Call for Papers:

Feeding and Clothing the World: Cash Crops and Global History in the Twentieth Century

Conference at the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC

Date: June 2-4, 2011
Conveners: Shane Hamilton, University of Georgia
Ines Prodöhl, GHI

Around 1900, when the imperial powers had nearly completely divided the world amongst themselves, raw materials became an essential element of global trade. Besides minerals, the industrialized nations and empires of the North were particularly interested in cash crops, unprocessed agricultural products, cultivated in monoculture and intended for export. Most cash crops were grown in regions of colonial or quasi-colonial dependencies. These crops were almost always processed in the industrialized world leading to technological innovations only in those places and therefore putting the regions of origin at a severe long-term disadvantage. Marketing of the manufactured products also disconnected them from their place of origin semantically and culturally in the mind of the Western public.

The conference seeks to analyze the economic and cultural consequences of the increasing demand for cash crops by the producing, processing, and consuming regions of the. Due to their economic importance, cash crops help us to understand trade relations and – by looking at the way those crops were perceived – processes of trans-cultural entanglements. We are interested in the dynamic relations between the production of cash crops and the consumption of the processed/manufactured products. We would like to combine the question of cultures and economies to explore the history of global connections, exchanges and transformations. We will ask about the processes and output of exchange that the cultivation and trade of cash crops entailed and in doing so we will also debate over the parameters of global history.
We solicit proposals for papers presenting historical research on the economic, political, cultural, and social history of cash crops, including but not limited to the following aspects:

• the link between agriculture and industry
• the migration of forced or free labor
• environmental impact
• social disruptions and famines
• labor regimes and international organizations in agriculture
• commodity chains and multinational corporations
• the role of states (empires) in the structuring of commodity markets
• methodological questions on global history

Please email a paper proposal (in English) of no more than 300 words and a short C.V. to Baerbel Thomas <b.thomas@ghi-dc.org>. The deadline for submission is December 1, 2010. Applicants will be notified by January 15, 2011. The conference, held in English, will focus on the discussion of pre-circulated papers, which should be ready for distribution by May 1, 2011. Expenses for travel and accommodation will be covered.

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