

Reflecting on Concepts of Coloniality / Postcoloniality in Latin American, South Asian and African Historiography

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RESÜMEE

Die Konzepte der Kolonialität/Postkolonialität sind seit den 1980er Jahren in verschiedenen Disziplinen intensiv diskutiert worden. Postkoloniale Theorie hat sich in den Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften zu einer höchst einflussreichen Denkrichtung entwickelt. Wenig erforscht blieb jedoch ein wichtiger Aspekt dieser Debatten: die signifikanten Unterschiede, aber auch die Überlappungen zwischen den spezifischen Diskursen über Kolonialität/Postkolonialität in Lateinamerika, Indien und Afrika, die hier in den Blick genommen werden. Die unterschiedlichen Historiographien der Kolonialität sind eng verknüpft mit den auch zeitlich divergierenden Erfahrungen von Kolonialismus in den einzelnen Weltregionen. Seit den 1980er Jahren hatte in allen Diskursen die Entwicklung postkolonialer Theorien einen bedeutsamen Einfluss, der eine neue kritische und umfassende Beschäftigung mit Kolonialismus und seinen Auswirkungen anstieß. Die lateinamerikanischen, indischen und afrikanischen Debatten über Kolonialität und Postkolonialität, ihre Unterschiede und ihre gegenseitige Durchdringung lassen sich adäquat nur in Form einer verflochtenen Geschichte der Historiographien darstellen.

During the last decades, concepts of coloniality/postcoloniality have become intensely debated issues in academic research, particularly so in non-European history. Many of the prominent concepts have been highly contested, be it otherness, hybridity or transculturation. However, one aspect that has not gained much attention of the scholarship is the considerable variations in the academic debates on (post)coloniality in different world-regions. The history of discourses and the priorities within the discourses show that the impact of regional characteristics could be quite significant. On the following pages, we thus try to address this lacuna. We will compare the different uses of concepts of (post)coloniality in the academic debates on Latin America, Africa, and Asia, showing

some distinct developments, analysing the state of the art in the discourse on the different regions and looking at the different phases of colonisation and decolonisation in the three areas.

We address coloniality/postcoloniality as interwoven concepts of assessing social dynamics, domination and resistance, socio-cultural formations and regimes of representation. The inclusion of the concept of postcoloniality emphasises the contested state of colonial patterns by highlighting conflictive negotiations and negotiations, and points at hybridisations and transculturation in cultural contact.

With this comparison, we aim at giving some background for the following papers that deal with coloniality/postcoloniality in many different world regions. In a wider context, we aim at providing some thoughts for an academic interchange without neglecting the differences between the discourses.

The different uses of concepts of (post)coloniality are strongly intertwined with the diverging experiences of colonisation in the three world regions. With regard to Latin America, we stress the point that coloniality lies at the heart of the constitution of the Americas as a geocultural unit. The Spanish conquest initiated a process of colonisation of the whole western hemisphere that can be understood as the largest and deepest project of colonisation in world history. Formal decolonisation started much earlier than in other world regions and this strongly influenced the (post)colonial debates in studies on Latin America. In the South Asian context, the article focuses on India: The colonisation of the Indian Subcontinent started much later than in Latin America, in the second half of the eighteenth century. Here we can observe that Indian academic historiography had its origin in the colonial legacy itself and that various concepts of coloniality were debated and discussed during the long struggle against colonial domination. After the formal decolonisation of India in 1947 the impact of colonisation remained a contested issue in the postcolonial discourse on Indian history, particularly after the emergence of the field of subaltern studies. We can observe a similar development, albeit later, in Africa with its colonial occupation in the second half of the 19th century, which also initiated the beginning of an African academic historiography. Here, the master narrative of a successful colonisation was questioned later and the ongoing decolonisation movement in the 1950s and 1960s was accompanied by research on the effects of modernization, urbanization and industrialisation during decolonisation, leaving the colonial legacy more or less aside.

In all regional debates, the emergence of postcolonial studies in the Anglophone world since the 1980s had a considerable impact, mostly so in Indian historiography with the strong intertwining of subaltern studies and postcolonial approaches and the dominance of the Anglophone discourse in Indian history. Also in African and Latin American historiography postcolonial studies renewed the interest in coloniality with research now addressing (post)coloniality and its impact from different angles; looking at systems of power, at symbolic resources, including also topics such as reproduction or racial boundaries.

Since the discussion on postcoloniality was mainly dominated by the Anglophone world, it often excluded Latin America. In our approach we therefore try to follow Fernando

Coronil's plea he made in a 2008 article titled "Elephants in the Americas? Latin American Postcolonial Studies and Global Decolonization" and to bring together debates on (post)coloniality from Asia, Africa and Latin America.¹ We will also show when and in what ways the discourses overlapped and at what point in the historiographical discourse certain concepts such as subalternity or hybridity were actually addressed. Thus, we hope to reach a more global understanding of the approaches in question.

1. (Post-) Coloniality in the Americas

1.1. America as a Colonial Invention

Coloniality lies at the heart of the constitution of the Americas. It is the Spanish conquest that initiated a process of colonisation of the whole western hemisphere by European powers that can be understood as the largest and deepest project of colonisation in world history. A lot has been written on the political and social history of Latin America under colonialism.² Recently, many scholars have argued that the constitution of America as a geo-cultural unit is the product of the process of European expansion and conquest.³ This is even expressed in the semantics of the continent's name, which goes back to the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci. Different indigenous peoples and nations are subsumed under the catch-it-all category 'indio', due to the historic mistake of Cristóbal Colón who thought to be in India.⁴ These aspects illustrate that America is marked by a colonial difference, which stands at the beginning of the Capitalist World-System and as a geo-cultural construction of the West.⁵

Departing from this point of discussion, we see in the context of Latin American postcolonial studies a critical discussion on Edward Said's seminal work on Orientalism. Walter Dignolo argues that the construction of the Orient in the 18th century as the 'Other' was only possible on account of the triumph of Christian Spain in the expulsion of the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula and the conquest of the Americas. Drawing on the

1 F. Coronil, *Elephants in the Americas? Latin American Postcolonial Studies and Global Decolonization*, in: M. Morana / E. D. Dussel / C. A. Jáuregui (eds.), *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, Durham 2008, pp. 396-416.

2 For example, see: H. Pietschmann, *El Estado y su evolución al principio de la colonización española de América, México 1989*; M. Möhrner (ed.), *Race and Class in Latin America*, New York 1970; M. Burkholder / L. Johnson, *Colonial Latin America*, New York 1998.

3 E. O'Gorman, *The invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of Its History*, Bloomington 1961; J. Rabasa, *Inventing America: Spanish Historiography and the Formation of Eurocentrism*, Oklahama 1993; and recently, see: W. Dignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, Malden 2005.

4 C. Büschges, *Die Erfindung des Indianers. Kolonialherrschaft und ethnische Identität im spanischen Amerika*, in: T. Beck / M. Dos Santos Lopes / C. Rödel (eds.), *Barrieren und Zugänge. Die Geschichte der Europäischen Expansion*, Wiesbaden 2004, pp. 193-228.

5 I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, v. I, New York / London 1974. For a perspective that includes also cultural dynamics, see: I. Wallerstein, *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-System*, Cambridge 1991. For an inter-American approach, see: A. Quijano / I. Wallerstein, *Americanity as a Concept, or the Americas in the Imaginary of the Modern World-System*, in: *International Journal of Social Science*, 134 (1992), pp. 549-559.

works of the philosopher Enrique Dussel, he contends that this can be seen as the first – Hispanic and humanist – modernity, while Orientalism appears only in the second phase of modernity associated with the emergence of new centers in the world system and with the beginning of industrialisation.

He summarises:

*Orientalism, in other words, was a particular re-articulation of the modern/colonial world system imaginary in its second phase, when Occidentalism, structured and implemented in the Imaginary of Spanish and Portuguese empires, began to fade away.*⁶

In Latin America, colonialism constitutes the historical period from the conquest in the ‘long 16th century’ until the early process of independence and the formation of post-colonial republics at the beginning of the 19th century. Nevertheless, many scholars have argued that we can notice in the formal post-colonial societies a persistence of colonial elements like the head tax for indigenous people, forced-labor systems, the *hacienda-dispositif*, slavery, the reservation-system and racial segregation, internal colonialism, as well as the exclusion of the indigenous majority from enjoying political rights.⁷

In order to deal with this colonial *longue durée*, in the recent interdisciplinary discussions in Latin American postcolonial studies a conceptual distinction is made between colonialism as a historic period and coloniality as the enduring weight of colonial elements, values, discourses, and practices in the post-colonial societies. This colonial *longue durée* does not mean that the ongoing power of coloniality can be conceived of as a monolithic, never-changing structure. Instead, we can argue with Mary Louise Pratt that “the ‘colonial legacy’ has been and continues to be renewed and integrated into a changing world through continuing permutations of its signifying powers, administrative practices, and forms of violence”.⁸

1.2. World-System and Ethnic Classification

An often criticised aspect of postcolonial approaches is their supposed negligence of socio-economic structures and inequalities and their over-interpretation of cultural elements. Florencia Mallon puts forth the same argument from the perspective of social history which is one of the most influential historiographical approaches in Latin America.⁹

6 W. Mignolo, *Local Histories / Global Designs*, Princeton 2000, p. 61.

7 S. Rivera Cusicanqui, *La Raíz: Colonizadores y Colonizados*, in: X. Albó / R. Barrios (eds.), *Violencias Encubiertas en Bolivia*, La Paz 1993, pp. 27-139; M. Thurner, *From Two Republics to One Divided: The Contradictions of Post-colonial Nationmaking in Andean Peru*, Durham 1997; B. Larson, *Trials of Nation Making: Liberalism, Race, and Ethnicity in the Andes, 1810–1910*, Cambridge 2004; O. Kaltmeier, *Hacienda, Staat und indigene Gemeinschaften: Kolonialität und politisch-kulturelle Grenzverschiebungen von der Unabhängigkeit bis in die Gegenwart*, in: H. J. Burchardt / I. Wehr (eds.), *Der Verweigerte Sozialvertrag: Politische Partizipation und blockierte soziale Teilhabe in Lateinamerika*, Baden-Baden 2010.

8 M. L. Pratt, *In the Neocolony: Destiny, Destination, and the Traffic Meaning*, in: E. Dussel / C. Jáuregui / M. Moraña (eds.), *Coloniality at Large*, Durham 2008, p. 461.

9 For an analytical overview over the debate between J. Beverly, from the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, and the social historian F. Mallon, see: G. Bustos, *Enfoque Subalterno e Historia Latinoamericana: Nación,*

Although it is true that postcolonial studies focus more on cultural issues, it is certainly an overstatement to say that they do not take into account socio-economic structures. Latin American thinkers heavily draw on Marxism, Dependence Theory and, especially the World-System-approach.¹⁰ The work of Aníbal Quijano and his concept ‘coloniality of power’ demonstrate how cultural approaches and the World-System Theory can go hand in hand.¹¹ Quijano’s central idea is to see ‘coloniality of power’ as a machine that transforms differences into antagonistic values – modern versus traditional, white versus black. Thus the concept of cultural classification – namely racism – is of supreme importance for the understanding of the formation of the modern world. This ethnic classification is related to the system of exploitation and thus forms an integral part of the Capitalist World-System. Walter D. Mignolo has expanded the idea of a ‘coloniality of power’ by arguing that coloniality remains ‘the darker side of modernity’ in so far as Renaissance and Enlightenment are conceived of as inherently European dynamics whose entanglement with coloniality is systematically silenced.¹²

1.3. Post-Colonial Spaces and Transcultural Identities

Following the post-structural and constructivist insights of identity-building processes as well as the debate around the spatial turn, postcolonial thinkers questioned the juxtaposition of such homogenic entities as colonisers vs. colonised. Instead, they put an emphasis on hybrid spaces of encounter, as it is expressed in the idea of ‘cultural contact zone’ proposed by Mary Louise Pratt.¹³ With Homi Bhabha and Edward Soja these spaces can be understood as ‘third spaces’ or as spaces-in-between.¹⁴ Concerning the Americas, some authors make use of such indigenous concepts as *nepantla*, which was coined by Nahuatl-speaking people to refer to the space-in-between the Spanish and the Mexican.¹⁵ These ‘third spaces’ generate multiple positionings and new hybrid identities that can be conceptualised with terms like ‘transculturation’, ‘mestizaje’, ‘anthropofagia’, and ‘post-colonial mimicry’. The concept ‘transculturation’ – a concept introduced by the Cuban author Fernando Ortiz¹⁶ – is of particular importance as it has less biological

Subalternidad y Escritura de la Historia en el Debate Mallon-Beverley, in: *Fronteras de la Historia*, v. 7, Bogotá 2002, pp. 253-276.

- 10 For example, see: F. Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela*, Chicago 1997; R. Grosfoguel, *Developmentalism, Modernity, and Dependency Theory in Latin America*, in: E. Dussel / C. Jáuregui / M. Moraña (eds.), *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, Durham 2008, pp. 307-335; W. Mignolo, *Local Histories / Global Designs*, Princeton 2000.
- 11 A. Quijano, *Colonialidad del Poder, Eurocentrismo y América Latina*, in: E. Lander (ed.), *Colonialidad del Saber, Eurocentrismo y Ciencias Sociales*, CLACSO-UNESCO 2000.
- 12 W. Mignolo, *Local Histories / Global Designs* (footnote 10), p. 249; Id., *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonisation*, Michigan 1995.
- 13 M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London / New York 1992.
- 14 H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London 1994; E. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Oxford 1996.
- 15 W. Mignolo, *Human Understanding and (Latin) American Interests – The Politics and Sensibilities of Geohistorical Locations*, in: H. Schwarz / S. Ray (eds.), *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, Oxford 2005, pp.180-202.
- 16 F. Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, Durham 1995, pp. 96-97.

connotations as such concepts as ‘mestizaje’ or hybridity. These concepts question the hegemonic models of assimilation, or ‘whitening’, that were predominantly in use not only in the 19th century but also in the modernisation and development discourse of the 1960s and 70s.

1.4. Geopolitics of Knowledge

Another topic discussed in the Latin America postcolonial studies is the articulation of coloniality and the production of legitimate knowledge. Mignolo argues that corresponding to the ‘real’ geopolitics, there exists a ‘geopolitics of knowledge’, in which indigenous and other peripheral knowledge and languages are not taken into account.¹⁷ Instead, knowledge about the ‘Other’ is constructed. We can argue that the construction of Western knowledge parts from a singular position – here from a Euro-centric standpoint – that is universalised and presented as the only valid knowledge-system. In order to put into question the existing geopolitics of knowledge it is important to ask for the locus of enunciation of every speaker. In order to go beyond the egocentric construction of knowledge we need, as Walter Mignolo points out, a double critique, that is to say, in an intercultural contact zone we have “to think from both traditions and, at the same time, from neither of them”.¹⁸ This is what he terms ‘epistemologic creolization’ or ‘border thinking’. In this sense, there exists a challenge to think about the modes of a mutual construction of knowledge in the processes of transculturalisation or hybridisation. However, in spite of the usefulness of such an approach, there still remains the question of the articulation of power and knowledge. For example, a German historian who writes in the academic lingua franca has other chances to be heard and to produce academically acknowledged knowledge than a kichwa-speaking indigenous shaman in the Ecuadorean Highlands.

1.5. Decolonising Historiography

This leads postcolonial historians to a project of epistemological decolonisation. Although Gayatri Spivak has postulated that the subaltern has no voice that can be heard in the hegemonic systems of representation, the main purpose of American postcolonial studies is to bring the subaltern back to historical narrations. This aim is explicitly formulated in the founding statement of the ‘Latin American Subaltern Studies Group’ published for the first time in English in 1995.¹⁹ Although the constitution of the group is interdisciplinary, we can discern a strong influence especially of comparative literature studies. Therefore, historians like Florencia Mallon have criticised that the group ignores and makes invisible the contributions that social history – particularly the idea of social

17 W. Mignolo, *Local Histories / Global Designs* (footnote 10).

18 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

19 M. Aronna / J. Beverley / J. Oviedo (eds.), *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*, Durham 1995.

history ‘from below’ – has made to include the subalterns into the writing of history.²⁰ On the one hand this argument is certainly true, if we think, for example, of the rich oral sources collected by the famous Workshop for Oral History in Bolivia under the direction of Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that the epistemological critique of the postcolonial goes deeper, including the classical historiographic methods.

Another academic formation is necessary if the historian needs not only to take into account sources in Spanish and /or Latin, but also, for example, the Maya codices in order to write an alternative history of the conquest, as José Rabasa did.²¹ Questions arise also about the standpoint of the archive and the problem to make subaltern voices heard, as they are usually not collected in the archives. Often they can only be approached through secondary archives. And in the case of the existence of indigenous sources, the historian faces a new challenge of reading, translation, and interpretation.²² It seems important, especially for historians concerned with subalternity, to enter into a broader, self-reflexive discussion on the own methods and the specific locus of enunciation.

2. Conceptualising Coloniality in South Asia: Changing Perspectives

2.1. Perceiving Coloniality under Colonialism

In this section, we will focus mainly on the changing perception of coloniality in India. Although the role of British colonialism in shaping and/or reshaping the history of South Asia has been generally accepted by scholars, apparently there is no agreement among them about the nature and the corollary of this interface between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’. Even though India is credited with a history of thousands of years, the historiography of ‘Indian history’ cannot boast of such an antiquity. The root of the history of Indian historiography has its origin in its colonial legacy itself. James Mill and later Vincent A. Smith, the best-known of the British administrative historians, founded the structure within which an ‘Indian History’ was construed firstly by the Colonial West and later by native Indian intellectuals.²³ According to such a British intellectual view, British occupation of India inaugurated a new era in its history – a transformation from an ‘archaic’ past to a ‘modern’ present and was the natural and eventual success of a superior culture / civilisation over an inferior one. It was this master colonial discourse that

20 F. E. Mallon, *The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History*, in: *The American Historical Review*, 99 (1994) 5, pp. 1491-1515; Id., *Subalterns and the Nation*, in: *Dispositio/n: Special Issue on Latin American Subaltern Studies Revisited*, 25 (2005) 52, pp. 159-178.

21 J. Rabasa, *Thinking Europe in Indian Categories or, “Tell me the Story of How I Conquered You”*, in: E. Dussel / C. Jáuregui / M. Moraña (eds.), *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, Durham 2008, pp. 43-73.

22 M. Baud, *Liberalism, Indigenismo, and Social Mobilization in Late Nineteenth-Century Ecuador*, in: M. Becker / A. K. Clark (eds.), *Highland Indians and the State in Modern Ecuador*, Pittsburgh 2007, pp. 72-88.

23 J. Mill, *The History of British India*, 3rd edition, London 1826; V. A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India: From the Earliest Times to the End of 1911*, Oxford 1911.

created and defined subsequent discourses (both Western and indigenous) on colonial India.

An alternative view on colonialism was the consequence of the rise of Indian nationalism by the end of the 19th century. Although its tone was different, the 'nationalist' perception about British colonialism was moulded in the same crucible of the colonial master narrative. Early Indian nationalist leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji wrote about the economic exploitation of India under colonial hegemony. The title of Naoroji's book *Poverty and un-British Rule in India* exactly reflects the attitude of the Western-educated early Indian nationalist leaders towards colonialism.²⁴ Although they were critical towards colonial exploitation, they did not completely reject the colonial rhetoric of 'progress'. Facing the problem of satisfactorily explaining the British success in subjugating and controlling India, they, to a great extent, accepted the civilising mission of the British and the need to 'catch up' with the West to be 'modern'. According to this view, Indian suffering under colonial rule was mainly because of the unwillingness of the British to introduce a 'proper' (and therefore 'progressive') British system of rule in India. For them colonialism was a necessary evil. British hegemony was necessary to recuperate the degenerated Indian culture and to guide it to a progressive future. However, the British were unwilling to do so. Obviously the perception of the early leaders of Indian nationalism about colonialism was rather shaped by the discourse produced by the hegemonic West. During the first half of the twentieth century, when the Indian nationalist movement was gaining its momentum, 'nationalist' historiography achieved particular political significance. There was serious reaction on the part of these 'nationalist' historians against the colonial attempt to degrade the Indian past and to glorify colonial occupation as a 'civilising mission'. Naturally the Indian past (especially the 'ancient Hindu' past in preference to the 'medieval Islamic') was glorified as a period of great achievements and progress.²⁵ In this way the nationalist scholars constructed an 'ancient India' and sought to establish the ability of an Indian nation to rejuvenate itself without the West. Within this nationalist historiography, there developed a Marxist trend. Its early products were R. P. Dutt, *India Today*, and Shevlankar's *Problem of India* (1940), both dealing with India and its economic downturn under British rule.²⁶

24 D. Naoroji, *Poverty and un-British Rule in India*, London 1901; R. C. Dutt, who wrote in the early 20th century also concentrated on the issue of economic exploitation of India under the British. R. C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age from the Accession of Queen Victoria in 1837 to the Commencement of the Twentieth Century*, London 1904; R. C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India under Early British Rule: From the Rise of the British Power in 1757 to the Accession of Queen Victoria in 1837*, London 1902.

25 R. C. Majumdar, *Champa, Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East*, Vol. I, Lahore 1927; R. C. Majumdar, *Kambuja Desa Or An Ancient Hindu Colony in Cambodia*, Madras, 1944; R. K. Mookerji, *Local Government in Ancient India*, Oxford 1919.

26 R. P. Dutt, *India Today*, London 1940; K. S. Shelvankar, *The Problem of India*, London 1940.

2.2. Perceiving Coloniality in Postcolonial India

The political success of Indian nationalism to create a 'nation-state' by emulating the West in 1947 had a deep influence in shaping the postcolonial perspective on British colonialism. In postcolonial India, colonialism became 'historic', an issue that needs to be observed and analysed from the 'present'. Postcolonial nationalist scholars had the task of not only decolonising Indian history and providing an 'Indian view' about its colonial past but also of dealing with the persisting socio-political problems in postcolonial India. As opposed to imperial 'Indian histories' which always portrayed colonial rule as being beneficial to India and its people, this new scholarship argued that colonialism not only hindered economic and political progress in the Indian subcontinent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also postcolonial India continued to bear the brunt of this colonial experience. Such nationalist historians as Bipan Chandra and Sumit Sarkar argued that colonialism was a regressive force that distorted all developments in colonial India and the fundamental reason of social, economic, political ills of post-independent India.²⁷ For them modernity and the nationalist desire for political unity were not so much British gifts to India as fruits of struggles undertaken by the Indians themselves. Opposed to this 'nationalist-Marxian' view of British colonialism, there developed another stream of scholarship – widely known as 'Cambridge School' – which depicted Indian nationalism as the work of a Western-educated Indian elite who competed and collaborated with the British in search of power and prestige.²⁸ From this point of view, Indian nationalism was not the very result created by colonial conditions, but the handiwork of an Indian elite clamouring for power. Later, C. A. Bayly, in his *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, extended the range of interpretation to the 18th century by discerning a continuity of 'corporate groups' from late Mughal into early British regimes.²⁹ If the national movement was largely an illusion to Seal, the British conquest became to Bayly an elaboration of processes already at work in India. According to him British colonialism has never been a hegemonic power in India, but operated successfully only because of the support rendered by the local people.³⁰

In spite of their differences in perceiving colonialism and its consequences, both nationalist and Cambridge scholars have emphasised the socio-political and economic aspects of colonialism and mainly focused on structural changes in the affected societies. Little attention has been paid in the study of colonialism to the culture of the colonised in Brit-

27 B. Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, New Delhi 1979; S. Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885–1947*, Delhi 1983. Irfan Habib and many other scholars followed similar arguments. For example, see: I. Habib, *Essays in Indian History – Towards a Marxist Perception*, New Delhi 1995; Id., *A People's History of India: Indian Economy, 1858–1914*, New Delhi 2006.

28 A. Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*, London 1968.

29 C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870*, Cambridge 1983.

30 C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, Cambridge, 1988; Id., *Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India*, in: *Modern Asian Studies*, 27 (1993) 1, pp. 3–43.

ish India. Anthropologists like Bernard S. Cohn noticed this lacuna in Indian colonial studies and tried to bring up the issue of cultural consequence of colonial hegemony in Indian colonial studies.³¹ However, it was mainly after the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* that this cultural facet of colonial dominance came into the forefront of Indian colonial studies.³² Also, anthropologists like Nicholas B. Dirks greatly contributed in this direction.³³ However, it was the 'Subaltern Studies' project initiated by Ranajit Guha that created a paradigm shift in Indian colonial-postcolonial studies.

2.3. Subaltern Studies School

Heavily inspired by and indebted to Marxist and Gramscian concepts, Ranajit Guha tried to critique the two established trends in Indian historiography – the colonial-neo-colonial and the nationalist-neo-nationalist.³⁴ For him and his colleagues both these schools were elitist which excluded the history of the Indian subalterns from colonial discussions because they were considered as 'pre-political' and 'backward'. By doing so, their history under colonialism was excluded from elitist narratives as irrelevant in anti-colonial struggles. There was a conscious attempt on the part of these scholars to detach themselves from Euro-centric approaches, including Marxist which analysed history from a 'universal history of capital' point of view, and thereby crediting the subalterns with their own consciousness. In spite of severe criticism levelled against their approach, especially regarding the attribution of an independent thinking realm (subaltern consciousness) to the subalterns and the idealisation and reification of pre-colonial 'Indian culture' based on religion as the only genuine local culture with the inherent ability to withstand colonial cultural assault, this study group successfully divulged the Euro-centric foundation of Indian colonial historiography.³⁵ Although the contributors to the later *Subaltern Studies Series* moved away from Guha's idea of the subalterns as 'the maker of their own destiny' and their ability to speak for themselves ('letting the subaltern speak'), especially after Gayatri Spivak raised the question 'can the subaltern speak?', and began to concentrate more on Western colonial power-knowledge by reading sources against the grain, and uncovering the signs and discourses by which our knowledge of the subaltern is created, their attempt to bring out how colonialism fundamentally re-

31 B. S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays*, Delhi 1990; Id., *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Princeton 1996.

32 E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York 1978.

33 N. B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*, Cambridge 1987; Id., *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Princeton 2001.

34 R. Guha, *On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India*, in: *Subaltern Studies*, v. I, Delhi 1982, pp. 1-7; Id., *Elementary Aspects of Peasant insurgency in Colonial India*, Delhi, 1983.

35 For more details about the various criticisms against the Subaltern approach, see: D. Ludden (ed.), *Subaltern Studies: Critical History, Contested Meaning and the Globalization of South Asia*, London 2002. Interestingly the idealisation of pre-colonial Indian culture as 'religious' very much echoes early Indologists' notion of 'spiritual' India as opposed to 'secular' West. Such an assumption can be problematic in studying pre-colonial Indian history. For a critique, see: B. J. Mailaparambil, *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore: Status and Identity at the Interface of Commercial and Political Expansion, 1663–1723*, Leiden / New York (forthcoming).

structured the lives as well as the perceptions of its subject population about 'itself' and its 'other' largely contributed in eliciting the salient features of colonialism which did not get enough attention from earlier scholars.³⁶ For them colonialism was not merely about political dominance and economic exploitation. It had a far deeper impact on the world-view of the colonised which defined and re-moulded their lives according to the hegemonic discourse authored by it. By doing so, the Subaltern Studies project came closer to the postmodernist, poststructuralist approaches in history.³⁷

In the past three decades the Subaltern Studies group and other postcolonial scholars have been successful in offering a systematic critique of both colonialism and nationalism and thereby challenging the fundamentals of Indian historiography.³⁸ They effectively divulged how colonial and its derivative nationalist discourses were successful in depriving the masses of their role in history through the practices of negation and appropriation and thereby rendering the history of modern India as a linear narrative of conflict between colonialism and elite nationalism, culminating in the victory of the latter.³⁹ In doing so, the Subaltern-postcolonial scholarship considers the postcolonial politics in India as a continuum of the colonial and thereby continuous to serve as a useful critique of both colonial and postcolonial histories of the Third World.⁴⁰

In recent years, the Subaltern Studies group has been focusing on two different, but mutually contributing, directions. While a group continued to deal with the subaltern issue in colonial and post-colonial Indian history, especially by deconstructing colonial discourses, the other concentrated more on expanding the theoretical horizon of the study group.⁴¹ In a continuous attempt to deconstruct the colonial knowledge about the colonised and to recover their self, the members of the second group have extended their critique to the discipline of history itself. Accordingly, it has been argued that insofar as the academic discourse of history is concerned, Europe remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all 'other' histories.⁴² This hegemonic nature of institutionalised history led

36 G. C. Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, in: C. Nelson/L. Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Urbana 1988, pp. 271-313.

37 For a discussion on various trends in the Subaltern Studies group, see: G. Prakash, *Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism*, *The American Historical Review*, 99 (1994) 5, pp. 1475-1490.

38 Beyond the Subaltern Studies group, scholars like Nicholas B. Dirks contribute much to the postmodern critique of Colonialism and its forms of knowledge. For example, see: N. B. Dirks (ed.), *Colonialism and Culture*, Ann Arbor 1992.

39 For a critique of Indian nationalism by Subaltern scholars, see: P. Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments* (footnote 7); Id., *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, London 1986; S. Amin, *Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-22*, in: *Subaltern Studies*, v. III, Delhi 1984, pp. 1-61.

40 For the attention gained by the Subaltern Studies approach beyond India, though with reservations, see: F. E. Mallon, *The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies* (footnote 20); F. Cooper, *Conflict and Connection: Rethinking African History*, in: *American Historical Review*, 99 (1994), pp. 1516-1545.

41 For the first group, see recent Subaltern Studies series issues: P. Chatterjee/P. Jaganathan (eds.), *Subaltern Studies XI: Community, Gender, and Violence*, New York 2000; S. Mayaram/M. S. S. Pandian/A. Skaria (eds.), *Subaltern Studies XII: Muslims, Dalits, and the Fabrications of History*, New Delhi 2005.

42 D. Chakrabarty, *Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?*, *Representations*, 37 (1992); Id., *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton 2000. For a critique, see: C. Dietze, *Towards a History on Equal Terms: A Discussion of Provincializing Europe*, in: *History and Theory*,

to the degradation of popular historical narratives in colonised societies. Therefore, the Subaltern scholarly critique of the discipline of history gives ample impetus for scholars to pay more attention to the marginalised popular narratives in colonised societies to recover local historical traditions before the introduction of 'scientific' histories.⁴³ Moreover, challenging the concept of historical knowledge as 'universal', subaltern historians urge to look for multiple historical perspectives in which previously marginalised and suppressed groups could get enough representation and expect for some form of shared and general history to be evolved in the future.⁴⁴

In conclusion, the perception of coloniality in Indian historiography has tremendously changed in course of time. While the focus of early colonial and nationalist discourses was on the success or failure of colonial institutions to introduce Western ideas of modernity and progress in the region, nationalist discourse in later years emphasised the political and economic exploitation of India under British colonialism. However, it was only in the closing decades of the twentieth century that the link between colonialism and its capacity to produce hegemonic knowledge forms about the colonised started to receive the attention of scholars which fundamentally challenged the hitherto notions about coloniality in Indian historiography.

3. Concepts of (post)Coloniality in Research on Africa

3.1. Defending the Colonial Enterprise

Literature that dealt with colonialism and coloniality in the African context started to emerge when the so-called 'scramble for Africa' was in its last stages around 1890.⁴⁵ If one looks at the British literature on Africa of this time-period, it was often a semi-official form of apology for Britain's role in the partition of Africa, written for a wider audience. There were also narratives of ex-administrators and ex-missionaries, sometimes supported by ample evidence from parliamentary papers or unpublished materials.⁴⁶ In the French context, a *histoire coloniale* started to emerge as well and similar books as in

47 (2008), pp. 69-84. Also see: D. Chakrabarty, In Defence of Provinzializing Europe: A Response to Carola Dietze, in: *History and Theory*, 47 (2008), pp. 85-96.

43 For more details, see: D. Chakrabarty, A Global and Multicultural "Discipline" of History, in: *History and Theory*, 46 (2006), pp. 101-109; Id., History and the Politics of Recognition, in: K. Jenkins/S. Morgan/A. Munslow (eds.), *Manifestos for History*, New York 2007, pp. 77-87.

44 D. Chakrabarty, The Public Life of History: An Argument out of India, in: *Public Culture*, 20 (2008) 1, pp. 143-168. For an attempt to connect the multiple history perspective of the Subaltern Studies group and Global History, see: A. Epple, New Global History and The Challenge of Subaltern Studies: Plea for a Global History from Below, in: *The Journal of Localitology*, 3 (2010), pp. 161-179.

45 J. E. Flint, Britain and the Scramble for Africa, in: R. W. Winks (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. V, *Historiography*, Oxford 1999, pp. 450-462, here p. 451.

46 A. D. Roberts, The British Empire in Tropical Africa: A Review of the Literature to the 1960s, in: R. W. Winks (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. V, *Historiography*, Oxford 1999, pp. 463-485, here p. 464; As an example for an early study by the then administrator of Uganda, see: F. Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire*, 2 vols., London 1893.

the British context were being written by colonial administrators or governors at the turn of the century.⁴⁷

From then onwards, historical research began to deal to some extent with colonial structures and economies, e.g. with colonial trading companies and their endeavours in East and West Africa. Another strand of research connected colonialism with humanitarianism and dealt with the abolition of the slave trade in East Africa by upholding the humanitarian ideals of the colonialists and by defending the colonial enterprise as necessary and beneficial to Africa.⁴⁸ After WWI some critical approaches towards the colonial situation started to emerge: for example the report written by Leonard Woolf on “Empire and Commerce in Africa” for the research department of the Labour Party in Great Britain in 1920, or the work by the French historian Charles-Andre Julien on French Northern Africa in 1931. Julien stressed the fact that the North-African countries had their own original history – besides the French colonisation.⁴⁹ However, most of the early works on colonies, colonialism and coloniality in Africa, be it in French, English, or German, concentrated on colonial administration, commerce and similar topics. These studies that generally dealt with colonisers and the structures of colonial rule left the African side unwritten and by and large defended the colonial enterprise as a form of civilizing mission or as a necessity for economic development.

3.2. Critical Approaches towards Coloniality and Colonialism

More critical approaches emerged after the Second World War: Studies that dealt with colonial situations from a variety of perspectives were conducted not only by British, French, and American historians but also by a new generation of African scholars.⁵⁰ Expansion of higher education started, particularly in the British-African colonies, after 1945. University colleges were established in Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Uganda, Sudan, and Rhodesia between 1950 and 1961.⁵¹ African graduates began to come to British universities and to address topics in African history from a new standpoint and to look at colonialism/coloniality from a new perspective.⁵² One could, for example, point at

47 F. Brahm, *Wissenschaft und Dekolonisation. Paradigmenwechsel und institutioneller Wandel in der akademischen Beschäftigung mit Afrika in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1930–1970*, p. 87.

48 A. D. Roberts, *British Empire* (footnote 46), p. 468

49 L. Woolf, *Empire and Commerce in Africa: A Study in Economic Imperialism*, London 1920; C.-A. Julien, *Histoire de l’Afrique du Nord. Tunisie – Algérie – Maroc*, Paris 1931.

50 Also in Leipzig, East German historians started to work critically on German colonialism in the 1950s, most prominently Walter Markov. See: M. Middell, *Weltgeschichtsschreibung im Zeitalter der Verfachlichung und Professionalisierung. Das Leipziger Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte 1890–1990*, 3 Bde., Leipzig 2005. In West Germany, similar topics were addressed only from the late 1960s onwards. See: H. Bley, *Kolonialherrschaft und Sozialstruktur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1894–1914*, Hamburg 1968; K. Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika. Wirtschaftsinteressen und Kolonialverwaltung in Kamerun vor 1914*, Zürich, Freiburg i. Br. 1976. For a general description of literature on German colonialism, see: U. Lindner, *Plätze an der Sonne? Die Geschichtsschreibung auf dem Weg in die deutschen Kolonien*, in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 48 (2008), pp. 487–510.

51 A. D. Roberts, *British Empire* (footnote 46), p. 474.

52 T. Falola, *West Africa*, in: R. W. Winks (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. V, *Historiography*, Oxford 1999, pp. 486–499, here p. 491.

the work “Trade and politics in the Niger Delta” (1956) by Onwuka Dike – a Nigerian, trained by British imperial historians, who worked on new fields in the research on colonialism. He concentrated on the interactions between European and African traders, while distancing himself from classical British imperial history that would rather deal with colonial institutions and colonisers only.⁵³ In Paris, similar phenomena can be observed. Leopold Senghor, who was the first African from a French colony to reach an *agrégation* in France and who, together with other African intellectuals, developed the new critical concept of *négritude*, was appointed as Professor of African studies in Paris in 1948.⁵⁴ On a macrohistorical perspective, one of the most important critical texts of this period dealing with coloniality is certainly George Balandier’s article “La situation coloniale” (1951), in which he brought together anthropological and historical approaches.⁵⁵ He looked at colonialism and coloniality as a relationship of power and as a specific historical process; he aimed at analysing the multitude of relationships between colonisers and colonised. Still, these new critical approaches were not broadly taken up in historical research, as the scholarly interest in African colonialism, its power structures, relationships, and consequences began to dwindle during the next two decades that were dominated by the issue of African decolonisation.

3.3. Modernisation, Decolonisation, and Dependency Theory

During the 1950s and 1960s, in the fields of political science and sociology as well as in the emerging field of area studies, research on African states started to focus more on the effects of modernisation, urbanisation and industrialisation. In the beginning, this trend was not necessarily pro-colonial or anti-colonial in direction. Especially in British scholarship, the re-organisation of colonial establishments and the promotion of scientific research within colonial establishments brought new trends into the research of colonialism. At the end of the 1940s, French Socialists and the British Labour party were still debating whether colonial regimes could be transformed into forces of economic and social progress.⁵⁶ However, with an ongoing decolonisation movement in Africa, modernisation and the dynamics of social change in decolonised societies came more strongly into the focus of research.⁵⁷

In the context of the Algerian war in the 1950s and 1960s, French scholarship started to attack colonialism by criticising it as a regressive force that needs to be removed. Even a critical study of colonialism was now judged as a reinforcement of the old colonial struc-

53 K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria*, Oxford 1956.

54 F. Brahm, *Wissenschaft und Dekolonisation* (footnote 47), p. 93; see also A. Eckert, *Das Paris der Afrikaner und die Erfindung der Négritude*, in: R. Hohls / I. Schröder / H. Siegrist (eds.), *Europa und die Europäer. Quellen und Essays zur modernen Geschichte*, Stuttgart 2005, pp. 287-292.

55 G. Balandier, *La situation coloniale: Approche théorique*, in: *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 6 (1951), pp. 44-79; for an assessment of Balandier’s article, see: F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, Berkeley 2005, p. 35.

56 F. Cooper, *Colonialism in question* (footnote 55), pp. 33-38.

57 I. Wallerstein (ed.), *Social Change: The Colonial Situation*, New York 1966; see also J. Miller, *History and Africa / Africa and History*, in: *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), pp. 1-32.

tures; a new history should rather be a history of the anti-colonial past.⁵⁸ In this framework one has to mention Frantz Fanon's famous studies. Drawing on Marxist thought and psychoanalysis he wrote a scathing critique of colonialism. In his view, colonialism could only be overcome by force and by a thorough decolonisation process that would modernise the African states.⁵⁹ Even if Fanon's studies with their strict dichotomy between coloniser and colonised were strongly criticised by many scholars, his work had a considerable impact on African studies and was also taken up in the discussions on coloniality in Latin American studies.

In the late 1960s and the 1970s, with some disillusionment around the concepts of modernisation new interests in historicising and economising of the situation in Africa emerged. Studies on the economic development of the new African states and their colonial legacies were brought to the fore, most prominently Walter Rodney's book on "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa" from 1972.⁶⁰ Rodney drew his theoretical insight from Latin American Studies on underdevelopment and dependency and wrote about European-African economic relations. Quite a number of works on the history of Africa now dealt with the articulation of modes of production in African societies, using neo-Marxist and *dependencia* approaches.⁶¹ In this context, colonialism and concepts of coloniality remained secondary concerns. Here, the themes of the Latin American and African discourses overlapped significantly, though with a considerable time-lag.

3.4. Postcolonialism and New Research on Coloniality in Africa

In the 1980s and 1990s we can observe a sudden revival of scholarship on colonial issues in the Anglophone world. Edward Said's book on Orientalism from 1978, which looked at the Orient as the product and construct of a western discourse and showed how certain images of oriental societies dominated European literature, is seen as the start of a new postcolonial critique. Generally, Said addressed the issues of cultural production and representation of difference in colonial and postcolonial societies.⁶² During the 1980s, the field of postcolonial studies emerged, essentially shaped by the theoretical considerations of Homi Bhabha and of the subaltern studies group, particularly of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.⁶³ The new approaches led to an upsurge in studies on colonial topics. In the beginning, postcolonial analysis was primarily employed in the field of literary studies, later

58 F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question* (footnote 55).

59 F. Fanon, *Die Verdammten dieser Erde*, Frankfurt am Main 1966; F. Fanon, *Schwarze Haut, weiße Masken*, Frankfurt am Main 1980. For a critical view on Fanon, see: A. Eckert, *Predigt der Gewalt? Betrachtungen zu Frantz Fanons Klassiker der Dekolonisation*, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, Online-Ausgabe, 3 (2006), H. 1, URL: <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Eckert-1-2006>.

60 W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London 1972.

61 See: F. Cooper et al. (eds.), *Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants, Labor and the Capitalist World System in Africa and Latin America*, Madison 1993.

62 E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York 1978.

63 H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London 1994; G. C. Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, New York 1987.

on postcolonial approaches developed in many different disciplines, in cultural studies, cultural anthropology and in history. They were taken up – as already mentioned – in Latin American research. In African studies and African history concepts of coloniality, colonialism and its impact now also found a renewed interest. Studies emerged dealing with interactions between colonisers and colonised, concentrating on hybridity in social formations and on the cultural conceptions of politics, thereby overcoming binary oppositions in the analysis of (post-)colonial societies.⁶⁴ Furthermore, several African scholars developed their own voice in postcolonial theory and started to address political and cultural power in Africa. Particularly Achille Mbembe tries to overcome the notion of Africa as an endless account of violence and as a “gap in history” and focuses on the compositeness of the African postcolony.⁶⁵

Highly influential African historians as Terence O. Ranger and Frederick Cooper have explicitly taken up postcolonial approaches in their work.⁶⁶ Cooper, who is himself quite critical of postcolonial theory, tries to bring it together with a thoroughgoing study of power relations. He concentrates on such various issues as the system of power in which the colonised lived, the symbolic resources they used, the interactions between colonisers and colonised and the challenging of the system by the colonized, addressing identity production in (post)colonial settings as well as colonial governance.⁶⁷

More generally, African colonialism is now addressed from many different angles and no longer reduced to such topics as ‘modernity’, ‘dependency’ or colonial institutions. Reproduction and sexuality are researched as key problems of (post-)colonial societies in Africa. Regulation of sexuality and gendered politics are analysed as distinctive demarcation lines in colonial settings. Likewise, racial boundaries and race as a general question of coloniality are more consequently taken up.⁶⁸ In the wake of Foucault forms of gov-

64 As an example for the numerous works that have been published in this context, see: J. L. Comaroff, *Images of Empire, Contests of Consciences: Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa*, in: F. Cooper / A. L. Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Berkeley 1997, pp. 163-197; M. Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*, Cambridge 1991; for African history in Germany, see: A. Eckert / A. Wirz, *Wir nicht, die Anderen auch. Deutschland und der Kolonialismus*, in: S. Conrad / S. Randeria (eds.), *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt am Main / New York 2002, pp. 372-392; M. Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika. Expeditionen, Militär und Verwaltung seit 1880*, Frankfurt am Main / New York 2005.

65 A. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony. Studies on the History of Society and Culture*, Berkeley 2001; see for a view that stresses compositeness and cosmopolitanism in Africa (and elsewhere) as well K. A. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, New York 2006.

66 T. O. Ranger (ed.), *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, London 1996; F. Cooper / A. L. Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Berkeley 1997

67 F. Cooper, *Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History*, in: *American Historical Review*, 99 (1994), pp. 1516-1545; F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley, Los Angeles 2005.

68 For example, see: A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, London, New York 1995; P. Scully, *Rape, Race, and Colonial Culture: The Sexual Politics of Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Colony, South Africa*, in: *American Historical Review*, 100 (1995), pp. 335-359; Z. Magubane, *Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa*, Chicago 2004; K. Walgenbach, *„Die weiße Frau als Trägerin deutscher Kultur“: Koloniale Diskurse über Geschlecht, „Rasse“ und Klasse im Kaiserreich*, Frankfurt am Main / New York 2005; L. Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire 1884–1945*, Durham,

ernmentality in the colonial / postcolonial situation are questioned as well, particularly so in research on southern Africa.⁶⁹ Not all new research on colonial and decolonised Africa is informed by postcolonial considerations. However, in many of the studies of the last two decades, the ongoing discussion in postcolonial studies has a considerable impact on the topics and approaches chosen.

In conclusion, after a long period of dwindling interest in colonial themes, coloniality, its representations and its impacts are now seen as a prominent marker of African societies and cultures, being shaped by colonial and postcolonial experiences. These topics are meanwhile researched in a great number of varieties within the field of African history.

4. Conclusion

As it is evident from the above discussion on the colonial and postcolonial historiographies in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, it remains an open task to explore the different connotations and historical experiences of colonialism in a transnational perspective. Nevertheless, it is obvious from the discussion that colonial experience was crucial in shaping the cultural, social, and economic layers of power in all these regions. In this article we made a distinction between (post-)coloniality as a historical period and as a mode of thinking. According to the latter perspective, (post-)coloniality is not related to a specific historical period, instead it can be described as a mode of thinking that highlights the lasting difference made by colonial practices and discourses. Departing from that approach it is nevertheless important to face the problem that we use concepts that have the same denomination although their historical and regional meaning may be very different. Therefore postcolonial studies, like cultural studies, have to deal with a radical contextualism as expressed best by Lawrence Grossberg: “To put it succinctly, for cultural studies, context is everything and everything is contextual”.⁷⁰ This radical contextualism has led to an epistemological change that brought local and indigenous epistemologies as well as subaltern actors into the historiographical discourse, thus challenging the hegemonic concepts of a universal history that is orientated in the leading difference between ‘the West and the rest’. In spite of the different regional, theoretical, and methodological approaches that rally under the banner postcolonial studies, there is a common interest that can be described as the decolonisation of history. The critique and deconstruction of the hegemonic Eurocentric and nationalist historiographies, the regional diversification of history, and the inclusion of subaltern actors can be considered as integral parts of this movement of epistemological decolonisation.

London 2001; U. Lindner, Contested Concepts of “White”/“Native” and Mixed Marriages in German South-West Africa and the Cape Colony, 1900–1914: A Histoire Croisée, in: *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 6 (2009), pp. 57–79.

69 See the article by Michael Pesek on Foucault, his concept of governmentality and its reception in African history in this issue.

70 L. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies: What’s in a Name (One More Time)*, in: *Taboo*, 1 (1995), p. 13.

Surely Edward Said's seminal work 'Orientalism' can be conceived as one of the milestones that questioned a Eurocentric worldview and contributed to what Chakrabarty has later called 'Provincializing Europe'.⁷¹ A critical reference to his work plays a major role in all regional debates on (post)coloniality. In spite of its seminal role in postcolonial studies, Said has been questioned from post-colonial scholars from other world-regions. One critical aspect is – probably unintended – the re-centralisation of the history of the modern West as opposed to the Orient. This depiction can also be questioned as it silences other histories; namely the histories of Africa, America, Asia, or Australia. This critique has been explicitly expressed from a Latin American standpoint by introducing the concept of Occidentalism. Nevertheless, from our trans-regional perspective it does not seem to make much sense to substitute one region – Orient – for another – the Americas. Instead it seems to be more appropriate to take into account the mutual, glocal, and pluri-topic constructions of 'shared histories'.⁷²

A further important contribution of postcolonial historical approaches is their conceptual inclusion of subaltern actors. In this aspect the Subaltern Studies Group has done pioneering work which found its reception also in other world regions as it is the case of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group. Nevertheless, the question how subalterns can be represented in historical discourses still remains open.

The continuing importance of coloniality is surely one of the strengths of postcolonial approaches, though there still remain some problems. These approaches run the risk of re-centering the historiography because Western and especially European powers were the initial actors of colonisation. Furthermore, the concept of (post-)coloniality can be overused so that it runs the risk of losing its explanatory validity. The debates on dependency theory in Latin American and African history have shown that it is highly problematic to locate the explanations for all power structures, exploitation systems and regimes of representation only in external factors like coloniality.

In spite of the differences in the processes of colonisation and decolonisation in the three regions that came under the purview of this article, it is possible to see that the interpretation of the experience of coloniality is shaped by overlapping concepts and histories. It is precisely in these interfaces that a primarily comparative approach reaches its limits as it fails to explain satisfactorily the intersections and the mutual constitutions of geo-cultural entities. Therefore we think that it is important to expand the scope of postcolonial studies and to connect the post-colonial debate with the ongoing discussions in the field of transnational and entangled histories.⁷³

71 D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcoloniality and the Critique of History*, in: *Cultural Studies*, 6 (1992) 3, pp. 337-357.

72 See: S. Conrad/S. Randeria (eds.), *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt am Main 2002.

73 See: A. Epple, *New Global History and The Challenge of Subaltern Studies* (footnote 44); O. Kaltmeier, *Post-koloniale Geschichte(n): Repräsentationen, Temporalitäten und Geopolitiken des Wissens*, in: J. Reuter / A. Karentzos (eds.), *Schlüsselwerke der Postcolonial Studies*, Wiesbaden (forthcoming); U. Lindner, *Neuere Kolonialgeschichte und postcolonial studies*, in: *Docupedia Zeitgeschichte*, <http://docupedia.de/zg/>, forthcoming.