

## **Project Abstract**

### **German and British pharmaceutical firms and the global production and trade of drugs and drug standards in the interwar period, with a special focus on quinine and cocaine.**

The purpose of this proposal is to get a better understanding of the role of the British and German pharmaceutical firms in the global production and trade of drugs and the standardization of drugs in the first half of the twentieth century.

As part of a comparative research project on Dutch drug standards and standard drugs in the interwar period, headed by Prof. Dr. Toine Pieters and Dr. Stephen Snelders, one of the aims is to investigate how the Netherlands became one of the largest producers and distributors of quinine and cocaine in the interwar period. To get a better understanding of these developments and put them in an international perspective, it is necessary to look at the global context of the production and distribution of the aforementioned drugs and the role of standard drugs and drug standards. Therefore it is essential to look at the different actors involved in the global production and distribution of these drugs, and their position in different parts of the world. As a historian with knowledge of the Spanish language, my part in this project is to study the role of Latin America in the world wide circulation of knowledge and practices. As part of my PhD-project it is essential to explore extensively the role of the European pharmaceutical firms, especially in Britain and Germany, in the global production and distribution of aforementioned drugs both in Europe and Latin America.

The aim of this proposal is hence explorative in nature. It aims at gathering and exploring information and knowledge about British and German pharmaceutical firms. How accessible are their archives? What sort of archival material is available and what kind of information can be distilled from these documents? Hereby focussing on the firms Merck, Boehringer and Hoechst in Germany and Burroughs Wellcome & Co, May & Baker and British Drug Houses in Great Britain, because of the indications of the production and/or distribution of the aforementioned drugs by these firms. The exploration and gathering of information has a twofold purpose: First, to find out more about what information is available on the role these companies may have played in the circulation of knowledge and standards between Europe and Latin America during the first half of the twentieth century. Is there, for example, archival information on the possible transfer of production technology of these firms to Latin America? And second to figure whether there is information available on the competition between these German and British pharmaceutical companies and Dutch

companies with regard to the Latin American drug market. Of course, we hope with the help of the historical expertise available in Berlin, Braunschweig and Manchester to locate new sources of company information which we may have overlooked so far.

Because my part of the project involves Latin America, it is also of importance to look at the role of Spain in the global production and distribution of the aforementioned drugs. Spain as a former coloniser has a long history of interference with the circulation of knowledge, technology and goods in Latin America. Both in colonial times and in the post-independence period of most Latin American nations, Spain has acted as an intermediary between Latin America and Europe. Therefore it is important to explore with the help of the historical expertise available in Madrid what kind of source material on the subject matter is available in Spain.

As a means to locate and explore aforementioned sources of information on the circulation of drug standards and standard drugs between Europe and Latin-America it would be most helpful to visit researchers specialized in these fields at the institutes which are linked to the ESF Standard Drug and Drug Standards programme. With their help and expertise it will be possible to map the available archival sources and to get a better understanding of the do's and don'ts of studying the circulation of standards drugs and drug standards in the interwar period between Europe and Latin America. As a result my PhD-project will benefit tremendously from visiting the ESF centres of expertise in the field of drug history. Only with their help it will be possible to make an exhaustive inventory of the available historical sources and knowledge on the global production and distribution of the aforementioned drugs. This in turn will provide crucial information for my PhD-project on the role of Latin America in the worldwide circulation of knowledge and technology regarding standard drugs and drug standards.

## Bibliography

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### **Prospective Hosts**

In Germany I would like to visit Prof. Dr. Volker Hess of the *Charité* institute in Berlin and Prof. Dr. Bettina Wahrig of the University of Braunschweig. Prof. Dr. Volker Hess is the expert on standard drugs and drug standards in Germany and expert on the archives of the German pharmaceutical firms. Prof. Dr. Bettina Wahrig is the expert on cocaine in Germany. In Great Britain I would like to visit Dr. Carsten Timmermann of the *CHSTM* institute in Manchester. He is an expert on the medical history in Great Britain. In Spain I would like to visit Dr. María Jesús Santesmasés and Dr. Juan Pimentel Egea of the *CSIC* institute in Madrid. They have the expertise on the medical history in Spain and the relations between Spain and Latin America in this particular field.

### **Starting Date**

I would like to start as soon as possible with these expert visits, at the latest September 1 2009. In close consultation with Prof. Dr. Volker Hess, Prof. Dr. Bettina Wahrig, Dr. Carsten Timmermann, Dr. María Jesús Santesmasés and Dr. Juan Pimentel Egea I will draw up a travel-scheme that suits all those involved.