Past rebellions serving the present: constructing collective memories of slave rebellions in the Caribbean

Venue: Sciences Po Bordeaux, University of Bordeaux, France

Date: 8th April, 2010

Host-organisers: Christine Chivallon, Director of research, Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS-CEAN), IEP de Bordeaux and David Howard, University of Oxford, Associate researcher (CNRS-CEAN)

Seminar theme: The core focus of the proposed seminar is the construction of collective memories of anti-slavery insurrections and rebellions in the Caribbean societies. Invited papers will analyse the historical and contemporary practices through which such events have been commemorated and represented. They will explore the dynamics of memory, and the capacity of commemoration to suppress or re-invent the past according to the needs or circumstances of the present. Invited speakers will thus assess the different forms of commemoration and the ways in which acts of rebellion and resistance to colonial authorities have been appropriated by divergent interest groups in the Caribbean. The seminar discussion will take into account the ‘forgetting’ of collective memory, as revealed through examples from popular historiographies of the French Caribbean, and assess the processes by which political elites have effectively removed narratives of resistance from official histories. Papers will consider the inverse context in which insurrections have been fully integrated into state narratives or nationalist identities, often most specifically in the construction of National Heroes. Speakers will also be invited to examine the significant variations in the ‘factual’ accounts of slave rebellions according to the political and historical perspectives of the historiographers and audience, which range from complete denial to intense glorification. Finally, the papers will address the wider theoretical processes of the ‘transmission’ and ‘invention’ of memory.
PROGRAMME

Discussants:

Stéphane Dufoix (Sociology, Institut Universitaire de France, Paris):
*Legacy of slavery and colonialism; diasporic peoples and Black diaspora*

Pauline Guedj (Anthropology, Université de Lyon), African-American religions; re-africanization of cultural practices

9h-9h30 Welcome-Introduction
9h30-10h Myriam Cottias, (CRPLC, Martinique and EHESS, Paris), historian,
*Legacies of the 1848 anti-slavery rebellions*
10h-10h15 Discussion

10h15-10h30 Coffee Break

10h30-11h David Geggus (University of Florida), historian,
*Caribbean history of anti-slavery rebellions; Haitian revolution*
11h-11h15 Discussion

11h15-11h45 Christine Chivallon, (Geography and Anthropology, CEAN-IEP, Bordeaux):
*The ‘rehabilitation’ of the Southern insurrection in Martinique*
11h45-12h Discussion

12-14h Lunch

14h-14h30 David Howard (Geography, University of Oxford):
*Symbolic re-appropriation of the Morant Bay rebellion in contemporary Jamaican society*
14h30-14h45 Discussion

14h45-15h15 Richard Price, (Anthropology, Johns Hopkins University): *Maroon societies: narratives of rebel slave societies*
15h30-15h45 Pause

15h45-16h45 Final Roundtable
*Perspectives on the present continuation of memories of conflicts:*

With:

The invited speakers
The discussants
The initiators of the programme « France-Caraïbe »:
Jessica Byron, Political sciences, (University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica),
Barry Chevannes, (Anthropology, University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica),
Justin Daniel, (Political sciences, Université des Antilles-Guyane)

17h Official signature ceremony
for the convention of the « Programme France-Caraïbe »
between Sciences Po Bordeaux, the University of the West Indies
and the Université Antilles-Guyane.