

Call for Papers (CfP): Anti-Colonial Narratives, 1905–1955. Lives and Legacies

Book proposal

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Aim and Scope of the Book

The history of anti-colonialism in the first half of the twentieth century continues to be an expanding research field. Within the last ten years, numerous research projects have yielded several monographs and edited volumes on anti-colonial and anti-imperialist organizations, committees and individuals (see Fredrik Petersson's forthcoming study *The Elephant and the Porcelain Shop*; Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 2013, Ole Birk Laursen's *Anarchy or Chaos: A Political Biography of M. P. T. Acharya*, 2021 Michele Louro's *Comrades Against Imperialism*, 2018; Michael Goebel's *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*, 2015; are but a few among many contemporary examples), while historical conferences and workshops have included (often with a global perspective) panels that have presented papers on specific issues, for example, on local, national, and global expressions of anti-colonialism (the most prolific cases have been the panels addressed at the ENIUGH and ESSHC conferences). While this growing corpus of research on anti-colonialism constitutes an important source of historical information, what still needs to be addressed, nonetheless, is the challenge of covering the scope and scale of individual experiences as seen through the narratives of anti-colonial activists. By addressing this gap, this offers us a unique chance to explore and include a broad range of theoretical and methodological approaches that will extend existing research in the fields of, for example, global history and the spatial turn, gender and anti-colonialism, political and intellectual history, and the challenge of writing historical biography.

In many cases, Europe has been located and interpreted (and the continent can be seen as such) as the center of historical development of anti-colonial movements in the first half of the twentieth century. Examples of the above have centered around organizations and committees as the *League Against Imperialism and for National Independence*, *Perhimpunan Indonesia*, *League in Defence of the Negro Race*, *International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers*, or the transnational scale of the *Indian National Congress*, and so forth. However, the aim here is to include developments, experiences and encounters that took place beyond Europe and across the colonial world itself. By doing so, it is possible to trace likely relations and contacts that ignore the "nation-state" or Europe as the interpretative geopolitical framework; instead, the aim of this book is to capture and understand the global and local scope of anti-colonialism in an era that has defined our modern world.

This also calls for paying attention to a broad range of political ideologies and convictions, meaning that anti-colonialism as a practice was not exclusively pursued by individuals connected with the international communist movement and its main advocate: the networks of the *Communist International* (Comintern, 1919-43). Thus, the book project aspires to address the importance and relevance of anti-colonial narratives associated with socialism, pacifism, anarchism, republicanism, religion, or philosophy.

The book's focus on individual encounters makes it possible to capture processes of politization and political consciousness, shaped in contexts of geographical and political

landscapes, and how these were affected in times characterized by both enthusiasm and uncertainty, hope and disbelief. A central hypothesis of the book project is to unearth how global conflicts such as the First World War and the Second World War (described by some as the “Thirty Year War”) contributed to mobilizing, concretizing and turning anti-colonialism into politically conscious movements capable of challenging the structures and system of existing empires such as the British, French, Dutch, Russian, Spanish, Italian, German, Portuguese, or the US. More specific, the chronological limitation aims at capturing how individuals challenged systems of colonialism and imperialism, starting from the impact and conclusion of the Russo-Japanese war in 1905 and ending with the culmination of the epochal event the “Afro-Asian Conference” in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955.

At the center of attention here is to invite contributors interested in furthering our understanding of either well-known anti-colonial activists (for example, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohammad Hatta, Ho Chi Minh) or figures that have been forgotten or ignored through the history of politics and biography writing. The title – *Anti-Colonial Narratives, 1905–1955. Lives and Legacies* – aims to give voice to anti-colonial narratives with an emphasis on individuals that either had a leading role in advancing anti-colonialism as a political, social, or cultural practice during the first half of the twentieth century. But even more importantly, it aims to put into conversation the histories of those individuals that have been placed largely in the margin of anti-colonial historiography and thereby reduced to the dustbin of history. The uncovering of individual and less-known encounters is central for the project.

Archives and Personal Collections

The contributions should preferably be based on archival research or by utilizing personal collections of distinguished anti-colonial activists. In these times of digitalization it is now possible to consult and make use of digitized archival material; however, it is likewise useful to see this as an opportunity to develop topics and questions that may have been left out due to limitations and restrictions in previous academic studies.

Method: writing biography or not?

The challenge of writing biography can be divided in several parts. Should the contributions follow a strict formula by adopting *per se* a “political outline”. No, that is not the intention, but rather, to let the authors’ have a chance to develop and write contributions that enhance our understanding, first, of individuals regarded as “anti-colonial activists” and, secondly, to give space for narratives that challenge our knowledge about the history of twentieth century anti-colonialism.

Suggested Themes and Categories

Geopolitical Division
Ideology and the Individual
The Local and the Global
Internationalism and Nationalism
Gendered Anticolonialism

Details

Each contribution should be around 10 000 words, including footnotes.

Abstract: 150 words.

Author biography: affiliation and published works relevant to the book's outline.

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Deadline for abstracts: 15.12.2021