

Between and Beyond: Transnational Networks and the British Empire

Day 1, 21 June

10:00-11:30 Panel 1: Empire at the Edges

Chair: Thomas Simpson, University of Cambridge (TBC)

Brian Wallace, King's College London

Circling the Wagons: White Settler Colonialism and Transnational Siege Narratives

The nineteenth century witnessed an unprecedented expansion of modern states into the territories of indigenous peoples, from the Anglophone booms of North America, Australia, and New Zealand, to the Boer trekkers of southern Africa and the French colonisation of Algeria. While some scholarly attention has recently been devoted to the economic and political structures of these societies, the common heroic national myths which emerged from the settler experience to shape them have received less attention. Given the conflicts which almost invariably arose between indigenous peoples and outnumbered settlers, sieges and the siege mentality may be offered as one such common experience.

Drawing on my research into Victorian colonial sieges, this paper will explore the imaginative exchanges which built up a common vision of white frontiers under siege through networks of print, popular culture, political rhetoric, and art. These narratives were characterised by a focus on the early, precarious days of settlement, and found their iconic images in the stockade, the circled wagons, and the blockhouse. Famous siege battles such as the Alamo, the Boer repulse of the Zulu army at Blood River, and the French victory at Mazagran, were deployed in their nations' colonial rhetoric in strikingly similar ways – as dramatic, morally uncomplicated tales in which aggressive expansion could be reformulated as a defensive necessity. Elsewhere, the quotidian siege mentality of the isolated settler was glamorised in stories of encirclement and peril which validated frontier violence, presented the consolidation of settler gains as a moral imperative for home states, and formed the basis for national mythologies of the ruggedly individualistic frontiersman.

Cao Yin, Tsinghua University

Erecting a Gurdwara on Queen's Road East: The Singh Sabha Movement, the Boxer Uprising, and the Sikh Community in Hong Kong

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, tens of thousands of Sikhs emigrated from the Punjab to Southeast and East Asia to pursue a better livelihood. At the same time, the Singh Sabha Movement was gradually gaining momentum in the Punjab, strengthening the Sikh identity through inculcating religious norms, building institutions, and educating the youths. Furthermore, Sikh soldiers and policemen, having long been tagged as a 'martial race' by the

British, were deployed widely in Asia to safeguard the interests of the British Empire. The research conducted for this article found that the three seemingly irrelevant historical events (the modern Sikh diaspora, the Singh Sabha Movement, and the Indian expedition during the Boxer Uprising in China) were essentially interrelated. The convergent point of these moments was the erection of a Sikh temple (gurdwara) on Queen's Road East, Wanchai, Hong Kong Island in 1902. Taking this event as a case study, this article seeks to explore the Singh Sabha Movement through the lens of the Sikh diasporic network and the imperial network. It also unveils the Indian face of the British Empire by the turn of the twentieth century, when Indians, rather than the British, were the protagonists and engineers.

James Wilson, University of Cambridge

The Island is Like a Garden: Chinese Settlement and Local Resistance in the Anglo-Dutch Indian Ocean Empires, 1790-1820

This paper will interrogate the cross-colonial connections between the British and the Dutch across which sites of Chinese migration in the British Empire were constituted as experimental spaces of settlement and control. Chinese settlement was critical to the making of Dutch empire in Java through the early modern period as Chinese acted as traders and cultivators. As British influence in Southeast Asia grew through the late eighteenth century, Britons travelled to Java and visited Chinese settlements with the aid of Dutch elites. They produced rosy accounts of Chinese labour and agricultural knowledge for a voracious metropolitan public and inspired abortive attempts to use Chinese settlement to improve farming in Penang and Trinidad. However, these ideas took on their greatest significance after the cession of the Dutch territories in Sri Lanka to Britain in 1802. British officials attempted to replicate the Sino-Dutch system and, in so doing, established complex (if contradictory) forms of freeholding and unforced work in the otherwise authoritarian Second Empire. These experiments suggest that complex and regionalised forms of work and agrarian improvement spread across the empire. Yet they did not last. After Java's invasion in 1811, Britons adopted Dutch prejudices against the Chinese and crushed a rebellion that pitted peasants against Chinese landowners. These developments inspired proposals for controls on Chinese work and land that extended land seizures and coercive contractual labour through the empowerment of government institutions. They presaged the emergence of later intrusive colonial states, as well as forms of indenture and cultural assimilation.

11:45-13:15 Panel 2: Capital, Finance and Religion

Chair: Aditya Sarkar, University of Warwick

John Slight, The Open University

British imperialism, capitalism and the global expansion of Islam, c.1830-1940

This paper analyses the transnational and transcolonial linkages that enabled the expansion of Muslim communities throughout the British empire, from the Caribbean to Africa, islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, to Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand. The role of British (and non-British) capital, migration policies (or lack thereof), and Muslim missionary activity all played a role in this phase of the expansion of Islam, making the faith for the first time a truly ‘world religion’ by the turn of the twentieth century. The paper will explore case studies such as the migration of Indian indentured labour to the Caribbean and the Pacific, and the migration of Muslim colonial soldiers, employees, merchants and workers to colonies such as British East Africa, Hong Kong and Australia. The paper will explore how these Muslim communities interacted with colonial authorities, and built new spaces for Islam within imperial environments, engaging with Muslim missionaries and religious scholars. This paper shows a fresh and multicentred view of the British empire, where the unintended consequences of imperial policies and business decisions by capitalists and merchants led to Islam being practised in locations as far afield as Trinidad and Fiji. This was a process that cannot be considered by only looking at intra-colonial developments; mosques established by Muslim missionaries from South Asia in Britain catered to Muslim migrants and British converts to Islam. The expansion of Islam was synonymous with the expansion and evolution of the British empire, and broader developments in global economic history.

Arun Kumar, Linnaeus University

Missionary Capitalism: Industrial Missions of the British Empire

This paper explores a hitherto neglected aspect of Christian missionaries as agents of global capitalism. It does so by unravelling the records of industrial missions established by Christian missionaries in various parts of the British Empire since the second half of the nineteenth century. My regional focus is on colonial India and Africa, where various denominations of protestant Christian missionaries set up small scale industries—agrarian farms of cash crops, artisanal workshops, printing presses, and textile factories—along with training free wage labour through industrial schools and orphanages for various capitalist enterprises such as railways. These efforts of Christian missionaries were part of industrial missions which were to make mission stations in colonies self-supporting and provide the ‘heathen’ converts with work and livelihood. Missionaries from the Western countries (USA, Germany, and England) used vast territories of the British Empire to operate their own small-scale capitalist venture and supported imperial capitalism by producing trained and disciplined wage labour. The paper broadens our understanding of Christian missionaries from just a global religious and education agent to individuals and institutions involved in the shaping of local and global political economy. It sheds some new light both on the capitalist nature of Christian missionaries and on the transnational character of the British Empire which facilitated the circulation of missionary agents and practices not only between the metropole and the colony but also across different nations, empire, and colonies.

Christian Velasco, University of Warwick

Kenyan Colonial Banking: The Rise of the Financial Network in the British Empire.

The inclusion of the East Africa into the British Empire required the development of political and economic institutions to extend the dominion over the region. In that sense, the creation of financial sector into the colonies was fundamental for the colonial project. However, the history of the development of the financial system of the colony, particularly during the first years of colonial life, stays a neglected topic into the literature. The limited studies that exist in terms of financial history tend to classify the banking institutions as inactive and monopolistic institutions. This deficient performance has been associated with their incapacity to adapt themselves to the necessities of the colony. For the scholars, the banks were just following the policies of their headquarters in London, disregarding the local conditions.

Using the case of Kenya, this paper analyses the early development of the financial system in the colony. Throughout the use of unexplored archival material from the main banks in the colony (National Bank of India, Barclays Bank and Standard Bank of South Africa) my research proves that the development of the financial institutions is more intricate and active than the existent literature has assumed. The commercial banks settled in British East Africa were not following a direct political agenda of the British government. On the contrary, the banks followed an expansion that conducted them to enlarge its network along the empire into the new territories from other already established dominions in Asia and Africa. There was not a unidirectional relation but a complex network that linked the metropolis with East Africa and other territories along the empire.

This multidirectional connection, gave to the financial institutions in the colony characteristics that distinct them from the rest of the territories dominated by other European Powers, but also from those under British rule. My research has as a final aim to prove how these especial conditions changed the development of the banks in the long term. The construction of the institutional network during the first years of colonial life defined many of the later characteristics of Kenya during the British dominion and even after the independence. In that sense, the banking institutions in British East Africa were not an exception.

14:15-15:15 Panel 3: Convicts and the Making of Carceral Space

Chair: Guillemette Crouzet, University of Warwick

Derek Elliot, Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane

The Empire's Convict: Transnational Punishment and Ideas of Reform, c. 1800-1860

This paper uses a rare first-hand orally transmitted account of one convict to examine the entanglements of forced transnational mobility of prisoners within the carceral network of the British Empire. Growing up poor and falling into the so-called 'fashionable world' of crime in

early nineteenth-century England, Charles Anderson was soon transported to Bermuda, New South Wales and Norfolk Island, for a variety of offences. He eventually found his freedom in Madras, India in 1854, where his life story was recorded by colonial officials. Anderson's narrative is important for two reasons. First, it reveals how, as metropolitan subjects banished to the edges of empire, convicts were able to exploit opportunities of agency in diverse localities across imperial spaces, often bringing them into contact with those outside the boundaries of empire, such as runaways and indigenous communities. Frontiers of empire were fluid and dynamic, and frequently crossed and re-crossed by those living on the literal and social edges of imperial spaces. Second, despite the marginality of convicts living at the frontiers of empire, circular life also meant contact with agents of empire connected to the highest levels of metropolitan government and society. New ideas of punishment and discipline were tested on prisoners in the social laboratories of penal colonies and settlements. On Norfolk Island, Anderson experienced this first-hand whilst serving his sentence under the governorship of Alexander Machonochie, a noted prison reformer. Anderson's own personal legacy was almost completely transformed by this encounter, rescued only through a moment of archival serendipity. Thus this paper also demonstrates how reformist ideas and meetings that developed and occurred within transnational imperial spaces were reconfigured through the structures of class and social position that affected subaltern agency and memory, across both space and time.

Katherine Roscoe, Institute of Historical Research

Connecting the Colony: Convict Labour on Australia's Carceral Islands

The 'network' is a useful framework to understand the trajectories of the people, goods and power that constituted empire. Too often, however, the 'nodes' that make up these networks are either entire colonies, or large cities. This paper disrupts the presumed geographical integrity of colonies as singular entities, analysing the Australian colonial system from the perspective of its offshore islands. It analyses a network of carceral islands off the coast of Australia, between 1788-1901, and shows how sending convicts to – and between – these sites enabled settler-colonialism within Australia and established maritime connectivity within the British empire. Thus, local disconnection and imperial connection are brought into one frame.

This paper argues that Cockatoo/Warameah Island (New South Wales) and Rottnest/Wadjemup Island (Western Australia) played key roles in the colonization of the vast Australian mainland. First, they were sites of expulsion for both Indigenous Australians and European 'bushrangers' who threatened the settler colonial frontier through livestock theft. This shows that the frontier was created in part through the dislocation of people onto prison islands at to the maritime margins of the colony. Second, it argues that islands were integral to the imperial project as sites of global connectivity, as they were situated at the cusp of the colony and the sea. Convicts on islands built essential maritime infrastructure that allowed the colonies to maintain connections with the metropole. They also collected botanical samples and created artisan goods that were displayed in international exhibits as part of imperial circulations of knowledge. By focussing on the relationship between island peripheries, the colonies, and the metropole, the multi-sited nature of colonial governance and economies

becomes clear. Using archival material from the Colonial Office, local officials' correspondence and records of the penal institutions themselves, this paper views the history of Australian colonialism from the outside in: showing that peripheral sites holding marginalised people were actually central to both mainland development and empire-wide networks of trade, punishment and governance.

Day 2, 22 June

10:00-11:30 Panel 4: **Commodities and Porous Borders**

Chair: Anne Gerritsen, University of Warwick

Aditya Ramesh, SOAS London

Commodity as sovereign: The political economy of rice in the British Empire c. 1939-1950

In the late nineteenth century, British Burma emerged as the chief supplier of cheap rice to a number Indian provinces across the Bay of Bengal. This paper examines the consequences of the abrupt halt of the Burmese rice trade into the Madras presidency and Ceylon during the Second World War, as result of the Japanese invasion of Burma. It suggests, as opposed to foregrounding an imperial exercise of sovereignty, that a variety of spaces, including the farm, agricultural institutions, the rice mill, cooperative land societies, the port and local government emerged at the forefront of colonial power relations. During the twentieth century, owing to the Great Depression and the fall in rice prices, south India and Ceylon, which previously were major rice producing and exporting regions, had become dependent on cheap rice from Burma.

The war entirely changed this situation. Food shortages gripped large parts of India, and the Government of India started a 'Grow More Food' campaign, which brought agriculture under wartime Defence of India rules. Rice cultivation began on a war footing. Simultaneously, a host of actors associated with the Burma rice trade, such as Dalit labourers, demobilized soldiers and Hindu Chettiar and Muslim Marrakayar merchants returned to the Madras presidency either fleeing from the war or in search of new fortune. As the threat of famine loomed large on the horizon, a host of people, commodities and technologies crossed the Bay of Bengal to reframe debates around colonial sovereignty. While the war accentuated nationalist sentiments, colonial sovereignty was both re-inscribed and continually loosened through the political economy of rice.

Chelsea Davis, George Washington University

Cultivating Imperial Networks of Knowledge: Phylloxera and the British Empire, 1860-1910

The wine industries in South Africa and Australia are today some of the most well-known and profitable in the world. Yet, their integration into the global market was a slow, stuttering process, one that started on British colonial foundations during the long 19th century. Because British colonizers had no experience growing or producing wine, the wine industries at the Cape of Good Hope and South Australia needed to invest in transnational networks of

knowledge in order to transform into successful global enterprises. This paper will focus solely on the use of these networks, at the end of the 19th century, during the environmental crisis of phylloxera.

Phylloxera hit Europe first in 1863, and within decades it would arrive in Australia and at the Cape, destroying thousands of vineyards around the world in its path. Colonial departments of agriculture in the respective colonies appointed state agriculturists, among other commissions of scientists both—British and foreign—to help eradicate the aphid. These scientists communicated and operated within and outside the British Empire. Given the global proportions of the devastation, such transnational exchanges in knowledge were necessary to stabilize and eventually expand the colonial industries. For some of these reasons alone, South Australia today contains some of the oldest vines remaining in the world. I intend to use this paper to show how colonial industry can only succeed when it invests in systems of knowledge and how local cultivation and production operated within larger transnational networks.

CJ Kuncheria, New Delhi

The 'Empire Wedge': The Indian Challenge to American Tobacco in Interwar Britain

In 1937, as the United Kingdom and the United States were negotiating a trade pact -- made critical as the shadow of a second world war loomed -- the British tobacco trade's leading journal reported that Indian tobacco was one of the sticking points. The differences were regarding the customs-duty rebate that tobacco produced within the British empire enjoyed over American leaf. This, for the US, was an unfair trade practice that hurt a politically significant export to its most lucrative market. What was noteworthy about the report was the tone of astonishment about India's prominence in the UK tobacco market. Imperial propaganda and lobbying by growers had made 'Empire Tobacco' almost synonymous with tobacco from Rhodesia. Equally astounding is the American worry. As late as 1930, UK cigarette manufacturers were resistant to using Indian and other empire-grown tobacco despite its cheapness and the propaganda of imperial patriotism around Empire Tobacco.

My paper uncovers the role of Indian tobacco as the "Empire wedge", as it was described by a worried American official, in making empire-grown tobacco acceptable to UK smokers and in displacing American leaf usage in the British cigarette industry. I show that the changing consumer tastes and choices during the Great Depression, along with governmental policies on tariffs and trade, helped make Indian tobacco more acceptable in Britain. Following the success of Indian tobacco in UK, I explore the play of these events in opposite sides of the globe: on the depression-era farm politics and practices in the US, and on the organisation of production in India. By reading records across India, the UK, and the USA against each other to shine light upon the relative darkness that shrouds Indian tobacco in the imperial archive, I also gesture towards the accretions of race upon commodities. In doing so, I demonstrate the transnational linkages and effects of a global commodity, and bring India into a discussion of interwar Atlantic politics and diplomacy.

11:45-13:15 Panel 5: Race, Empire and the Transnational

Chair: Meleisa Ono-George, University of Warwick (TBC)

Somak Biswas, University of Warwick

India, Indophiles and Indenture: Cultural Politics of a Transnational Discourse

This paper looks at the entanglements of sympathetic British figures (Indophiles) around the discourse of anti-indenture in the early 20th century. Between 1910-1925, this small but influential ensemble of Indophile figures (Henry Polak, C.F. Andrews, and William Pearson) enabled the production of a transnational discourse against indenture spread connecting India and Indian Ocean colonies of the British empire.

Drawing on private papers, public reports and official correspondence relating to the campaign for abolishing indenture, I show how Indophile investments mobilised a discourse on how indenture fostered immorality among Hindu women and men and threatened 'Indian honour' abroad. Indophile reports and rhetoric reify upper caste/class presumptions of morality, that resonated centrally with nationalist presumptions of caste, class and honour and the anxieties in losing them. Premised on a projection of their personal intimacies with major Indian leaders such as Gandhi, Tagore and Gokhale, I argue how the anti-indenture campaign and its transnational deployments affirmed, forged and tempered Indophile loyalties and affective networks by harnessing it for Indian nationalist causes. Indophile reports and rhetoric Indian leaders such as Gokhale and Gandhi, and a string of nationalist institutions such as the Indian National Congress, the Imperialist Citizenship Association and the Indian Overseas Association eagerly coordinated with Polak, Andrews and Pearson to normalise the Indian emigrant in indentured colonies of the British empire. In a discourse that spanned different contexts, colonies and continents and sharply split along racial lines, the presence of rare white figures to speak for Indian interests in the empire provided a critical impetus in the politics of representation.

Joachen Lingerbach, University of Leipzig

Entangled networks of empire, diaspora and internationalism: Polish refugees, colonial societies and international organisations in East and Central Africa (ca.1942-50)

Taking the case study of Polish refugees and their interaction with hosting colonial societies this paper is going to ask how different sets of actors interacted in the context of colonial host societies. From 1942 to 1950 nearly 20,000 Poles lived in camps scattered over six different British colonies and acted within at least four different networks on various scales. First, they were taken care of and controlled by officials of the British Empire from the imperial government in London, through the local colonial governments down to district commissioners and camp commandants. Secondly, they were part of worldwide Polish diaspora networks and administered by the Polish exile government in London which sent numerous officials to the camps and colonial capitals. Thirdly, after the war the refugees came under the care of newly

established international organisations for refugee relief (UNRRA and IRO) introducing yet another set of officials with different convictions and policies. And fourthly, were they integrated into the fragmented colonial economy and society around the camps, creating new networks and altering existing ones.

This paper will address the practice and logics of these different networks and the interaction between them. The Polish refugees themselves navigated these networks in their struggle to find a place in the shifting realities of the postwar world. Trying to make the most of a desperate situation they emphasized their whiteness, their Polishness or their religious affiliation and used links within the Polish diaspora. Based on British and Polish archival as well as African oral sources this case sheds a light on the tensions between colonial, national and universalist logics within the context of an increasingly challenged British Empire.

Alison Okuda, Worcester State University

The Construction of Transnational Conflict in the Colonies and the Metropole

From the end of World War II up to the early sixties, thousands of people relocated from the British West Indies and the Gold Coast to London. Shared experiences of colonial rule or cases of racism did not bind these individuals. This paper examines the realities of human misunderstanding and tension during situations of inter-colonial contact situated in the metropole.

Colonial institutions, particularly the education system, divided people from the West Indies and the Gold Coast. School served as the central imperial mechanism in the lives of students. In addition to studying curriculum in English history and linguistics, they absorbed teachers' derogatory remarks about other colonial subjects. In many cases, Colonial Education Officers moved between locations across the British Empire and spoke of their recent experiences. As a result, their students learned lessons about lawless "heathens" in Africa or the poor descendants of slaves in the Americas. In the Black Atlantic, only a few West Indian soldiers and West African sailors might have been able to counter these stories.

Educators' myths and lies about the British Empire's "other" subjects made a critical impression on their students. They developed into lasting beliefs that would attempt to prevent transnational cooperation. By the period of mass migration from the West Indian and Gold Coast colonies to the metropole, this paper shows that the strength of these lessons had bred tensions when these Africans in diaspora would have benefitted from the inter-colonial support of a community.

14:15-15:45 Panel 6: Technologies of Empire

Chair: James Poskett, University of Warwick

Vaibhav Singh, University of Reading

The machinery of empire: networks of typographic technology in colonial India

The decades of 1930s and 40s in which India's struggle against British rule gained momentum also ushered in critical technological change in the way text in several Indian languages was materially produced. The foremost facilitators of this change – from manual to mechanical methods – were American and German commercial entities precariously placed in the colonial equation. Across an extended period of proprietary technology and corporate hegemony, multinational companies involved in the mechanisation of Indian scripts functioned within contradictory ideological frameworks of empire, rarely acknowledging – but nonetheless involving and accommodating – colonial subjects as historical actors in technological ventures.

A combination of local and international actors networks of typographic design and technology enabled not only the realisation of print through technical expertise but also cultural validation and the pursuit of political aspirations, using language and script as key elements in a larger discourse of region and nation. Given the nuances of power struggles inherent in decisions related to language and script, the process of typographical change afforded a space where colonial as well as nationalist ideology could be 'both transmitted and queried, produced and challenged'.

Focusing on the dilemmas and contradictions in the project of mechanisation, this paper examines the role of transnational networks of typographic technology in colonial India. Against the backdrop of India's independence movement, in deeply contested territories of language and script, an examination of networks that formulated and realised this project throws new light on the richly ambivalent ideological negotiations between imperial administration, colonial establishments, and extra-colonial entities.

Ranjana Saha, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi

Milk, Mothers and 'Mothercraft': Regional, National and Global Histories, 1890s - 1930s

The paper will begin with an analysis of the largely unexplored colonial and indigenous medical and medico-legal advice on breastfeeding and motherhood in colonial Bengal. These will then be located amidst the wider national and transnational connections of ideas, initiatives and instruction concerning medicalised motherhood or 'mothercraft', primarily influenced by Frederick Truby King (1858-1938, New Zealand physician, most influential advocate of 'mothercraft' and clocked childcare), in colonial India, Britain and the British empire. The basic idea was that mothering had to be learnt as not just anyone could be a 'good' mother. 'Proper' breastfeeding formed a crucial segment in lessons of 'scientific', medicalised motherhood as 'mothercraft', central to the global infant welfare movement. My main argument is that breastfeeding, a discursive category and biocultural experience, surfaced as central to imperial, colonial and nationalist medical advice on 'mothercraft' to rejuvenate community, 'racial' and national health and manly vigour.

A global historical methodological approach to 'mothercraft' will emphasise the significance of the 'interconnectedness of the world' (Conrad, 2016: 9) and the metropolis and the colony forming 'a unitary field of analysis' (Cohn, 1996: 4). Gender, 'race', class, caste, and age will be the main categories of analysis. Source materials primarily include medical manuals and periodicals, and various reports such as judicial and medical branch proceedings, sanitary

commissioners' and public health reports, municipal administration reports, censuses, newspapers, and various national and international infant welfare exhibition and conference papers, illustrations, and advertisements.

Shilpi Rajpal, Indian Institute of Science Education & Research Mohali

The Mental Hygiene Movement: A Global Perspective

The paper will look at the transition from the mental hygiene movement to the mental health movement. It aims to delineate the mental hygiene movement in the United States and its interconnections with Britain and the British empire mainly colonial India during the first half of the twentieth century. The mental hygiene movement propagated that mental diseases were like other physical diseases and should be treated at early stages. They promoted the belief that the mind should be preserved and mental health should become a part of the public health measures. Numerous community mental health initiatives were taken, child guidance centres alongside out-patient clinics were opened, connecting the local to the national, and the national to the transnational.

The paper will chart the transnational cross-fertilization of ideas, people and movements across Britain and the British empire, and beyond. It will demonstrate how mental hygiene connected global concerns and fears about mental retardation and health. There exists numerous works on the history of the mental hygiene movement in the context of the US and Britain, written largely from the national perspective on Britain (Toms, 2013; Thomson, 1995, 2010) and the USA (Pols, 1997).

The paper contextualises Indian psychiatry into the global perspective by tracing its connections with the mental hygiene movement. A wide range of archives related to the mental hygiene movement such as the proceedings of international conferences of mental hygiene, personal papers, promotional booklets and medical journals will be utilized.