



# FRONTIERS OF HUMANITY AND BEYOND

TOWARDS NEW CRITICAL  
UNDERSTANDINGS OF BORDERS

## P12 - FRONTIERS, RACE AND ENVIRONMENT: CONFLICT AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NATURAL SCIENCES NARRATIVE IN THE EDGES OF THE COLONIAL EMPIRES.

### ORGANISERS

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### ABSTRACT

The European colonial empires of the 18th and 19th centuries were formed largely as complex systems of mobile, dynamic and mutable frontiers. In this sense, for this panel, we propose to foster the debate on the history of the production of scientific knowledge within the limits of colonial empires, whether in Africa, America or Asia. The central question to be addressed is how the environment and conflicts of a social, religious and racial nature conditioned the processes of knowledge construction concerning colonial nature, as these often depended on the interaction and incorporation of local knowledge, exchanged, shared, transmitted and negotiated across complex cultural boundaries. In its metaphorical sense, a frontier may also be understood as a territory of dispute, where new cultural standards are forcibly moulded as each side gains, or loses, terrain. In this sense, the establishment of continuous processes of exchanges, appropriations and resignifications took place, profoundly influenced by the eventual degree of imbalance that would exist between the opposing forces positioned at the frontier complexes. The production of knowledge in colonial environments, far from being the direct outcome of understanding, emerged from conflict, from mutual interests, through sensitive processes of negotiation. The congruences – or concordances – common points of interest that stemmed from these processes were, to a great extent, the result of an incomplete understanding of the other, being, nevertheless, a continuous process of mutual misunderstanding. What was the importance of these processes in the construction of the scientific narratives, between the second half of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century?

In what way did these cultural clashes condition the vision of science concerning different themes, such as race, climate, environment and nature? It is to the debate on these issues that we hope this panel can offer its contribution.

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