

## **CALL FOR PAPERS: Colonial violence beyond the borders of empires: dis/connections, transfers, and mobilities, ca. 1850–1954**

**Date:** 08.12.2022–09.12.2022

**Venue:** Munich, Germany

**Host institution:** Käte Hamburger Research Centre *global dis:connect*, Ludwig Maximilian University Munich; University of Cologne, Cologne

### **Organisers:**

Dominique Biehl (University of Basel, Basel)

Ulrike Lindner (University of Cologne, Cologne)

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In recent years, historians have increasingly sought to write imperial history beyond the borders of individual, ‘national’ empires.<sup>1</sup> The term ‘transimperial history’ is gaining traction for such approaches, with dedicated conferences, a scholarly network, and a first attempt at definition.<sup>2</sup> Transimperial history, according to Daniel Hedinger and Nadin Heé, seeks to go beyond the dichotomy of cooperation and competition between empires, and has a particular focus on connections between them. A systematic transimperial approach, they hold, enables us to identify the density and variety of the connections between empires and thereby underscores colonial expansion as a shared project.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, as Bernhard Schär has remarked, if ‘networked’ or ‘webbed’ (Tony Ballantyne) conceptions of empire are to reach their full analytical potential, they should not stop at national-imperial borders.<sup>4</sup>

Transimperial history has had an impact on research fields such as the history of imperial science.<sup>5</sup> However, its approach has been far less applied to one crucial aspect of colonial rule: violence. Violence was ubiquitous in colonialism, but generally peaked in contexts of warfare and occupation, as well as in resistance against these twofold processes. It is these instances of the use of violence that this workshop will explore from a transimperial perspective. Already more than a decade ago, Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski postulated a common ‘Western’ ‘colonial archive’ on violence.<sup>6</sup> We still know little about the

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<sup>1</sup> Ulrike Lindner, *Koloniale Begegnungen: Deutschland und Großbritannien als Imperialmächte in Afrika 1880–1914* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2011); Volker Barth and Roland Cvetkovski, eds., *Imperial Co-operation and Transfer, 1870–1930: Empires and Encounters* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> See the conferences “Trans-imperial cooperation and transfer in the age of colonial globalization” (Erfurt, 22–24 March 2018) and “Transimperialités contemporaines – Moderne Transimperialitäten” (Paris, 14–16 March 2019) as well as the Transimperial History Network (<https://www.transimperialhistory.com/>); for a definition see: Daniel Hedinger and Nadin Heé, “Transimperial History – Connectivity, Cooperation and Competition”, *Journal of Modern European History* 16, no. 4 (2018) 429–452.

<sup>3</sup> Hedinger and Heé, “Transimperial History”.

<sup>4</sup> Bernhard C. Schär, “From Batticaloa via Basel to Berlin: Transimperial Science in Ceylon and Beyond around 1900”, *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History* 48, no. 2 (2020), 230–62.

<sup>5</sup> Deborah Neill, *Networks in Tropical Medicine: Internationalism, Colonialism, and the Rise of a Medical Specialty* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012); Bernhard C. Schär, *Tropenliebe: Schweizer Naturforscher und niederländischer Imperialismus in Südostasien um 1900* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2015); Samuël Coghe, *Population Politics in the Tropics: Demography, Health and Transimperialism in Colonial Angola* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, “Hannah Arendt's Ghosts: Reflections on the Disputable Path from Windhoek to Auschwitz”, *Central European History* 42, no. 2 (2009), 279–300.

exact forms this archive took, who contributed to it, how it might have been formed, and whether it was indeed as exclusively ‘Western’ as Gerwarth and Malinowski assumed. This lack of a transimperial perspective on colonialism and violence is even more surprising, as processes of land seizure, occupation, and resistance were extremely violent events, often legitimised by racist ideas and excluded from the developing framework of international law. We would like to expand the field beyond the few existing studies on colonial concentration camps, the circulation of European mercenaries in colonial armies, and the conceptualisation of an ‘imperial cloud’, a reservoir of imperial knowledge that was not limited to a single empire and which included, but was not limited to, colonial violence.<sup>7</sup>

The workshop will address different aspects of transimperial connections concerning colonial violence. On a conceptual level, we need considerations on their specific nature, while, on an empirical level, case studies will assist in approaching the different dimensions in which these entanglements manifested themselves on the ground. Finally, contributions will also complicate the notion of connectivity itself. One of our hypotheses is that colonial violence presents a more complex field of connectivity than we might find in other transimperial histories. We also invite contributions analysing points of disconnection, of absences, detours, misunderstandings, distortions, or creative/hybrid appropriations. We are interested in whether and how transimperial histories can change our view of the different theories of nationally specific colonial cultures of violence, such as the notion of a ‘minimum force’ British colonial warfare, a supposed German ‘colonial *Sonderweg*’, or the myth of Italians as ‘*brava gente*’, as benevolent colonisers.<sup>8</sup>

By integrating European and non-European empires into our discussion of colonial violence from a transimperial point of view, we want to transcend dichotomies between ‘land’ and ‘sea’, and ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’ empires. Thus, we are interested in papers dealing with such empires as the British or Portuguese, but also Qing China, Ethiopia, the United States, or Austria-Hungary, to name just a few.

The timeframe chosen for the workshop runs from approximately 1850 to 1954. The second half of the nineteenth century represents a period when accelerating processes of global connectivity brought ever more regions of the world under the impact of the violence of expanding imperial actors and when the number of different actors involved in this violent endeavour multiplied. Meanwhile, with the French defeat in Indochina and the beginning of the war in Algeria, the mid-1950s represent the continuities of colonial violence beyond 1945 but exclude the tidal wave of decolonisation around 1960, the international entanglements of which have already been studied in more detail.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Aidan Forth and Jonas Kreienbaum, “A Shared Malady: Concentration Camps in the British, Spanish, American, and German Empires”, *Journal of Modern European History* 14, no. 2 (2016), 245–67; Christoph Kammersiek and Jonas Kreienbaum, “An Imperial Cloud?”, *Journal of Modern European History* 14, no. 2 (2016), 164–82; Bernhard C. Schär, “Switzerland, Borneo and the Dutch Indies: Towards a New Imperial History of Europe, c. 1770–1850”, *Past & Present* 2022 (<https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtab045>).

<sup>8</sup> Jürgen Zimmerer, “Colonial Genocide and the Holocaust: Towards an Archaeology of the Holocaust”, in: Anthony Dirk Moses, ed., *Genocide and Settler Society* (New York: Berghahn, 2004); Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2005); Thomas R. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919–60* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990); Rod Thornton, “The British Army and the Origins of Its Minimum Force Philosophy”, *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 15, no. 1 (2004), 83–106.

<sup>9</sup> See for instance: Jeffrey Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Fabian Klose, *Human Rights in the Shadow of Colonial Violence: The Wars of Independence in Kenya and Algeria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

As many of those involved in practicing the actual violence of war and occupation in the colonial world were themselves very often colonial subjects or in a status of lesser privilege as compared to representatives from the imperial metropole, we would like to pay special attention to the transimperial mobilities of subaltern actors, ideas, and texts, touching upon colonial or anti-colonial violence.

Finally, we are also interested in the role that so-called ‘national minorities’ of imperial states played in different empires. Examples here could be the role of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh people in the British or other empires, German- or Slovene-speakers in Italian colonialism (or other colonialisms), and the ethnic or religious minorities of the Ottoman Empire – actors who, at least in part, were subjected to (structural) violence in their home countries which could be considered colonial, while at the same time engaging in colonial violence themselves.

Possible paper topics include but are not limited to:

- Conceptual/theoretical approaches to transimperiality/transimperial knowledge transfer
- Blockages, absences, detours: What factors could impede transimperial connectivity? Where was such connectivity absent or how did blockages distort transfers?
- The circulation of knowledge and ideas around colonial war and violence beyond the borders of empires, and the specific media of this circulation
- Transimperial mobilities of the actors of colonial war and occupation
- Colonial itineraries of military attachés/observer missions
- Transimperial mobilities of the actors, ideas, and texts of anti-colonial armed resistance
- Cooperation between empires in colonial war and/or occupation as well as transimperial cooperation between anti-colonial states, groups, and individuals
- Mutual perceptions and interpretations of the colonial violence of other empires in popular culture, in colonised societies, or among specific administrative, cultural, and military groups
- Colonial violence and self: reflections on transimperiality in ego-documents, such as photographs, diaries, letters, and postcards
- The role of national minorities in conflict and occupation in colonial empires
- Transimperial patterns and connections in the staging or depiction of violence
- Transimperial cultures of remembrance/commemorative imprints of transimperial dis/connections

The workshop will take place on 8 and 9 December 2022 in Munich at the *global dis:connect* Research Centre. It is primarily planned as an on-site event but there will be the opportunity to join virtually. Proposals should be submitted to T.Menger[a]lmu.de by 15 April 2022. Your application should include a provisional paper title, a short CV, and an abstract of max. 300 words. The workshop is generously funded by the Käthe Hamburger Research Centre *global dis:connect* and the University of Cologne. Participants from the Global South will be reimbursed for travel and accommodation costs; for other participants, the organisers will do their best to obtain funding as well.

