

## ***Trachtenvereine* in the USA: practices of Bavarian customs associations in the negotiation of German-American ethnicity, culture and tradition**

Worldwide Oktoberfests, Dirndl and Lederhosen are dominant representations of “Germaness” even though they more likely depict customs in Bavarian and Tyrolean regions. This stereotypical depiction is perfectly exercised by associations, called *Trachtenvereine*. With my dissertation I will investigate the practices of *Trachtenvereine* or Bavarian and Tyrolean customs associations in the USA between 1880-1930, the period of their first formation. Moreover I will analyze how they created and enact ideas of “Germaness” and the difference to the Austrian members of their community. As the USA were an important nation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the research on those associations will add to the understanding of how this specific representation of German ethnicity spread transnationally and is still present in the ongoing festive culture in the USA. I seek to close the gap in historiographical research about cultural transfer of German culture and the connection to the movement of Bavarian and Austrian customs associations in the US. Originally formed in Bavaria (the Austrian associations were formed later), the customs associations were brought to the USA by German and Austrian immigrants at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first us-American association formed in 1914, during the time of nation building in the USA and coincides with the beginning of the First World War. So it was a challenging time for German immigrants, influenced by big skepticism and anti-German climate. They had to negotiate their ethnicity, culture and their traditions to find resonance in challenging times for immigrants in the USA.

As the associations foremost exercised collective and ritualistic activities the focus of my work lies on their performative and ritualistic practices on an individual and institutional level. Using historical Ego-Documents, programs and minutes of the associations I will be able to grasp their activities and the resonant relationships they formed. Additionally I will use German-American newspapers as a source to analyze the outside perception and interaction with different audiences of German-American festivities. Combining those different levels of analysis I will be able to investigate the meaningful and responsive relationships of *Trachtenvereine*, with their clothing, country of origin, audience and bigger collectives, like the us-American nation. Furthermore the investigation of practices will allow me to understand connections to and of traditions, cultural transfer and nationalism. Those will help me to draw conclusions on changes in motivation and needs of the members of the *Trachtenvereine* and show connections and networks, which still influence the German-American community today.