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TIDSSKRIFT FOR HISTORIE

Epidemics

A TEMP special issue dedicated to primary research and interdisciplinary studies of historical epidemics

Throughout human history, infectious diseases have played a crucial role in the life of individuals, societies, as well as entire civilizations. Infectious diseases have not always just been the enemy - at times, it has also acted as the most important ally on conquests, as a defender of realms, or as a lever for political centralization of power or for socio-economic rights and development. In this sense, COVID-19 is merely the latest example that pandemics have over time shaped world history.

But still, the history of disease and epidemics has received significantly little attention in traditional historiography despite their importance. Hence, with this issue, TEMP seeks to explore the history of epidemics, and secondly, possible interdisciplinary research within the field of historical epidemiology.

Since McNeill in *Plagues and Peoples* (1976) set out to explain the importance of diseases, historians have predominantly studied epidemics as social, political, and cultural processes. For instance, how existing social institutions responded and developed despite the strain inflicted by epidemics. Diseases were primally seen as cultural, and economic entities quite separated from the biological aspects of the disease – for instance, the uniqueness and life of the pathogen itself. Hence, one ambition with this issue of TEMP is to show the benefits of studies that merge the biological characteristics of epidemic diseases with given social, economic, cultural, and institutional processes.

Quantitative studies of diseases have largely been dominated by epidemiologists and demographers. Epidemiologists have particularly focused on the immediate and short-term impact of e.g., influenza pandemics and historical demographers, in general, have studied pandemics' long-term effects on population change. In both cases, the traditional quantitative approaches of epidemiologists and demographers alike tend to be decoupled from historical development, and from qualitative methodology. With this theme issue, TEMP hopes to bring quantitative and qualitative approaches to the history of epidemics to collaborate.

The emergence, course, and end of pandemics are the results of complex interdependencies between, on the one hand, special cultural, political, and economic conditions, and on the other hand, the bacterium, parasite, or virus. Key to historical epidemiological research is therefore the merging of different scientific disciplines; from qualitative methods from the Humanities over statistical analyses to dynamic mathematical modeling of the prevalence and spread of historical diseases.

In collaboration with the PandemiX Center (at Roskilde University), we plan a special issue with a wide range of topics – chronological, geographical, methodological, and theoretical – in historical epidemiology. We strive to explore and broaden our understanding of the interaction between the biological, cultural, and historical variables that caused epidemics, their individual course of the epidemics, as well as the immediate and long-term consequences. We welcome articles that relate to or demonstrate the possibilities of combining historical, social, demographic, economic, mathematical, and epidemiological approaches and methods.

Deadlines:

- Deadline for abstracts (min. ½ page): November 15, 2022.
- Seminar: ultimo May 2023
- Deadline for papers: ultimo August 2023.

Editors:
Jakob Bek-Thomsen (AU), Lone Simonsen (RUC), Louise Nyholm Kallestrup (SDU), Mads Linnet Perner (KU/Rigsarkivet), Mathias Mølbak Ingholt (RUC), Maarten van Wijhe (RUC), Niels Brimnes (AU), Niels Wium Olesen (AU), Per Klüver (Gasmuseet), Poul Duedahl (AAU), Søren K. Poder (RUC), Rasmus Kristoffer Pedersen (RUC).