



Transregional
Academy

Call for
Applications

Submission Deadline:
15 March 2020

Shadows of Empires

Imperial Legacies and Mythologies in East Central Europe

14-21 September 2020 in Sofia, Bulgaria

Transregional Academy organized by PRISMA UKRAÏNA - Research Network Eastern Europe in cooperation with CAS Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, Center for Governance and Culture in Europe, University St. Gallen, and the German Historical Institute Warsaw

Shadows of Empires. Imperial Legacies and Mythologies in East Central Europe

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The empires of the 19th century left both material and intellectual legacies in Eastern Europe. They challenged each other's influence in the region, and some territories of East and Central Europe were not only imperial borderlands but also a part of, or vassals dependent on, the Russian and the Ottoman empires. To these belonged parts of present-day Romania and Moldova: the historic principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, and parts of Ukraine: Crimea, the Northern Black Sea Coast and the historic regions of Bukovyna and Podillia. On the intellectual map of Eastern Europe at the fin de siècle, Russian pan-Slavism and pan-Turkism were the competing ideologies. Relations with the imagined "West" implied specific consequences and occupy a special place in the legacies of all empires. While the "solution of the Eastern question" always meant disintegration for the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, with the Congress of Vienna in 1815, became part of the geopolitical balance of power in Europe.

How to problematize the imperial legacy?

If we go beyond the description of imperial legacy as based entirely on the past of empire as a form of government, the phenomenon itself becomes non-trivial and requires conceptualization. Maria Todorova divided imperial legacy into two parts: legacy as continuity and legacy as perception (in our opinion, the second case is about the "invention of tradition", in Eric Hobsbawm's understanding, rather than legacy), and asked where the timeline between them lies. Is it appropriate to discuss imperial legacy, or better, imperial legacies? This question can be developed in two ways. On the one hand, imperial legacy differs between the center and the periphery (as well as within the periphery itself). On the other hand, by appealing to different components of legacies, groups of successors can construct distinct and even conflicting images of their lineages and themselves. Hence, the approach of the New Imperial History proposes to consider not the imperial structures but the discourses of "imperial situations", which may exist even before the formal proclamation of the empire (which in fact may never occur) as well as after its disappearance from the political map of the world.

How can we research the imperial legacies of the Ottoman and Russian empires without the essentialization that may arise from both the insufficient criticism of existing typologies of empires and from "othering" or romanticizing imperial legacies? Are inequalities or violence in the post-imperial space of East Central Europe (inescapable) imperial legacies, or are we faced with a case of over-historicizing that hinders our understanding of the realities rather than helping it? How can we research imperial legacies in times of the reaffirmation of the nation state and transgressive neo-imperial policies?

Nonlinear interaction of mythologies of empires and nation-state

The creation of imperial mythologies followed the emergence, establishment and expansion of state structures. The myths of the Russian princes' foreign, Varangian descent and of Osman's Dream served to explain and glorify the origins of the Russian and Ottoman empires. The myth of the Golden Age and of "Moscow as the Third Rome" gave them temporal and spatial perspectives; political concepts such as Ottomanism or the formula "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality" were intended to manage heterogeneous hierarchies within empires. In the later imperial period, the dominant imperial narrative was opposed with notions such as the "prison of the peoples" or the "Turkish yoke". After its collapse, elements of the Russian Empire's mythology were transformed into parts of an 'invented tradition', transmitted to the USSR and then to the Russian Federation. The same is true for elements of the Ottoman mythology in the modern Turkish state. In the newly-established national states of East and Central Europe, imperial mythologies sought to emphasize their new beginning and their legitimization before and beyond the imperial past.

Sofia as the venue of the Academy was chosen deliberately, as this once-Ottoman city is one of the most evident examples of such a process of de-imperialization. For several decades after becoming the Bulgarian capital in 1879, Sofia turbulently sought for its "modern", "European" face, which often meant the entire destruction of its Ottoman legacy, unambiguously associated with the "backward" and "oriental". In the interwar period, attention was drawn to the Ottoman architectural traditions of the city, but they were still not fully regarded as part of Bulgarian cultural heritage.

Brief Description of the Academy Format

We are planning to gather up to twenty scholars (historians, literary and cultural scientists, cultural anthropologists, sociologists, economists, political scientists, etc.) in the early/initial stages of their career (doctoral/postdoctoral), who are eager to contribute to the topics and questions described. Projects that look at imperial legacies and mythologies in East and Central Europe from a comparative and transregional perspective are highly welcomed. The participants will present and discuss their current projects. Explorations of the city space of Sofia shall also play an important role. The common language of the Academy will be English.

The Academy will take place at the Centre for Advanced Study in Sofia (www.cas.bg), an independent, multidisciplinary Institute for Advanced Study with a wide radiance in the region.

Steering committee of our Academy: Katharina Biegger (Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin), Diana Mishkova (CAS Sofia), Andrii Portnov (PRISMA UKRAÏNA Berlin), Miloš Rezník (German Historical Institute Warsaw), Ulrich Schmid (University St. Gallen), Viktoriia Serhienko (National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine Kyiv), Annette Werberger (European University Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder).

How to Apply

1. A CV (max. 3 pages);
2. A three- to five-page outline of the project the applicant is currently working on, with a brief introductory summary thereof;
3. A sample of an academic writing (in any language);
4. The names of two university faculty members who can serve as referees (no letters of recommendation required).

The application should be written in English and sent via **email** as **one pdf file** to **academies@trafo-berlin.de**

Please specify the topic of the Academy: "Empires" in the subject line of the e-mail.

Deadline for applications is **15 March 2020**. Those who send their applications after the deadline will not be considered. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by the end of April 2020.