

[Contested Archives and the Intellectual Histories of Indian Modernity: From the Precolonial to the Postcolonial](#)

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As Indian intellectual history has taken a 'global' turn in recent times, it has thrown up a wide range of methodological questions on the theory and practice of the discipline. This global turn has been pioneered most notably by Christopher Alan Bayly in his work entitled 'Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire'^[1]. Bayly's most significant intellectual contribution has been to urge scholars to introduce spaces beyond the European world, such as India, within the realm of global intellectual history, as fertile grounds of ideations. In doing this, he acknowledged the heavy reliance on English materials for his work, thereby enabling a process of canonising a 'modern' and English textual archive for 'Indian' intellectual history. Considering Bayly's work as our entry point, we intend to problematise this canonisation of key English source texts and English-speaking actors as the exclusive and dominant archive for Indian political thought based on visibility to a 'western' readership.

This intervention is not to prescribe any particular methodology for future intellectual histories of India, neither is it an attempt to overlook alternative methodological approaches that has branched out over the years, since Bayly's work. Our larger aim in this conference is hinged on two primary concerns. One is of bringing to the fore works of emerging scholars in Indian intellectual history and political thought, framed by both context specificity and vernacular sources. The second important goal is to bring together young scholars working on intellectual traditions, texts, and figures, that are even beyond the purview of the received canon. Therefore, we welcome submissions which will question the ways in which the postcolonial afterlives of the empire, have shaped practices of history writing. By doing so, we hope to incorporate actors and archives from the 'margins of history', as agents of historical change.

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We welcome abstracts of not more than 500 words, which may focus on the following themes, but not limited to:

- Resituating the archive in writing histories of South Asia: textual, ethnographic, and oral histories?
- Juxtaposing political thought with political action in the writing of intellectual histories of South Asia.
- Ideas and historical actors in context: Positionality informing choice of sources and canon formation
- Deconstructing the vernacular: Politics of language, translation, and linguistic communities
- Trans-temporality and trans-spatiality in histories of modernity and colonialism.
- Reincorporating contested borders and contact zones as fertile grounds of intellection.
- Intersectional histories of identity and the politics of history writing: class, caste, race, and gender.
- Rethinking analytical categories in historiography: political, social, economic, and cultural.

Submissions should be sent to cantabconference@gmail.com no later than the **20th of March, 2020**. Conference papers will be published as journal special issue or an edited book. We encourage applications from late stage doctoral scholars/advanced graduate students, and early career researchers who received their doctorate not more than five years ago. Some bursaries are available for participants, but organisers actively encourage applicants to seek funding from their own institutions. We may be able to offer shared accommodation on a selective basis. Please do mention in the application, if you require accommodation. We would like to invite all the participants to the conference dinner. Venue to be specified shortly.

For queries, feel free to write to Shuvatri Dasgupta (sd781@cam.ac.uk) or Rohit Dutta Roy (rd548@cam.ac.uk), Faculty of History, University of Cambridge.

[1] Bayly Christopher. *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire*.

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