

Researching the History of Medical Care, Humanitarianism and Violence in Asia during the ‘long’ Second World War: New Approaches, Challenges and Limits

Organisation: Marie-Luce Desgrandchamps (University of Geneva), Pierre Fuller (Sciences Po, Paris), Laure Humbert (University of Manchester), Bertrand Taithe (University of Manchester)

Date, Place: 22 May 2023, 1 Place Saint Thomas d’Aquin, Bâtiment M, B.001 (Sciences Po, Paris) and online.

Participants: Liu Weijia, Pierre Fuller, Jean Corbi, Yan Yiqiao, Caroline Reeves, Sarah Xia Yu, Jinghong Zhang, Nicole Barnes, Laure Humbert, Bertrand Taithe, Marie-Luce Desgrandchamps.

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The aim of this workshop is to rethink the history of the long Second World War (1931-1953) from the perspectives of those who delivered and received medical and humanitarian care in Asia. It follows on a series of online seminars that took place from December 2021 to June 2022 (<https://colonialandtransnationalintimacies.com/seminar-series/>) and brought together scholars studying how humanitarian and medical aid was experienced in wartime every-day life in both ‘traditional’ army medical health services and in ‘irregular’ wars across the world. The seminar series aimed at stimulating conversation between different strands of historiography. It built on important developments in colonial cultural studies, which have transformed our knowledge of the colonial body and repertoires of colonial governance (Stoler, 1995, 2002, 2010; Ballantyne and Burton, 2006; Pierce and Rao, 2006; Sehlkoglu, Zengin, 2015; Saada, 2012). It also drew on recent histories of wartime medical care, intimacy geopolitics (Shah, 2013; Pain 2014) that have considered medical sites as spaces of bodily and intimate desires and bonds, where ideas about gender, race, pain and the body were contested (Bourke, 2000; Doan, 2012; Carden-Coyne, 2015; Barnes, 2018). Finally, it engaged with new gendered histories of humanitarianism (Salvatici, 2019; Möller, Paulmann, Stornig, 2020; Martin-Moruno, Edgar, Leyder, 2020). While the seminar series showcased exciting new research on the history of medicine, psychiatry, refugee, displacement, humanitarianism, international laws, forensic practices and violence against health providers and patients, it lacked sufficient contribution by historians of medical care and humanitarianism in Asia. This is the rationale behind the organisation of this workshop. Its aims are two-fold: to consider both the relationship and disconnect between the historiographies of humanitarianism in Anglo-European and Asian contexts; and to bring historians on Asia into further dialogue with the issues and themes raised at the Colonial and Transnational Intimacies seminar series held in 2021-22.

Programme

1st session: 14h to 16h (Bâtiment M, B.001 and zoom)

Pierre Fuller (Sciences Po, Paris): Links and non-links between humanitarian historiographies: setting the scene

Nicole Barnes (Duke University, Durham, NC): Intimate Communities. Wartime Healthcare and the Birth of Modern China

Jean Corbi (Sciences Po, Paris): “‘National Defense Medicine’ : Chinese-style physicians and medical relief during the war against Japan”

Yan Yiqiao (EHESS, Paris): “Local Elites, Charity Networks, and the Provision of Social Relief in Wartime Sichuan, 1937-1945”

2nd session: 17h-19h (Bâtiment M, B.001 and zoom)

Caroline Reeves (Harvard University Fairbank Center, Cambridge MA): Manly Men and Dirty Nurses: Cultural Transmission of Nursing Imagery in Wartime China, Japan and the USA, 1900-1930s

Sarah Xia Yu (DeSales, Pennsylvania): Plague Control, Medical Care, and Local Autonomy in Shanxi, 1918–1935

Jinghong Zhang (University of California Santa Cruz): Trauma of Warfare: Maxillofacial Surgery and Medical Relief in Wartime China, 1948 to 1953

Marie-Luce Desgrandchamps (University of Geneva and University of Fribourg), Laure Humbert (University of Manchester), Bertrand Taithe (University of Manchester): presentation of the 2021-22 seminar series and the publication project.

