

Report on Workshop “Missionary Activities: Challenging Cultural and Religious Paradigms at Home and Abroad”

The Workshop started on 19 January, Friday at 13:00 with the 15-Minute opening speech of Professor Richard Rottenburg. Professor Rotenburg stressed the importance of the examination of missionary activities in different contexts for the Research Cluster and Graduate School Society and Culture in Motion.

The topic of the first day was “Mission and Violence.” The first presentation was done by Dr. Arne Moritz, Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg. He talked on Nicolas of Cusa. The texts for discussion were “Cary J. Nederman: Worlds of Difference. European Discourses of Toleration c.1100-c. 1500, Pennsylvania University Press 2000, 2 ch. 6: “Nationality and the Variety of Rites in Nicholas of Cusa”, pp 85-97 and !Nicholas of Cusa: On Peaceful Unity of Faith (De Pace Fidei), Minneapolis 1994.” The discussion was developed around the idea of interreligious understanding and Cusa’s non-orthodox ideas about the presentation and understanding of religion against a multi-religious background.

In the second presentation the members of the Reading Group Latin American Thought, Stefan Knauß, Emilia Portaluppi, Gustavo Macedo and Carmen González presented and discussed the text “The Americas, Christian Expansion, and the Modern/Colonial Foundation of Racism” by Walter Mignolo. A lively discussion ensued.

In the evening the participants of the workshop attended the Guided tour at MarienBibliothek, Halle. Emeritus Professor Andreas Kleinert made an informing power point presentation about the library and guided the tour. After the tour, the group had dinner at Restaurant Mönchshof.

The second day started at 9.15 with the presentation of Professor Reinhardt Kößler of Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, Freiburg. The title of his Presentation was “Rhenish Missionaries in Southern Namibia and Their Pupils.” His presentation was on the Rhenish missionaries in Namibia in the first half of the twentieth century. The German mission to Nhamo people of Namibia was discussed. Professor Kößler provided the audience with a detailed historical background by stressing the important events in the history of the mission.

The following section was “Mission and Knowledge.” In this part Professor Klaus Koschorke from Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich, presented. The topic of his presentation was “Mission and the Printing Press, the Formation of Transcontinental Networks.” His presentation was mainly based on the texts “Christliche Missionen und religiöse Globalisierung im 19. Jahrhundert” (Koschorke) and “When is India to have her own native bishops”? Der schwarzafrikanische Bischof Samuel Ajayi Crowther (ca. 1806–1891) in der christlichen Publizistik Asiens und Afrikas im 19. Jahrhundert.” Professor Koschorke’s presentation dwelled on the global missionary networks. By stressing the importance of printing press for global missionary networks, He illustrated a wide range of interaction between different continents and missionary centers. He also referred to how the case of Samuel Ajayi Crowther was articulated in missionary periodicals of late nineteenth century. The ensuing discussion was profitable for the attendants.

The third session of the second day was “Mission and Health” which started at 14:00. In this part Adadow Yidana from the Graduate School Society and Motion in Culture spoke on “The Concept of Health in African Missions.” After highlighting the important historical events as related to mission and medicine, he handled the topic from a sociological and anthropological perspective.

After the last presentation the organizers of the workshop decided to continue with a small discussion on the workshop. Along with the organizers Sophie Pfaff attended the discussion as well. It was concluded that the workshop was quite informing for all the participants. Thanks to the wide range of topics and texts discussed, relatively untouched aspects or events of the missionary activities worldwide were brought to attention. It also gave the organizers to evaluate their projects in a broader perspective as the presentations touched upon the idea of global mission networks too. Due to the fact that the participants were from different academic backgrounds, not only the presentations but also the discussion of the texts and topics created a fertile ground for multiple points of views and interdisciplinary interaction. It is concluded that the topics discussed in the workshop well suited the research objectives of the Graduate School Society and Culture in Motion as they were related to the mobility of ideas and artifacts globally and how they were evaluated locally and globally.