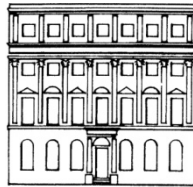


German Historical Institute London



BULLETIN

ISSN 0269-8552

Debarati Bagchi, Yamini Agarwal, and Dipanwita Donde:
Winter School on Global History: Challenges and Opportunities
Conference Report
German Historical Institute London Bulletin, Vol 42, No. 2
(November 2020), pp107-111

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Winter School on Global History: Challenges and Opportunities.

Organized jointly by the GHIL India Research Programme (IRP), the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies, and the Max Weber Stiftung India Branch Office (MWS IBO), and held on 17–21 Feb. 2020 at the India International Centre, New Delhi. Conveners: Felix Brahm (GHIL), Monica Juneja (Heidelberg University), Indra Sengupta (MWS IBO and GHIL), Debarati Bagchi (MWS IBO), and Pablo Holwitt (South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University, New Delhi).

The Winter School brought together postdoctoral and early career scholars from Germany and India working with the methods and approaches of global history. The week-long event was divided into three thematic teaching sessions. In the final session, held over the last two days, the participants presented their own research, taking into account the concepts and methods discussed in the three teaching sessions. An excursion to the Mehrauli Archaeological Park was organized as a part of the event. The thematic sessions dealt with three areas of global history: the history of pedagogic practices, the history of peripatetic objects, and the history of labour. There was also a panel on *The Languages of Global History* (see separate report).

The Winter School opened on 17 February 2020 with a welcome address by Indra Sengupta, followed by a brief introduction by Monica Juneja and Felix Brahm. The first session initiated the discussion on global history with a focus on education. Parimala V. Rao (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) delivered a lecture on 'Global Entanglements and Colonial Education Policies in India', in which she sketched a broad picture of how global ideas left a mark on the colonial education system in India. She began with a brief introduction to the England–Scotland relationship and pointed out that, as a result of the Scottish Enlightenment, Scotland had a more secular, regularized, and egalitarian education system than England. Many Scotsmen appointed in India contributed to educational experiments there, and Rao cited the expansion of school education in Etawah under two Scottish officials: H. S. Reid and A. O. Hume. The American War of Independence and the loss of British colonies in

North America made officers of the East India Company overly cautious about retaining power in India. Elite British officers like Lord Cornwallis, who fought and lost in the American colonies, believed that the establishment of seminaries and colleges in America was one of the causes of the loss of the colonies there, and hence he wanted to keep Indians insulated from English education. Fear of losing India through the spread of radical ideas was acute: the hoisting of the flag of the French Revolution in Calcutta in 1830 or the popularity of Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* among students in the city unnerved the officials of the East India Company. Yet the Scottish officer Charles Grant strongly opposed this attitude.

The second thematic session on 18 February 2020 was Monica Juneja's lecture on 'Peripatetic Objects'. Juneja noted that art history as a discipline had been fairly slow in responding to the 'global turn', and it was only now aiming to 'catch up' by building upon ongoing debates. Juneja drew our attention to the ideas of the 'globe' and the 'world'. The 'globe', she said, is an abstract and imagined space; yet it also implies a spherical, interconnected space containing zones of mobility. In comparison, 'world' indicates an inhabited place containing lived memories, providing contexts for relations transacted on global levels. Juneja cautioned that the terms should not be conflated, since art historians have to deploy them depending on how they are addressing the question of 'scale' in doing global art history. Juneja also stated her preference for the analytical category of 'transculturation', explaining that it implies long-term cultural relationships that transcend the boundaries of modern nation states. Drawing upon art historical methodologies that account for the portability and materiality of objects, Juneja emphasized that objects were exchanged through trade, consumption, travel, and diplomacy. The mobility of objects from their production to their transportation and assimilation in other regions, cultures, and time periods – as well as their reappearance in the present day, particularly through exhibition spaces and museums – enables the tracing of object biographies through the lens of transcultural relationalities. By means of case studies, Juneja examined connected histories shaped by travelling objects. She referred to exotic and fragile objects (such as porcelain, chinoiserie, or jades) that arrived from Asia, and the 'encounter' between these objects and European collectors in the heart of Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These objects came

to represent European collectors' imagination of 'exotic' Asia, which did not necessarily align with the territorial boundaries of Asia.

The theme for the third day (20 February 2020) was the concept of labour in global history. Prabhu Mohapatra (University of Delhi) discussed the emergence and spread of 'informal labour' as a relatively new concept in the global history of labour. He reminded the audience that to understand the growth and spread of informal and precarious labour, we need to understand the trajectory of the rise and eventual transformation of formal labour. Referring to Marcel van der Linden's work, he started the lecture with the story of the emergence of 'labour' as a Eurocentric concept perceived as a configuration of industrial, male, unionized wage labour in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This definition was both geographically and temporally specific to Europe and North America. Mohapatra explained the ways in which historians have tried to locate heterogeneous forms of labour from across the globe in order to break away from the Eurocentric definition. He then traced the genealogy of informal labour through its relation with other cognate terms like informal sector, informal economy, and the two crucial ideas of informality and precarity. The massive expansion of global wage labour and a recognition of workers outside this labour force led to an understanding of 'informal work' as a global phenomenon—work that remained excluded from the traditional definition of wage labour. Breaking away from the Eurocentric definition of formal labour, historians attempted to bring geographically and temporally diverse forms of informal labour together under the rubric of labour history. Mohapatra argued that this heralded a fundamental shift in the global history of labour.

In the last one and a half days, seventeen early career scholars presented their research on various themes of global history. Arun Thomas (University of Hyderabad) presented on the subject of intoxicants as cultural commodities in the social life of British Malabar. Heeral Chhabra (University of Delhi) engaged with animals as colonial subjects, legalizing 'cruelty' to animals for military purposes, and transnational debates on humane or non-cruel methods of culling 'strays'. Julian zur Lage (University of Hamburg) problematized the writing of histories without travelling to the locations referred to. Sandipan Mitra (Presidency University, Kolkata) discussed how anthropology as a university discipline facilitated research by Indian

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authors on caste and race. Om Prasad (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) spoke on the scientific workers' movement in India, mapping the place of science and technology in nation-building. Stella Kneifel (University of Erfurt) traced the migration of Arab students to universities in the German Democratic Republic and explored how they behaved and related to each other in the university space. Agnes Piekacz (Bielefeld University) spoke on the history of British military clothing and the ban on the sale and distribution of second-hand uniforms from Britain to South Africa. Susanne Quitmann (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich) spoke on the transregional history of child migrants to Australia and Canada from Britain in the period between 1870 and the 1960s. Nokmedemla Lemtur's (University of Göttingen) project focused on high-altitude mountaineering expeditions in the Himalayas as transcultural encounters between European explorers and indigenous communities. Akash Bhattacharya (Azim Premji University, Bengaluru) looked at the relationship between education and the making of a suburb, focusing on nineteenth-century Uttarpara in light of wider discourses on education. Johanna Ziebritzki (Heidelberg University) discussed two pioneering figures of Indian art history and traced their roles as educators, collectors, and intellectuals in the process of nation-building in early twentieth-century India. Frederik Schröer (Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin) examined the sense of community and new systems of knowledge creation among Tibetan refugees during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Saumya Agarwal (Heidelberg University) shed light on the extensive wall paintings of Shekhawati, which are found on cenotaphs, temples, shops, wells, and houses. Josefine Carla Hoffmann (University of Göttingen) explored the collaboration between India and Germany in training workers for the rapidly growing steel, engineering, and automotive industries in post-Independence India. Maria-Daniela Pomohaci (University of Göttingen) presented a social history of sanitation workers in late colonial Calcutta (now Kolkata). Samuel Sathya Seelan's (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) presentation focused on an ethnographic study of sanitation workers in Bangalore. Norman Aselmeyer (European University Institute, Florence) explored the spatial and social transformations in Nairobi that came with the construction of the Uganda Railway in 1895.

WINTER SCHOOL ON GLOBAL HISTORY

The presentations opened up lively conversations and interesting engagements with the thematic sessions of the Winter School. The senior scholars reflected on the presentations and helped the participants sharpen their engagement with the methods of global history.

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Winter School Group Photo



Credits: Max Weber Stiftung, India Branch Office, New Delhi