

Contents

‘Meet the Author Series’ 1
 CTH meeting 4
 Conference participation 4
 New works by CTH members 4
 From the editor 5

‘Meet the Author Series’

**Meeting Professor Kristin Hoganson
 and Professor Jay Sexton,
 the Co-editors of *Crossing Empires:
 Taking U.S. History into Transimperial Terrain***

Tomoki Yamada

(PhD student at the University of Birmingham
 and the Coordinator of CTH)

On 2 December 2022, the Center for Transimperial History (CTH) hosted the second session of its ‘Meet the Author Series’ online. Joining this second session as ‘authors’ were Dr Kristin L. Hoganson and Dr Jay Sexton. Dr Hoganson is Stanley S. Stroup Professor of United States History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests lie in masculinity and gender politics around 1898, trade and consumption, the history of the rural hinterland, and, more generally, US history in a world-historical context. Dr Sexton is Rich and Nancy Kinder Institute Chair in Constitutional Democracy and Professor of History at the University of Missouri. His research interests

pertain to the political and economic history of the nineteenth-century United States. He has written on how the history of the United States evolved through its contact with the wider world through steam infrastructure.

These two leading American historians’ co-edited book, *Crossing Empires: Taking U.S. History into Transimperial Terrain* (Duke University Press, 2020), served as a topic for discussions on transimperial history. Much stimulated by the book’s provocative attempt to bring US history into ‘transimperial terrain’, the participants found themselves in a lively exchange of ideas on transimperial history as a new field of research.



Meet the Author Series — CTH

Kristin L. Hoganson and Jay Sexton (eds.),
Crossing Empires
Taking U.S. History into Transimperial Terrain
 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

Title

Thu 1 Dec. 2022, 10 PM, New York
 Fri 2 Dec. 2022, 12 PM, Japan
 Fri 2 Dec. 2022, 4 AM, Berlin

Date

Zoom
 (Registration required. Click on the QR code below)

Venue

Description
 Weaving U.S. history into the larger fabric of world history, the contributors to *Crossing Empires* deexceptionalize the American empire, placing it in a global transimperial context. They draw attention to the breadth of U.S. entanglements with other empires to illuminate the scope and nature of American global power as it reached from the Bering Sea to Australia and East Africa to the Caribbean. With case studies ranging from the 1830s to the late twentieth century, the contributors address topics including diplomacy, governance, anticolonialism, labor, immigration, medicine, religion, and race. Their transimperial approach—whether exemplified in examinations of U.S. steel corporations partnering with British imperialists to build the Ugandan railway or the U.S. reliance on other empires in its governance of the Philippines—transcends histories of interimperial rivalries and conflicts. In so doing, the contributors illuminate the power dynamics of seemingly transnational histories and the imperial origins of contemporary globality.

Author

Jay Sexton is Kinder Institute Chair in Constitutional Democracy and Professor of History at the University of Missouri and author of *A Nation Forged by Crisis: A New American History* (Basic Books, 2018).

Kristin L. Hoganson is Stanley S. Stroup Professor of United States History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and author of *The Heartland: An American History* (Penguin Books, 2020).

Center for Transimperial History

To register, click here or scan the QR Code

The session opened with the guests introducing the book they edited. First of all, Professor Hoganson talked about how in the first place the very idea of producing this book came about. Her own interest in transimperial history was triggered by findings in her own empirical research on the consumption of imported goods in the United States, as well as her academic interactions with postgraduate students. It was also fed by the new lines of research that transnational history had opened up. She remained unsatisfied, however. Using as it does the term *national*, the vocabulary of transnational history fails to capture certain aspects of US history. The United States, she realised, was not simply a nation but simultaneously an empire, just as many other nations were. Hence, the need to bring the history of this ‘empire’ in relation to those of others. This prompted Professor Hoganson to convene, with Professor Sexton, a conference and to embark on a book project involving its participants. Their turn away from the transnational towards the transimperial took place in 2015–16, the very years when the world witnessed a stream of nationalistic sentiments stirred in part by the rise of Donald Trump as a presidential candidate in the United States and the controversy surrounding Brexit in the United Kingdom.

Professor Sexton then explained the four highlights of their book. The first is that, through a transimperial lens, it sheds new light on migration,

which had previously been observed from a national perspective. Julie Greene’s contribution to this volume, for example, addresses the migrant labourers of the Panama Canal zone, demonstrating not only that those labourers crossed imperial borders but also that they were caught up in the competition among different imperial regimes, which they were able to utilise for their own purposes.

The second highlight of the book is its attention to the development of state institutions and infrastructures. The book demonstrates how the emergence of the United States as a state power can be explained in terms of its transimperial relations with the outside world. Nicole Phelps’ essay examines the role that US consular service played in the US becoming an ‘empire’, and Julian Go’s essay presents a fresh perspective on how the adoption of the secret ballot as an emerging political technology was linked to the institutionalisation of racial segregation in the nineteenth-century South. As Professor

Sexton pointed out during the session, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, imperial and state formations continued to evolve hand in hand with one another: it was as part of these global formations that the development of various state institutions and infrastructures in the United States took place, making it have ‘imperial’ as well as ‘national’ origins.

The third highlight of the book concerns the relevance of environmental studies, which has much

... The United States [...] was not simply a nation but simultaneously an empire, just as many other nations were. Hence, the need to bring the history of this ‘empire’ in relation to those of others. [...] Crossing Empires, edited by Professors Hoganson and Sexton, fascinatingly portrays deep and diverse entanglements between the US and other empires, calling historians to take a fresh look at history through a transimperial lens.

influenced historical scholarship in recent years. Environmental history, Professor Sexton pointed out, will be a fertile ground for transimperial research. Exploring the environmental history of fur sealing in the United States, John Soluri's contribution examines the way in which the hunting of seals affected imperial-indigenous relations, with indigenous sovereignties being challenged and usurped.

Last but not least, the fourth highlight of the volume is its focus on eighteenth-century history. Historians of the eighteenth century, particularly those specialising in the Atlantic world, have written a rich history of exchanges—both collaborative and competitive—among empires, and these exchanges can be seen as what we refer to as 'transimperial' even though these historians do not use the term. Their approach is extended to this volume, which focuses on a period between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with due attention given to imperial dynamics and hierarchies dating back to the eighteenth century.

Following Professors Hoganson and Sexton's talk about the backstory and key points of their co-edited book, the 'authors' and other participants engaged in intense discussions on a range of issues. First, they discussed the impact of the transimperial approach on US scholarship. Professor Hoganson argued that, despite increasing attention to settler colonialism, the imperial denial has still been so deep-seated in the United States that some historians tend to be trapped in the exceptionalist idea of their own nation having been different from typical imperial nations such as Britain. This persistent imperial denial, as she emphasised, is challenged by their book, which de-exceptionalises US history by connecting it to the world history of empires.

The second topic of discussion was the

question of state building and its relation to the transimperial. As this volume vividly illustrates, the evolution of state institutions in the US was a product of transimperial exchanges and intercourse, which allowed those officials in charge to adopt ideas coming from other empires. The US was by no means the only example of having one's own state formations influenced by developments in other empires. As a participant in the session pointed out, Japan, for instance, borrowed many ideas concerning state-building from Britain, Germany and even the United States in its effort to establish itself both as a nation-state and as a colonial empire all at once. In fact, the case of Japan is interesting in that it prompts scholars to ask some related questions. How is the often-invoked distinction between the 'West' and the 'Rest' relevant to transimperial history? Is colonialism unidirectional in the sense that it originated from the 'West'? Or should it be seen as multidirectional in light of the example of Japan as a 'non-Western' nation which colonised other 'non-Western' peoples? In this regard, as participants pointed out during the session, a series of research concerning the Japanese empire by Daniel Hedinger and Eiichiro Azuma, both of whom are members of CTH, should be seen as providing important case studies to ponder the multidirectionality of colonialism.

The third question concerned the very idea of 'empire' as a unit of analysis in historical studies. When we think about relations between empires in transimperial history, how should we define 'empire' in the first place? Furthermore, how does our own definition of empire relate to such concepts as 'informal empire' and 'cultural imperialism', which have already served to shape scholarly debates? Should we, as practitioners of transimperial history, make an analytic distinction between the kind of territorial rule

under direct colonial control on the one hand and the informal kind of imperial influence which does not entail colonisation on the other?

Crossing Empires, edited by Professors Hoganson and Sexton, fascinatingly portrays deep and diverse entanglements between the US and other empires, calling on historians to take a fresh look at history through a transimperial lens.

CTH meeting

CTH is run in conjunction with a JSPS grant project, ‘The Theory and Practice of Trans-imperial History: Towards an Open-ended Framework of Research’ (JSPS Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B), project number 22H00690). The first meeting of the grant project was held at Doshisha University on 22 January 2023. At this meeting, Yoshihiro Yakushige, a CTH member, made a presentation entitled ‘Settler Colonialism and Biblical Archaeology in Palestine’.



Conference participation

Tomoki Yamada participated in the *Global History Collaborative Summer Institute* (EHES in Paris, 29 August 2022 to 2 September 2022), where he presented a paper entitled ‘Indians and Tanganyika: Colonialism, the Mandates System and Petitions to the League of Nations, c. 1914–27’.

On 13 October 2022, three CTH members, Nadin Heé, Maria Framke and Satoshi Mizutani, attended the *Asian Association of World Historians (AAWH) Fifth Conference in Collaboration with India International Centre (IIC) (New Delhi)*, where they organised ‘Panel 2: Trans-imperial Perspectives on Indo-East-Asian Entanglements in the First Half of the 20th Century’. With Heé playing a role as the host of their panel, Framke made a presentation titled ‘Help China—Help Yourself: Trans-imperial Anti-colonialism and International Humanitarian Relief Work in China, c. 1938–1945’ and Mizutani gave a talk entitled ‘Pan-Asianism, Indo-Japanese Solidarity, and Japanese Colonialism: Korean Unfreedom for “Asian” Freedom?’.

On 22 February 2023, Motoki Tomoyose made a presentation entitled ‘La gestion des indésirables : l’histoire de l’immigration en Nouvelle-Calédonie de la fin du 19e siècle’ at an academic event held at the University of Tokyo, *Ma recherche en 8 minutes*, organised by the Historians’ Workshop.

New works by CTH members

September 2022

Yoshihiro Yakushige, ‘Nihonteki kirisutokyō to kyūyakugaku: 1930 nendai no Asano Junichi no yogen kenkyū wo chūshin toshite’ [‘Japanese Christianity’ and Old Testament Studies: Junichi Asano’s Research on the Prophet in the 1930s], *Fukuin to sekai*, vol. 77, no. 9, 2022, pp. 24–29.

October 2022

Makoto Yoshida, ‘Proving “Japaneseness”: Passport and Identification Problems of Japanese in the Dutch East Indies’, in Yumi Kitamura, Alan H. Yang and Ju Lan Thung (eds.), *When East Asia*

Meets Southeast Asia: Presence and Connectedness in Transformation Revisited, Singapore: World Scientific, 2023, pp. 155-177.

November 2022

Satoshi Mizutani, 'Indians and Koreans in Crosscolonial Solidarity: Part II. Rabindranath Tagore and His Transimperial Encounters', *Transimperial History Blog*, 22 November 2022.

<https://www.transimperialhistory.com/indians-and-koreans-in-crosscolonial-solidarity-part-2/>

Satoshi Mizutani, Nobuaki Shiokawa and Hideaki Tobe, 'Rethinking Colonialism, Liberation, and the Cold War: Ryuta Itagaki, *A Linguist Who Crossed into North Korea: Kim Su-Gyeong 1918-2000* (2021)', *Shakai Kagaku [The Social Sciences]*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2022, pp. 53-79.

December 2022

Taro Tsurumi, 'Isuraeru ga han'ei suru kage de: riberaruna kokusaichitsujo no hiriberaruna sankayōken' [In the Shadow of Israel's Prosperity: Non-liberal Participation Requirements of the Liberal International Order], *Sekai*, 2022, no. 964, 2022, pp. 191-200.

From the editor

We are glad to publish the second issue of our newsletter. We are also delighted that, thanks to all those who have offered generous support, CTH was able to hold the second session of its 'Meet the Author Series', which proved to be an excellent international occasion for exchanging ideas on transimperial history.

Tomoki Yamada
Coordinator of CTH and
Editor of the *CTH Newsletter*