



**Exploring the (Post-)Colonial Encounter.**

**Performance, Language, and Violence**

**Tuesday, 11 September 2018**

University of Southampton, Avenue Campus, Confucius Boardroom (65/2123)

Workshop organised by Felix Brahm, Pritipuspa Mishra and Falko Schnicke

**Programme**

**09.45-10.00** Welcome and Opening Remarks by the Organisers

**10.00-11.30 I: On Historicizing** (Chair: Falko Schnicke)

Christer Petley, ‘Slavery > Archive < History’

Priti Mishra, A noble dream? The search for a national language in early twentieth century India

Indra Sengupta, Of places past: history and the political in locally produced late twentieth-century travel guides

**11.30- 12.00** Coffee Break

**12.00- 13.00 II: Semantics in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Encounter** (Chair: Priti Mishra)

Charlotte Riley, Semantics is always a bitch: Development and aid as post-colonial encounter

Felix Brahm, ‘Invectivity’ and political mobilisation: Thoughts on two cases from colonial Kenya and Tanzania

**13.00-14.30** Lunch Break

**14.30-15.30 III: Post-Colonial Politics** (Chair: Indra Sengupta)

Falko Schnicke, Colonial history and Cold War power relations: Elizabeth II’s visits to India, Pakistan (1961) and the US (1976)

Ian Talbot, Rethinking the Indian Partition

**15.30-16.00** Coffee Break

**16.00-17.00 IV: Colonial and Post-Colonial Violence** (Chair: Felix Brahm)

Tom Menger, ‘Not very uplifting work’. German officers first encountering and practising colonial violence in East Africa, c. 1890-1907

Chris Prior, Fighting the good fight? African violence and the British (post)colonial encounter in the 1960s

**17.00** End of Workshop

**Abstracts**

**10.00-11.30 I: On Historicizing**

**‘Slavery > Archive < History’**

Christer Petley

University of Southampton

‘To read the archive is to enter a mortuary; it permits one final viewing and allows for a last glimpse of persons about to disappear into the slave hold.’ Saidya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*

‘For as long as it has been a subject of professional scholarship, American slavery has exposed the methodological limits of the discipline of history.’ Stephanie Smallwood, ‘The Politics of the Archive’

What can the archive of slavery tell us? Can that archive speak for enslaved people? What dilemmas lie there for historians? Can we represent the archive’s victims? This presentation confronts those questions, working with archival traces of enslaved people forced to live, work, and die on the properties of Simon Taylor (b.1740-d.1813), a rich British sugar planter in the colony of Jamaica. It pokes at issues that haunt and bug me in the afterglow of writing a book—*White Fury: A Jamaican Slaveholder and the Age of Revolution*—all about Taylor and his world.

**A noble dream ?: Hindustani and Indian Nationalism in the early twentieth century**

Pritipuspa Mishra

University of Southampton

Multilingual diversity was the source of one of the most enduring anxieties in Indian nationalist thought. If one of the primary features of a nation was linguistic unity then how could India, with her many mother tongues, be a nation? If language formed the root of national unity by housing the most essential of national truths, impulses and aspirations then what hope did India have of holding her fragments together as multiple mother tongues whispered diverse aspirations, truths and impulses in her citizen’s ears? This concern about linguistic diversity had a number of significant implications for Indian nationalist thought about language. My paper focuses on one primary implication of this anxiety—the search for a pan Indian language that would bind the nation together- Hindustani. The need for such a language was coupled with a need to bestow on it a historic continuity that would bolster its claims as the museum of the inner life of Indians. As a result, twentieth century nationalist imagination of Hindustani emerged as a paradoxical thing—simultaneously new and ancient.

**Of places past: history and the political in locally produced travel guides in late 20th century India – a case study**

Indra Sengupta

GHI London

This is a brief report on the research we are doing as a part of the International Centre of Advanced Studies: Metamorphosis of the Political in a module called *History as a Political Category*. In our sub-project we try to understand the complex relationship between political subjectivities and historical consciousness by looking beyond academic history or wider narratives of national history writing. We focus on a range of sites – selected according to a range of criteria – and analyse narratives of the past that have been produced locally to see how history has reconfigured politics at these sites and vice versa in the course of the 20th century. My own project deals with locally produced travel guides. In this presentation, I present some of the early, tentative findings based on fieldwork in Murshidabad in Bengal.

**12.00- 13.00 II: Semantics in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Encounter**

**‘Semantics is always a bitch’: Development and Aid as post-colonial encounter**

Charlotte Riley

University of Southampton

‘But still we are victims of word games,

semantics is always a bitch:

places once called under-developed and 'backwards'

are now called 'mineral rich.'

- Gil Scott-Heron, ‘Black History’.

This paper explores the language and ideology of aid and development in the period bridging the late British empire and the new 'post-colonial' Commonwealth. It argues that aid and development was often framed as a 'new' relationship between nations but can in fact be conceptualised as a continuation of colonial relationships between the former metropole and colonies: the 'post-colonial encounter' structured by colonial heirarchies, language and ideologies.

**'Invectivity' and political mobilisation: Thoughts on two cases from colonial Kenya and Tanzania**

Felix Brahm

GHI London

This paper discusses how far the concept of ‘invectivity’, developed by a group of researchers at the University of Technology in Dresden, offers new insights into the (post-) colonial encounter. Understood as an umbrella term to grasp various phenomena of disparagement, the paper argues that this concept can be useful not only to gain further understanding of the social proximity of racism, but also of communicative practice within colonial societies more broadly, and of political mobilisation under colonial conditions. Drawing on two cases from colonial Kenya and Tanzania – the introduction of the *kipande* system in 1919 and the criminal libel case against Julius Nyerere in 1958 – the paper probes into invectives as triggers of political mobilisation and demonstrates how insults and the declaration of being insulted became political instruments that contained destructive as well as provocative and productive potential.

**14.30-15.30 III: Post-Colonial Politics**

**Colonial history and Cold War power relations: Elizabeth II’s visits to India, Pakistan (1961) and the US (1976)**

Falko Schnicke

GHI London

It was a special state visit when Queen Elizabeth II embarked for the US in 1976 since it was dedicated to celebrate the United States’ independence from Britain 200 years earlier. The ceremonials reflected that aim by highlighting the success of democracy. It is remarkable how positively the shared history was adopted – especially if compared to other post-colonial visits from the same ear such as the visit to India and Pakistan in 1961. History formed a major aspect of both programmes, yet it played a different role in the mentioned cases since Britain had fundamentally different relations with both countries at the moments the visits took place. This paper will highlight which impact Britain’s (relative) position of strength towards India regarding remembering colonial history had as well as Britain’s position of dependence from the US only a few years later.

**Rethinking the 1947 Partition Violence in the Indian Subcontinent**

Ian Talbot

University of Southampton

The British departure from India and the creation of Pakistan was accompanied by large scale violence that claimed upwards of a million lives. This paper will examine the characteristics of the Partition-related violence and explain why the Punjab region was at its epicentre of the violence. It will do this by a series of case studies which cover the period from March 1947 until August. This period it will be argued marked a new phase in which episodes of violence differed from earlier communal clashes. The paper will then go on to consider why the partition-related violence in the Punjab has not been addressed in wider studies of religio-ethnic violence and discuss the appropriateness of conceptualising this in terms of ‘ethnic cleansing’ and genocide. Finally, there will be a consideration of the violence in terms of the comparative work by Stathis Kalyvas on mass collective violence.

**16.00-17.00 IV: Colonial and Post-Colonial Violence**

**Not very uplifting work’. German officers first encountering and practising colonial violence in East Africa, c. 1890-1907**

Tom Menger

Cologne/ London

With Michel Foucault in general, and Norbert Elias and Mark Hewitson specifically for the German case, one could argue that by the end of the nineteenth century, the sight and experience of physical violence had become rare in the Western European public sphere. For those who first came to the colonial world and were thus confronted with its pervasive presence of physical violence – from corporeal punishment to colonial warfare – this must have been a novel experience. This paper, based on a number of ego-documents from the colony of German East Africa, takes a closer look at how German soldiers reacted to, and dealt with, this experience, and what this can tell us about attitudes to violence and whether there was anything specifically colonial about this.

**Fighting the good fight? African violence and the British (post)colonial encounter in the 1960s**

Chris Prior

University of Southampton

This paper will examine British responses to violence and the threat of violence in 1960s Africa, and what these can tell us about the extent to which colonial modes of thinking continued to shape postcolonial foreign policy outcomes at a time when London was ostensibly fashioning new forms of statecraft.