lafi 2018. On 'semi-colonies': Gekas 2017. On cultural transfers: Abdellatif et al. 2012.

⁵ For a global perspective on empires in the 'long' nineteenth century (1760s-1920s): Osterhammel 2014, pp. 392–468. See also Leonhard and Hirschhausen 2011.

⁶ For the latter, see, e.g. Horden and Kinoshita 2014.

⁷ For first steps into this direction, see Abulafia 2011; Watkins 2013; Purcell 2016.

Rethinking Imperial Space: Trans-Mediterranean Perspectives

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP MITTELMEER-PLATTFORM



July 13 – July 14, 2022
Universität Konstanz



PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13

17.15

KEYNOTE LECTURE

Rethinking Imperial Space

BY JANE BURBANK & FREDERICK COOPER

(New York)

The essence of empire is the extension of power across space and cultural difference. Empires make connections over long distances and among unlike societies. But they also break and prevent connections, as imperial leaders try to organize economic and political life along vertical relations to their centers of power and to impede horizontal relations among incorporated territories. Imperial connections are asymmetric, often conflictual. Extending power meant coming to grips with space as it actually existed, in a geographical sense but also a political one, as configured by earlier and ongoing politics. Subordinated people may evade or oppose imperial power or they may twist the empire's interventions and innovations to their own benefit. Rival empires with their own lines of connection and networks of many types – trade, religious, communal – crisscross the empire's claimed space.

Empires attempted to maintain control over densely and lightly populated agrarian regions, deserts, seas, oceans, rivers, islands, mountains, valleys, each of which posed particular limitations and possibilities for incorporation, resistance, or reconfiguration of imperial power. Historians' recent focus on Atlantic, Indian Ocean, or Mediterranean worlds can be augmented by the new interest in terrestrial connections (Saharan or Eurasian) and riverine or littoral routes. These perspectives are not alternatives; they complement each other. A major question is the relationship of different kinds of space to others within, across, or against imperial formations. Our introductory talk is intended, through examples and analysis, to open up discussion of these relationships.

19.00

Reception

20.30

Dinner: Hafenhalle, Hafenstraße 10, 78462 Konstanz

THURSDAY, JULY 14

Universität Konstanz, K7, 78462 Konstanz

9.00

MANUEL BORUTTA (Konstanz):

Welcome & Introduction

9.30

ULRICH GOTTER (Konstanz):

*Communities, the Imperial Framework, and the Sea:
The Mediterranean Dimension of the Roman Empire*

10.30

Coffee Break

10.45

DANIEL G. KÖNIG (Konstanz):

*From Caliphate to Commonwealth: Political
Fragmentation and the Resilience of Imperial
Standards*

11.45

KIRSTEN MAHLKE (Konstanz):

*Imperial counternarrative(s) in 16th Century South
American Chronicles*

12.45

Lunch Break

14.15

NORA LAFI (Berlin):

*Rethinking Ottoman Imperiality: an Urban and
Mediterranean Perspective*

15.15

MANUEL BORUTTA (Konstanz):

*Rethinking Modern France: Algeria, Corsica, and the
Midi*

16.15

Coffee Break

16.45

MALTE FUHRMANN (Konstanz):

*Germany's Mediterranean Empire: Colonial Fantasies
and Bloody Consequences*

17.45

ANDREAS GUIDI (Konstanz):

*Fascist Colonialism as Post-Ottoman History: Imperial
Continuities in a changing Mediterranean Space
viewed from Rhodes*

19.00

Final Discussion

20.30

IKRAMS; Bodanstraße 4, 78462 Konstanz

Organizers:

MANUEL BORUTTA, ULRICH GOTTER
& DANIEL G. KÖNIG

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