



CALL FOR PAPERS

The Centre for Global South Asia Conference 2024

Renegotiating Sovereignty in the Global South

Proposal deadline: 15 January 2024

Call

We invite proposals that investigate the use of material culture, heritage sites, history or history-writing by former sovereigns, monarchs or rulers to renegotiate their roles under changed socio-political circumstances from the 1800s to the present. The context for change may include decolonisation, post-colonial nationalism, democratic reform, conquest, the abolition of monarchies, and the adoption of democratic or other forms of governance due to which they no longer rule/ rule at the apex of their government. We also welcome proposals that draw on older histories to explore how heritage, lineage, and cultural practices were mobilized to achieve social and political goals in our period of focus.

We seek to enrich our understanding of this phenomenon through comparison and juxtaposition and so the remit of this call encompasses the Global South. There are two important exceptions that we will include: studies that investigate how material culture or other heritage that originates in the Global North is deployed by former rulers in the Global South; and those dealing with First Nations (even if located in the Global North).

Background and Approach

One of our aims is to encourage conversations across geographies and temporalities. We wish to raise new questions, and to analyse the multiple and complex ways that former rulers and their descendants invoked concepts of sovereignty, and harnessed history to reimagine their place in the changing world around them.

For example, in South Asia, although India chose electoral democracy upon independence from British colonial rule in 1947, the democratic nation state inherited many – often ancient – kingdoms within its new borders. Although the national government soon ‘integrated’ the former princes and their kingdoms, the process took time. In tandem, this period of nation-building saw concerted efforts to collect for the nation, much of it from historic royal collections; but what is remarkable is that many Indian princes drew on precisely the same resources to establish their own museums in repurposed palaces. In addition to feeding into broader understandings of India’s cultural heritage, it is these latter princely institutions, and not their state-run counterparts, that are now emblematic of the artistic and cultural heritage of their ‘home’ regions.

In the Americas, in areas that had been part of the Spanish Empire, this process followed a different timeline and trajectory. For example, the descendants of the Inca and Mexica (Aztec) rulers developed strategies to maintain control over their ancestral lands and petitioned the Spanish Crown for recognition of their position. They commissioned histories and produced detailed genealogies that celebrated their family’s former imperial stature. In the Andean region, the memory of descent from the Inca rulers remained important and was mobilised during anti-colonial struggles between the sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries. Following the Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari rebellions of the 1780s, the Spanish Crown sought to erase the memory of Inca ruling families by destroying the evidence offered by portraits and all aspects of material culture. Recent research is seeking to uncover what happened to these families in the post-independence period.

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A few shared lines of enquiry emerge, such as:

- What role has art, material culture, and history writing (both within and outside institutions such as museums) played in the projection of rulership and claims to sovereignty in the Global South?
- What did they (i.e. the above) symbolise in the immediate aftermath of a moment of change (for example independence), and thereafter?
- What did 'national' collections – and the nation they constructed – owe to former rulers?
- How did former rulers use, resist, and subvert being 'collected', and to what effect?
- What do 'princely' collections mean to their regional and local public, positioned as both audience and stakeholder (whether institutionalised in museums or otherwise)?
- How has the memory/ legacy of rule been mobilised by different groups over this period?
- How were concepts related to rulership (encompassing the many different ways of expressing, enacting, and embodying rulership) translated to serve new goals, whether in local or distant geographies?

This list is not exhaustive. Proposals are welcome to explore further questions that link to these.

Conference Details

This will be a two-part conference:

- Part I: London, mid-June 2024 (date TBC), themed around intangible heritage such as lineage, cultural practices, and history writing.
- Part II: Jaipur, November/ December 2024 (date TBC), themed around tangible heritage such as art, collections, and architecture.

We invite proposals for both Part I and II based on original, unpublished research that can be included in a conference publication. You are welcome to submit one proposal for each part of the conference. We will ask you to indicate your preference in case both are deemed suitable, but we are unable to accommodate both. We welcome submissions from scholars at all career levels. The programme committee will rank proposals based on how well-presented and conceptualised they are in response to the themes and questions outlined above.

Costs

Presenters at both London and Jaipur will be offered limited funding towards domestic travel and accommodation if required. Details will be communicated after decisions. Registration and conference catering will be covered for presenters. Those unable to present in person will have the option to do so virtually.

To submit your 150-word abstract, [CLICK HERE TO FILL THE SUBMISSION FORM](#). If you would like to discuss an idea, please write to the Centre for Global South Asia at cgsarhul@gmail.com. **Please DO NOT email proposals to this address. Submission is only via the form linked above (you will be asked to resubmit via the link if you send it by email).**

Decisions will be communicated via email by 31 January 2024.

(Please remember to check your spam folder.)