

Thursday, December 3, 10–12 am, KJC Room 212



Lecture by

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Dr. Sacha Zala: Reflections on the Cult of the Nation and Early Fascism: D'Annunzio at Fiume

For Italy the consequence of World War I was a very successful national consolidation that concluded the process of national unification: Italy could reach its ethnical and “natural” borders virtually everywhere and Italian minorities outside the nation-state were relatively small. Despite this, the question of Fiume (today's Rijeka in Croatia) fomented a strong nationalistic wave in Italy, which condemned the so-called “mutilated victory” and culminated in September 1919 in the occupation of the city of Fiume by the poet-warrior Gabriele D'Annunzio. During the 16 months of occupation, D'Annunzio created a new style of mass communication based on the cult of the nation. Constitutive for this cult of the nation was a great variety of religious metaphors, symbols and rituals which D'Annunzio invented and which recurred on the “mental maps” of a generation of young soldiers who were forged by the apocalyptic experiences in the trenches during the war.

Dr. Tomoko Akami: Empires and the League of Nations: Opposition and cooperation in norm setting, and bringing scholarships in Japan and Germany into a picture

This presentation is not a paper based on substantial archival research, but is a proposal for a research collaboration for which I believe this cluster, especially A3, could be an ideal base. I would also like to suggest a further broader potential for such cluster activities from this research angle. In the past several years, I have argued for the need to use the idea of empire/nation-state, not the nation-state, as a unit of modern international politics. Here, I have emphasized the nature of the modern nation-state as an external and internal formal empire. I have developed this idea from a case study on modern Japan and international politics of Northeast Asia in the inter-war period. It is intended as an alternative to the orthodox view of history of international relations which had largely been centred on Western Europe. Now I would like to use this framework in order to understand the operations and meaning of the League of Nations. The proposed research title is therefore ‘an examination of the role of various empires of different status and backgrounds in setting certain norms of global governance with the League of Nations in the inter-war period, and the implications of this norm shaping for the subsequent United Nations’ operations in a similar field.’ In this way, I would see empires not as an opposing force to the League of Nations and its principle of self-determination, but as member states of the League. I would like to look at how their colonial concerns influenced (or were blocked in) the League's attempts in shaping the notion of global governance, and various key issues in this process.

I would in particular appreciate your feedbacks on the following three points. Firstly - as my works have been focused on Northeast Asia, especially the case studies of Japan's international affairs in this period - what would the experience of Germany and other European states suggest regarding this shift of focus from the nation-state to empires when looking at the operations of the League? Secondly, the field of history of international relations has largely been examined from Anglo-American perspectives. I am convinced that bringing Japanese case studies into the picture could shed light on hitherto neglected aspects (e.g. in the English school the idea of the ‘international society’). What potential and also problems do you see in bringing other central European perspectives into an analysis of the shaping of norms at the League of Nations? Thirdly, while I would examine the League's experts' committees for this research focus, are there any other specific cases you have encountered or could think of which would illuminate the process of creating norms in global governance best (e.g. mandate management, refugee management, public health, labor conditions, standard of living)?

