

China and India in the (Post-)Colonial Entanglements

Friday, 7 June 2024 10:45 (1h 30m)

The four papers in this panel present a balance of looking back to the colonial history and looking into the decolonial/postcolonial present. They explore the micro-foundations of the non-White, non-Western Self's contestations of colonial and postcolonial positionality within the international order, as well as the micro-dynamics of the decolonialisation moment.

Hao's paper takes a historical approach to analyse the details of the decolonial moment of Hong Kong, pondering upon the salient decisions of the British government in its 1983-1984 negotiations with the People's Republic of China during the handover. It uncovers the micro-foundations of decolonialisation process with its rich historical materials and innovative theoretical approach.

Inspired by the English School approach, Hsu's paper uncovers Republican China in the liminal space between empire and nation-state in the colonial contexts of the early 20th century. Zooming in on Republican China's public health governance and contestation of the defining elements within the "standard of the civilisation" to negotiate its sovereignty and status, Hsu challenges the notion of state formation as a unilinear, teleological process.

Tang's paper touches upon the postcolonial entanglements, analysing the ways in which the colonial discourses of Orientalism shape the present-day India's search for and construction of the national Self. Diving into the post-1990 diplomatic elites' practices around the India International Science Festival, Tang's paper speaks for the agency of postcolonial states in negotiating their own status and positionality within the international order.

Han's paper interrogates the "critical White-centrism" among postcolonial IR critiques by exploring how Chinese quasi-officials in the 21st century record their professional duty in Africa and how they racialize Africa, the West, whereby negotiating their own racial identities therein. Drawing from but moving beyond the racial triangulation framework, it argues for the central analytical power of a deeply entrenched desire for modernity that fundamentally informs the racialized language that Chinese agents adopt to hierarchize the Chinese Self, the Western Other, and the African Other. Han thus how uncovers postcolonial agents may wield their agency to recreate a self-centric version of the global racial hierarchy.

Track Classification: Colonial, Postcolonial and Decolonial Working Group