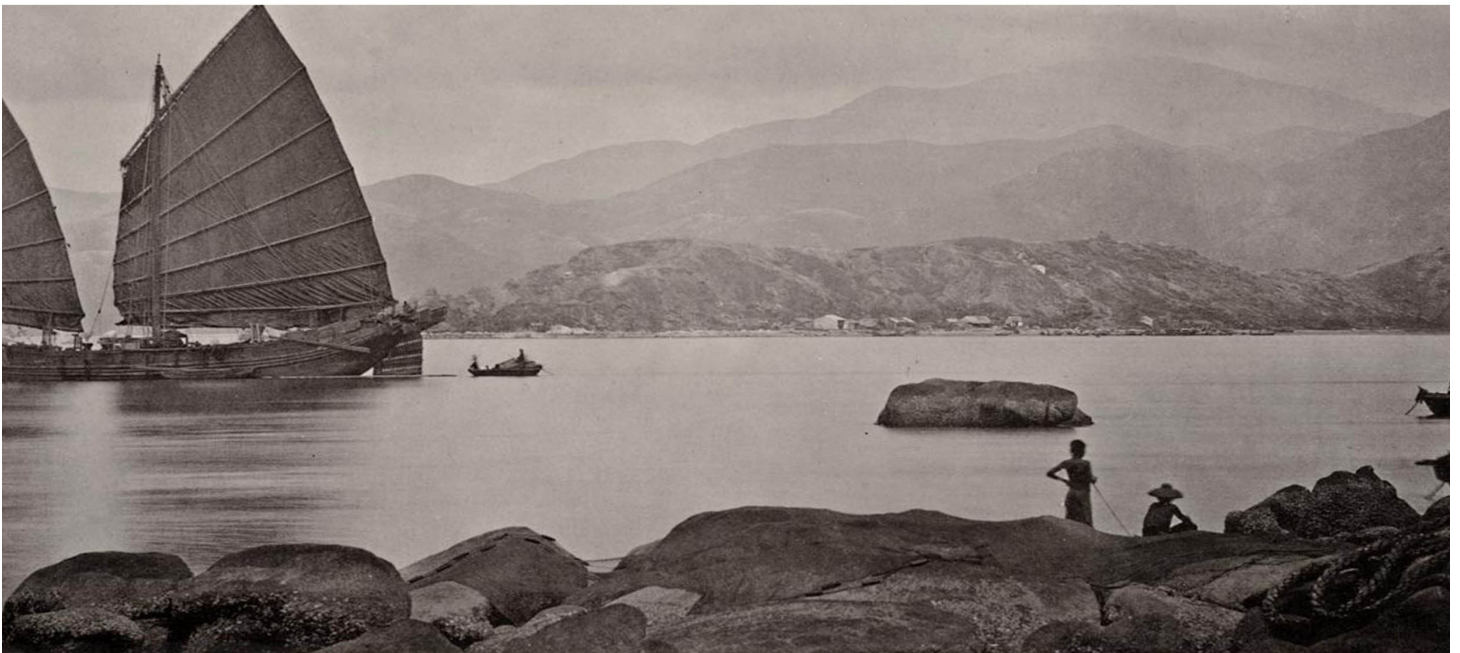


# **LESS THAN A STATE, MORE THAN A COLONY**

## **Protectorates & Semicolonialisms in Comparison**



**Saturday, February 13, 2016**

**Yale University  
InterAsia Initiative  
Convener: James Pickett**

## LESS THAN A STATE, MORE THAN A COLONY

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### PROTECTORATES AND SEMICOLONIALISMS IN COMPARISON

Yale University, InterAsia Initiative

Convener: James Pickett

*By invitation only: if interested, please email [inter.asia@yale.edu](mailto:inter.asia@yale.edu)*

Saturday 13 February 2016

11:15-11:30: Coffee and Snacks

11:30-12:00: Welcome and Framing Comments - James Pickett

12:00-1:30: Legal Jurisdiction and Colonial Clients

- Discussants:
  - Peter Perdue
  - Diana Kim
- Papers:
  - Omar Cheta, "Competing Jurisdictions and Negotiating Sovereignty in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt"
  - Kwangmin Kim, "Muslim Clients and Capitalism in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864"

1:30-2:15: Lunch

2:15-4:15: Indirect Rule, Law, and the International System

- Discussants:
  - Rohit De
  - Omar Cheta
- Papers:
  - Kavita Datla, "Lesser States and the Post-War International Order: Hyderabad in the Security Council"
  - Diana Kim, "The King Who Could Not Die: Suzerainty, Indirect Rule, and 20th Century Imperialism"
  - Priyasha Saksena, "Jousting Over Jurisdiction: Sovereignty and International Law in Late Nineteenth-Century South Asia"

4:15-4:30: Coffee

4:30-6:00: Colonial Origins of "Sovereign" Spaces

- Discussants:
  - Julie Stephens
  - Kavita Datla
- Papers:
  - Nicholas Abbot, "*Sarkars* into States: Translating Sovereignty and Governmentality in Eighteenth-Century India"
  - Morgan Robinson, "Binding Words: Student Conversion Narratives and the Establishment of the Zanzibar Protectorate"

6:00-6:30: Closing Remarks - Peter Perdue

6:30-8:30: Dinner and Drinks (catered on-site)

## Concept Note

Over the last decade, scholars have taken renewed interest in the "in-between" cases of colonialism: protectorates, princely states, treaty-ports, and other instances of gradated sovereignty. Yet such polities remain underexplored and fragmented between area studies. This workshop aims to put scholars working on thematically similar topics, but geographically disparate areas, in dialogue with one another. It targets the interstices of intellectual history, political theory and everyday practices, and their evolution from the early modern to the modern.

Was there something uniquely modern about the sorts of protectorates established under European colonial rule? Or was Nasir al-Din Tusi describing something fundamentally similar seven centuries earlier, when he advised rulers to follow Alexander the Great's example and rule through proxy by "installing local dynasties"?

What were the commonalities and differences between forms of indirect rule practiced by Qing China (e.g. in Xinjiang), those structures China was subjected to in the treaty ports, the systemization of British princely states in India, Russian-sponsored khanates in Central Asia, and the myriad strategies of indirect rule in colonial Africa?

How did semicolonialism shape prevailing understandings of sovereignty, both in terms of law and practicalities? What were the opportunities and limitations inherent in indirect rule?

This event will devote a single afternoon to discussion of pre-circulated papers. Sections of the workshop will focus on several thematically-related papers at a time, with scholars from the Yale community and other workshop participants commentating.

## **Participant Abstracts**

### **Nicholas Abbot**

History Doctoral Candidate, University of Wisconsin

"*Sarkars* into States: Translating Sovereignty and Governmentality in Eighteenth-Century India"

As a specific political term, the Persian word "*sarkar*" has had a complex history in South Asia, connoting first Mughal imperial households in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, then rival satrapies in the eighteenth century, and finally the British colonial and modern nation states of the subcontinent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Using Indo-Persian chronicles and lexicons, as well as glossaries and pedagogical materials produced by the East India Company, this paper charts the evolving meanings of the word and considers how they illustrate changing ideas about sovereignty, governmentality, and the state, especially over the course of the eighteenth century. In particular, it contends that the Company's initial usage of the word in the early 1770s reflected a desire to insert itself on equal terms among the late Mughal empire's complex constellation of competing successor regimes. However, the paper also suggests that this same sense of equivalency increasingly impressed upon British officials the need to refashion the Company's Indian clients and align them with emerging expectations of "modern" governance, a shift that would have dramatic consequences for India's princely states and royal families throughout the nineteenth century.

### **Omar Cheta**

Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern and Historical Studies, Bard College

"Competing Jurisdictions and Negotiating Sovereignty in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt"

Based on research in the British consular and Egyptian merchant court archives, this paper argues that mid-nineteenth-century Egypt was the site of two co-existing notions of sovereignty, which sometimes ran parallel to one another, and at other times seemed to be on a collision course. The first is a survival of the early modern Ottoman politics of difference, where the sovereign presided over an imperial apparatus that was dedicated to managing the difference between numerous communities. At least until the British occupation of 1882, the British and other European states that enjoyed extraterritorial concessions continued to recognize the Khedival government as an apparatus for managing difference. Accordingly, they used the capitulations to gain more concessions

from the Khedival government as one different group (albeit an increasingly privileged one) among many. The second notion of sovereignty promoted the consolidation of the legal regime. The Khedival officials who subscribed to this notion considered it a step toward gaining control over the government apparatus, and ultimately achieving political autonomy. Being aware of both of these co-existing/conflicting notions enables us to rethink sovereignty in the period immediately preceding the more formal and more visible colonial arrangements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Consequently, this awareness will also allow us to explore the political imaginations of later historical actors who would shape different discourses about sovereignty and national independence.

### **Kavita Datla**

Associate Professor of History, Mount Holyoke College

“Lesser States and the Post-War International Order: Hyderabad in the Security Council”

As the Indian Army mobilized to enter Hyderabad’s territories, the Security Council of the United Nations began considering its case, and that of the status of lesser states within the international order. Suspended because the Nizam had abdicated in military defeat to the Indian army, the discussion continued one year later, with Pakistan’s ambassador Zafrullah Khan speaking on behalf of Hyderabad. This paper explores the political circumstances and debates surrounding these events in order to understand how princely states served in the consolidation of the two dominant political forms of the modern era, empire and nation. At the cusp of India’s independence, this legal case allows us to consider how British governance in South Asia across unevenly defined and administered territories, and its recognition of weak or fragmented sovereignty, served colonial interests. At the same time, it allows us to interrogate the forms of freedom and democracy that were consolidated at this foundational moment in empire’s wake.

### **Diana Kim**

Prize Fellow in Economics, History, and Politics at Harvard University

"The King Who Could Not Die: Suzerainty, Indirect Rule, and 20th Century Imperialism"

On June 22 1935, the supreme ruler of highland Burma’s largest and most powerful indigenous principality died. Yet until 1937, the Sawbwa of Kengtung remained in state, his body ceremoniously exposed to view in the Great Hall of Kengtung Palace. For nearly two years, the Sawbwa’s mortal remains could not be put to rest. It was an unusual

occurrence, grieved his family and subjects, not least because the splendid non-burial represented a “financial embarrassment,” “intrigue,” an “unsettled condition of affairs” that endangered the spiritual and moral health of the Shan State. This paper has two intertwined objectives. First, it seeks to understand why the ruler’s funeral was so delayed and second, by identifying the forestalling party to his royal burial, this paper offers to expose a hidden world of colonial jurisprudence. The strange death of the Sawbwa, I argue, was an unintended consequence of Britain’s quasi-sovereign rule in South and Southeast Asia, or more specifically, the legal category of suzerainty. This paper traces the commercial origins of this category binding the British Crown and her Asiatic colonies. It utilizes primary sources to develop a comparative analysis of Britain’s 18th and 19th century political treaties and trade agreements with indigenous rulers in India and Burma that came to define this constitutional relationship by the early 20th century. My analysis highlights the haphazard process by which the category of suzerainty evolved and came to encode multiple and competing meanings, such as a feudal principle of superiority, a traditional and “oriental” mode of domination, as well as a power-sharing arrangement appropriate for core-periphery states. In addition to explaining how an ambiguous definition of suzerainty came to prevent the Sawbwa from his proper interment in 1935 Kengtung, the paper’s findings engage with scholarship on British imperialism and customary law, the comparative politics of opium trade control in borderland Asia, and post-colonial legacies of ethnic federalism.

**Kwangmin Kim**

Assistant Professor of History, University of Colorado at Boulder

"Muslim Clients and Capitalism in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864"

From 1759 to 1864, the Qing Empire ruled the Muslim population of Eastern Turkestan through the system of “indirect rule”, heavily relying upon local Muslim clients. On the basis of analysis of the lives of several Muslim governors who worked under the Qing Empire, this paper examines the inner working of the Muslim client regime, i.e., its agendas, structure, and the social tensions it created in the oasis society. This paper shows how the Muslim clients took advantage of the Qing Empire’s reliance on them for revenue development, and expanded the scope of their enterprises of capitalistic agriculture and mining, all the while creating serious tension with rural village communities. In telling this story, this paper sheds new light on the similarity between the Chinese indirect rule in Xinjiang and the British imperial rule in northern India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

## **Morgan Robinson**

History Doctoral Candidate, Princeton University

"Binding Words: Student Conversion Narratives and the Establishment of the Zanzibar Protectorate"

The slave trade was one of the major justifications for Britain's increasingly heavy-handed presence on Zanzibar in the late-nineteenth century. Illicit trading continued even after the abolition of the trade in 1873, and this illegal commerce was one justification for Britain's declaration of a protectorate over the islands in 1890. Slave narratives collected by the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, an Anglican missionary society based on Zanzibar, helped to stoke the fires of abolitionists and imperialists alike, both groups claiming to want to 'protect' against further slave trading. By declaring a protectorate, however, Britain ostensibly eschewed control over the internal affairs of Zanzibar, thereby allowing the status of slavery to persist on the islands until 1897. This chapter uses the published biographical narratives of mission students—most of whom were freed slaves—to explore the idea of religious conversion, offering a new model for its historical study. The chapter also explores how these narratives fostered connections between Zanzibar and England, links that lodged East Africa firmly within the British colonial sphere.

## **Priyasha Saksena**

SJD Candidate, Harvard Law School

"Jousting Over Jurisdiction: Sovereignty and International Law in Late Nineteenth-Century South Asia"

Current histories of international law argue that sovereignty in the late nineteenth century was an “on/off affair,” with the world divided into “civilized” Europe and “uncivilized” non-Europe. However, my paper has its basis in the idea that the heterogeneity of legal entities that composed the British Empire (dominions, direct colonies, protectorates, mandates etc.) has crucial implications for understanding the history of international law. I propose to focus on the historical school of jurisprudence to argue that the dominant idea of sovereignty in colonial South Asia was that of “divisible sovereignty.” The acknowledgement of “shades” of sovereignty meant that entities such as the Indian princely states were recognized as sovereigns “of a certain kind.” The extent to which international law determined relations between the princely states and the British Government remained contested, with colonial lawyers arguing both for the inclusion as well as the removal of such states from the international system. I will focus on



jurisdictional disputes between the princely states and the British Government to flesh out the role played by international law in the definition and contestation of the relationship between the princely states and the British Government. Focusing on such disputes, I argue, will enable us to understand that the rhetoric of inclusion-exclusion, along with the idea of legal evolution, were core to nineteenth century international law.