

Central Europe and Colonialism: Introduction

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Apart from a short period between the Berlin conference and the end of the First World War, when Germany played a minor role as a colonial power, Central Europe¹ was largely excluded when western countries and Russia divided the world between them. Nonetheless, Central Europeans played an important role in the history of colonialism. Not only did large numbers of Central Europeans migrate to the colonial world, but Central Europeans also provided personnel to occupy, administer and police colonial empires, and they reflected on colonial experiences at different levels of high and popular culture. In addition, their in-between position brought Central Europeans into contact with both the West European imperial powers and Russia, which made the Central European experiences and perspectives richer in many ways than those of the colonial powers themselves, where close contacts with specific territories tended to marginalize perceptions of other parts of the world. Moreover, trade contacts between Central Europe and the colonies resulted in an exchange of Central European industrial products and tropical commodities from the colonies.

On the other hand, large parts of Central Europe experienced a similar fate at the hands of the great powers (including the post-Second World War domination by the Soviet Union) as countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas. Just as (post)colonial studies examines the colonial past of these areas, scholars have recently started to explore the same processes in Central Europe. For the period before 1918, East Central Europe's position vis-à-vis imperial Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary can be considered in a similar way to Ireland's position in relation to Britain, prior to independence.

This special issue of *European Review* brings together papers about Central Europe and colonialism, presented at the fourth event of the 'Wrocław Seminar' series. The seminar was organised by the Academia Europaea Knowledge Hub in Wrocław in cooperation

with the Philological Faculty of the University of Wrocław, and took place between 21 and 23 September 2016. The Wrocław Seminars are an initiative of the Academia Europaea, the Philological Faculty of the University of Wrocław, and Sweden's Tercentennial Jubileumsfond. This project is mainly aimed at early career researchers.

The papers in this special issue focus on four aspects of the relationship between Central Europe and colonialism: trade in commodities, migration, knowledge gathering and the position of East Central Europe within an imperial context.

Trade in commodities is discussed in four papers. Three researchers from Viadrina University examine trade between the German speaking lands and the colonial world, either directly or through Spanish, Portuguese and French port cities. Klaus Weber looks at the export of products of labour-intensive German cottage-industries to West Africa against the background of favourable geographic conditions for the early modern development of export industries in early modern Europe. Torsten dos Santos Arnold describes how early modern German protestant merchant communities in Atlantic port cities managed to circumvent the monopolistic trade policies of the Portuguese, Spanish and French Atlantic empires. Samuel Eleazar Wendt analyses the reorientation of Hanseatic merchants' involvement in world trade during the second half of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth centuries. Just further eastward, Dariusz Kołodziejczyk considers the position of Poland on the global map by focusing on the routes and impact of three selected 'commodities' that were transported to and from Poland in the early modern era to the Ottoman Empire, namely slaves, tobacco and silver coin.

Mark Häberlein discusses migration in the context of a colonial venture, examining the career of Johann Matthias Kramer, a language teacher and emigration agent, as a case study to illuminate the intersections between migration, colonialism, cultural transfer, and the dissemination of information in the eighteenth century.

The construction of knowledge is addressed in two papers. Esther Arens and Charlotte Kießling explore the traces of colonialism and slavery in *Ambonese Herbal* (1740ff.) and the *Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet* (1705) of Georg Rumphius, a German natural historian who served the Dutch East India Company on the Moluccas. The actions of the Polish/Upper Hungarian nobleman Móric Beňovský in Madagascar are the focus of Damien Tricoire's paper. Tricoire shows how this outsider within the French colonial bureaucracy managed to build a successful career on fictitious accounts of his success in establishing French rule on Madagascar.

The position of East Central Europe within an imperial context is the subject in the final three papers. Helge Wendt discusses how the double identity of 'Austrian' missionaries of Slavic or Italian origin shaped the way in which they conceived their pastoral work in southern Sudan. Jawad Daheur explores the pre-First World War Polish opinion about German colonialism in Cameroon in connection with the perception of German rule 'at home', in the German part of partitioned Poland, showing that the Cameroonian issues were mainly polemically used in the Polish language press in order to advance the Polish cause in imperial Germany. Benjamin Thorpe discusses the proposals for a continental-scale fusion of Europe and Africa into one political entity called 'Eurafrica' during the interbellum by the (originally)

Austro-Hungarian nobleman Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi. He shows how the idea of Eurafica emerged as a means of opening up colonialism to those European states, most of them in Central Europe, which lacked their own colonies, but developed colonizing ambitions to match their western European counterparts.

Note

1. We understand Central Europe in this special issue as an area stretching from the territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the East to the German speaking regions in the West.

About the Authors

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