



Original Mission

Note from the Editor: this text, while not written as a mission statement, reflects the aspirations of FEEGI at its origin.

Despite the obvious importance of European expansion to the history of the people of the whole world--and regardless of whether one views this fact negatively or positively--academic attention to this monumental phenomenon has been constrained by disciplinary conventions. Some historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, linguists, geographers, and specialists in the history of art regularly devote their best efforts to the study of European expansion and the global interactions that followed from it, they have, so far, labored mostly in isolation or at best had the benefit only of informal contacts with like-minded colleagues at other institutions. Thus, the difficulty of viewing the processes of European expansion in their entirety or of understanding their impact on people around the globe is only compounded by two other factors.

First, many scholars approach European expansion through national or imperial prisms, thus focusing on the enterprises of a single European population, whether Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, English, or Russian, but rarely finding the opportunity to communicate with colleagues who engage similar questions for different populations or even for the same population in a different part of the globe. Second, scholars who view European activities overseas and across continents from the perspective of populations whom Europeans conquered, absorbed, or exploited, or even with whom Europeans traded, rarely come into contact in the usual course of professional meetings with those who specialize in the study of Europeans. Thus those of us who are interested in these larger issues of expansion and interaction often

find we understand dimly only one small piece of a large and opaque process, when in fact there are colleagues who might help shed light on the subjects which engage our interests if only we could find a constructive venue for the exchange of ideas. Our experience suggests that collegial interaction among scholars who work on all different parts of the globe within the particular chronological focus of FEEGI's purview offers the opportunity to bring problems more clearly into focus, to frame new avenues for research, to learn of new methodologies, and to consider our tiny piece of the puzzle within a larger perspective.

We come to FEEGI from a wide range of fields, interests, and perspectives. Some members study Europe, others European colonies overseas. Some focus on European expansion, while others work on powerful kingdoms and empires or small scale societies around the globe with which Europeans had different kinds of interactions. We focus on the colonist and the colonized, on the conqueror and the conquered. We specialize in different oceanic basins and land masses.

Some of us adopt a global perspective while others pursue microhistory. Some live within nations whose histories are deeply entangled with the issues central to FEEGI's intellectual scope. But, together, we look at places and people touched directly and indirectly, benignly or catastrophically, by the process of enhanced global interaction that commenced in the fourteenth century.

FEEGI aims to provide a collegial setting which formalizes the interaction of scholars from such a wide range of perspectives. It seeks to challenge and--at least temporarily--to suspend traditional field boundaries which separate those who frame similar questions for different populations and those who approach issues of expansion and interaction from different vantages. We achieve this goal through several mechanisms: we are affiliated with a journal, *Itinerario*, which is based in Leiden, The Netherlands. We have a biannual newsletter. We have a website, which posts information of interest to FEEGI's members. And, most importantly, we host a biennial meeting, at which by custom all sessions have been plenary, thus privileging the collective and collegial interaction which is at the heart of FEEGI's enterprise.