



Einladung zum Gastvortrag von Prof. Jean François Cottier

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**The Latin Text of *Nouvelle France* (1683-1763):
State of the question and research perspectives**

Dienstag, 30. Oktober 2012, 15.00 Uhr

Zentrum für Alte Kulturen (Langer Weg 11, SR 5)

As Joseph IJsewijn rightly points out, the history of the Latin of Canada still remains to be written. The basis of this history lies in Nouvelle France and in the Latin writings that, alongside vernacular texts, accompanied the conquest of Canada's expansive territory. The undertaking might appear somewhat paradoxical since today, just as in the 17th century, New France is seen largely as a vast, wild region, populated with Indians to be converted, zealous missionaries and trappers relatively detached from the concerns of the Republic of Letters. Moreover, the last *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, published in 2007 dedicates a mere 30 pages to New France and not a single line to its important Latin heritage! There are several reasons for this phenomenon, the main one being linked to the problem of the status of a text that hovers between an archival document, a diary and literature. Another explanation lies in the fact that Latin has not been able to benefit from the 'nationalist' interest paid to early French texts, taken to be the foundations of a literary Quebec. This explanation holds still more since the Quiet Revolution of the Sixties, which culminated in rejecting, in one fell swoop, the Church, its language (Latin) and the humanist culture which was its basis. But the harvest of Latin texts to be had is rich and reaches the same areas of interest as the vernacular literature, upon which it spreads new and important light: relations, travelogue, history, chronicle as well as spiritual, scientific, linguistic and liturgical texts.... It not being possible to propose a complete and exhaustive study of the Latin writings of New France, my paper proposes to present an initial state of the question, based at once on the existing scholarship concerning either the study of a particular text or character, or the analysis of what was happening during the same period in France and in Europe. All that makes, of course, for an invitation to reconsider both Latin and classical culture's contribution in the establishment of New France's society, while at the same time opening up new fields of Latin literature.

