

Initiative for Historical Social Sciences Meeting Evaluation

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In its third session in fall 2007, The Initiative for Historical Social Sciences (IHHS) hosted Oz Frankel as the guest speaker. Frankel's work "The State and Social Investigation: The U.S. and Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century" presents a study, which is in line with the objectives of the initiative that is to focus on cross disciplinary studies in order to encourage further dialogue among history and social sciences. Frankel's work employs historical data in conjunction with sociological concepts of public sphere and representation, making his work an excellent case for the participants of IHHS to discuss and explore further.

Focusing on nineteenth century British and U.S. government publications, Frankel explores the ways in which, both states assumed novel functions and roles within their respective societies. Through these publications, both states became gatherers (and investigators) of social facts and publishers of official reports. The major argument of the book is that government investigations and reports constituted a new form of politics, which connected communication and representation. This new form of representation operated in a dual way; it allowed the governments to represent their citizens in ways that expanded beyond the limitations of traditional representative institutions. Moreover states' role as the publisher of official documents and reports enabled them to represent themselves to their publics as centralized and modern political entities. Therefore

gathering and publishing social investigations transformed both states' capacity to communicate with their publics, while allowing less powerful groups of both societies (such as American Indians, freed slaves or the unemployed poor in Britain) to become presentable and representable political subjects. Using the term *print statism* to denote this field of communication between states and their publics, Frankel explores the dynamics of this new politics.

Since the subject of Frankel's research is similar to that of Foucault, the discussion started with questions on his position regarding Foucault's work. Frankel was clear to differentiate his approach by stating that he does not focus on the phenomenon of power or knowledge but on the investigation and report aspects. He does not refute Foucault's theories but instead examines the actions of governmental emissaries and the nature of the actual product of their investigations; the reports. He emphasized that a history of report is yet to be written and this history would be informative for studies on history of scientific publications.

Following this point, the relationship between scientific publications and governmental reports was the next topic of the discussion. The question of scientific method and whether these reports were scientific in their outlook and methodology was put forward. According to Frankel, at the beginning of nineteenth century a symbiotic relationship between two forms of inquiry existed. However by mid nineteenth century scientific works and governmental reports diverged into two distinct paths. Academia and governments differed in their ways of formulating questions and approaches to these

questions. Within the discussion, it was made clear by several participants that the major reason for this divergence was due to the nature of both institutions. Governments' responsibilities were reflected in the preparation of the reports whereas academia did not share similar public or political responsibilities. Governmental reports tended to be more factual and analytical whereas works of social sciences of the time were more biased and limited. Frankel emphasized that he was trying to move away from the much accepted discourse of history of science, which regards these reports as a moment within the ascendancy of science. Instead, he tries to point out the distinct nature of the reports by examining their function in the creation of a modern public sphere and modern state. A final topic of the discussion revolved around the logic of states in publishing these reports. Answering a question on groups that are not problematized such as women, Frankel explained that these reports were not necessarily about democracy or equality, therefore which groups represented through the reports were determined by political processes rather than democratic principles.

Due to the nature of the subject work, third session of Initiative for Historical Social Sciences presented the participants with an opportunity to have a discussion on areas where social sciences and historical sciences can interact with and inform each other. Frankel's study relates historical research with social and political processes of the time, which enabled the participants to engage in an intellectually stimulating discussion.