

Was it a man's world? Intersections of gender and global history

Conference at the Hotel Bad Murtensee, Muntelier, Switzerland, 25 to 27 August 2022

Convenors: Christof Dejung (Bern); Angelika Epple (Bielefeld)

During the last twenty years, global history has become an established field of expertise, However, social structures associated with gender and sexuality received relatively little attention in global and transnational history studies as Merry Wiesner-Hanks (2007) and others have pointed out.

To be sure, gender relations and their intersections with categories such as ethnicity/race or class are an integral part of studies in colonial history or area studies. In many of the numerous studies which examine the effects of worldwide interaction, individual actors – of all sexes – are barely mentioned. As Lynn Hunt (2014) famously maintained, global history is mostly geared to the paradigm of economic globalization. Unintentionally, so it seems, the structure-driven or empire-centered approaches in global history each lead to a backdrop framing the traditional narrative according to which big men or structures, respectively, make history. The indexes of most global history books seem to confirm this finding: women do not show up. What does this mean for global history as a distinct field though, of research? What does it mean that the actors' gender, their masculinity or their femininity, are barely examined in a systematic manner, or that queer and transgender actors who do not fit into the Western gender dichotomy are mostly ignored?

What is more, there seems to exist a certain historiographical gender division in terms of who actually writes global history. The syntheses and handbooks on global history are significantly more often written by male authors than by female ones. Why is this so? What could such a finding tell us about the discipline, and of the gendered labor division at work?

We would like to explore the potential benefit of adopting gender as a useful category (Scott 1986) of global historical analysis by having a fresh look at the long nineteenth century. If we interpret global history as the examination of structured transformations on a global level, as Sebastian Conrad (2016) maintains, we might ask the following questions: How was the transformation of the world characterized by particular concepts of gender, and how did the establishment of global entanglements shape gender orders around the globe? Did European expansion and the establishment of global markets result in an assimilation of gender roles across the globe? How were the respective notions of masculinity and femininity related to other social categories such as ethnicity/race, class, religion or sex? In which contexts did queer and transgender actors play a role in global interactions? What was the impact of mass media, new institutions of learning or the formation of nation states on gender orders, and how were they influenced by the establishment of labour movements and urban middle classes across the world?

The conference will bring together scholars from different parts of the world to investigate these topics for the period between the late eighteenth and the early twentieth centuries. They will examine the relevance of gender to particular social fields such as politics, labour, business and consumption, science and learning, religion, sexuality and family order across the world. They will also include methodological reflections on how to make silenced subjects visible or how to include performative aspects of gender in global history. Last but not least, papers will also challenge the (gendered) genre of global history and explore how global history could, or should, be rewritten from a gender historian's perspective.

Programme

THURSDAY, 25 AUGUST

12:30 Reception with drinks and a small buffet

13:30 Introduction: Christof Dejung (Bern) and Angelika Epple (Bielefeld)

14:00 Panel 1: Global migration and gender order

Chair: Agnes Gehbald (Bern)

Elisa Camiscioli (Binghamton): The “traffic in women” as migration history: gendering global migrations in the early twentieth century

Johanna Tönsing (Paderborn) and Mustafa Aksakal (Bielefeld): The diary of an Inuk exhibited in a human zoo: Chances and limitations of grasping migrant perspectives for global history studies

15:30 *Coffee Break*

16:00 Panel 2: Women, mobility and the global circulation of ideas

Chair: Serena Tolino (Bern)

Frederik Schulze (Bielefeld): Globalization and emancipation: Women travellers in Latin America in the 19th century

Aurea Mota (Barcelona) and Ainamar Rodagut (Barcelona): Role of women as cultural mediators in the 19th and 20th century

17:30 *Short break*

17:45 Keynote

Lynn Hunt (Los Angeles): Women, global products, and western notions of superiority: The paradoxical consequences of the improvement in status of women in the West

Chair: Christof Dejung (Bern)

20:00 Dinner

FRIDAY, 26 AUGUST

9:00 Panel 3: Fashion and bodily hygiene

Chair: Angelika Epple (Bielefeld)

Sangita Saha (Ann Arbor): Self-care, domestic well-being and bodily hygiene: The role of consumption of toiletries and cosmetics for the middle-class women in colonial Bengal

Katja Jana (Berlin): Shaping collective bodies and updating the mind: Male fashions in Ottoman modernization and its global dimensions

10:30 Coffee Break

11:00 Panel 4: Bodily practices and social order

Chair: Patricia Purtschert (Bern)

Simona Lukminaite (Hyogo), Developments in the modern women's physical education from a global perspective

Stefan Rinke (Berlin): "The fear of the vampire woman": Global images of the 'American Girl' and the transformation of social norms in Latin America – Chile in the early twentieth century

12:30 Lunch

14:00 Panel 5: Gendering economic history

Chair: Felix Brahm (Bielefeld)

Mariana P. Candido (Emory): Women and wealth in Angola: Gendered strategies to secure property, 1800-1880s.

Jana Tschurenev (Göttingen): Male breadwinners, female homemakers: Gendering global labour history

15:30 Coffee Break

Walk to the nearby town of Murten

20:00 Dinner in the Restaurant Käserei in Murten

SATURDAY, 27 AUGUST

9:00 Panel 6: Gender and the imperial world order

Chair: Angelika Epple (Bielefeld)

Johanna de Groot (York): “Speaking back” to gender binaries: Some reflections on masculinities and femininities in imperial settings

Felix Brahm (Bielefeld): A big man's world? Global trade and changing gender relations in precolonial East Africa

10:30 Coffee Break

11:00 Concluding Discussion

Chair: Christof Dejung (Bern)

12:00 Lunch buffet