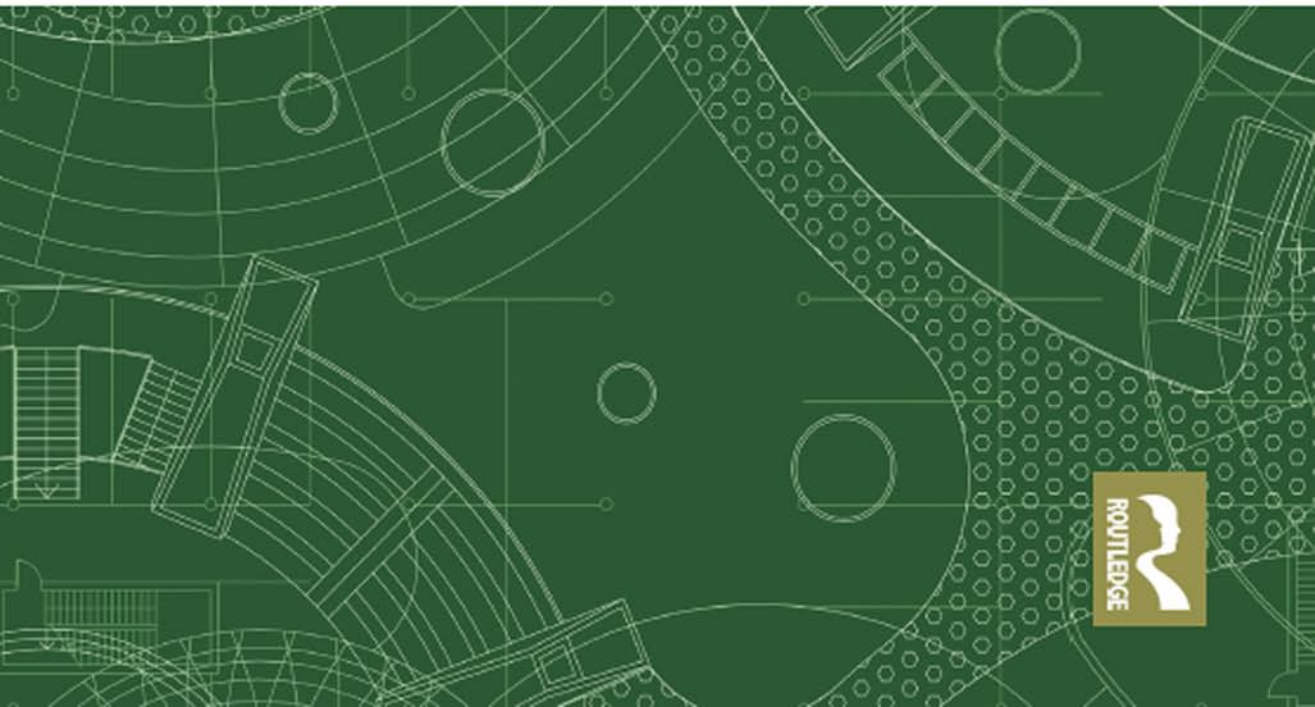
# COLONIAL FORMATIONS

Edited by
Jane Carey and Frances Steel



ROUTLEDGE

# Colonial Formations

*Colonial Formations* highlights the critical importance of colonial dynamics at the so-called peripheries of the British Empire. With a focus on the Australasian settler colonies, the Pacific, India and China, it examines colonised peoples' subjectivities, mobilities and networks, through accounts of labour, law, education and activism.

Decentring the British metropole, while shedding light on its enduring power, contributors chart the vast array of mobilities and connections that shaped these dynamics. They illuminate contexts and experiences of labour, education, touring, courtrooms and anticolonial struggles. Many attend to questions of colonial belonging and its limits – within cultures of sociability or citizenship – and its attendant benefits and rights. The chapters show how colonised peoples, both Indigenous and 'coloured' migrants, critiqued and mobilised to challenge imposed strictures on their life possibilities, whether in individual colonies, in cross-colonial networks or across the imperial arena. In doing so, this collection offers new insights into the interplay of place, mobility and power, and on the critical importance of colonial formations.

The chapters in this book were originally published as a special issue of the journal *History Australia*.

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*Edited by*
**Jane Carey and Frances Steel**

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INTRODUCTION

# Introduction: on the critical importance of colonial formations

Jane Carey and Frances Steel

In 1921 the *National Geographic Magazine* published a special issue on 'The Islands of the Pacific'. Richly illustrated with photographs, as was the hallmark of the magazine, the issue also featured a map produced as a special colour supplement (see Figure 1). In his introductory essay for the edition, J.P. Thomson, C.B.E., LL.D., who was the Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, referred readers directly to this map, so they might situate themselves within what he assumed would be an unfamiliar geography for most. He also included a detailed written description of 'this Polynesian Empire, if I may so call it' which 'extends across the Pacific from the eastern waters of Australia and New Guinea for a hundred degrees of longitude to Easter Island', listing all of the major island groups and 'numerous clusters of islands, reefs, and lagoons scattered over wide expanses of tropical ocean'.[1]

The map supplement also emphasised empire, but from a quite different perspective. It, too, included all of the 'Islands of the Pacific', but these were overlaid with 'Sovereignty and Mandate Lines in 1921'. Indeed, these lines dominated the map. Assigning a different colour to each of the imperial powers in the Pacific (Japan, the US, France, the Netherlands, Britain, Australia and New Zealand), thick borders partitioned islands and sea. In this representation, the land mass of Australia looms large (although depicted at an atypical angle, as if acted on by the 'weight' of the Pacific) and New Zealand particularly assumes a new prominence, exceeding the conventional mapping of its three main islands. Great Britain's possessions are centrally positioned, but it is not especially dominant in the region, with Australia and New Zealand mapped as distinct and equivalent imperial powers, rather than encompassed within the British Empire as a whole (as typically identified by the same shade of red on world maps at the time). China and the mainland United States are relegated to either side of the top corners of the map just peeping into view, almost as afterthoughts, belying their continental proportions. If the thick sovereignty and mandate boundary lines implied clear divisions of territory and authority, a series of fainter lines indicated something different. They represented the various cable lines of the region. These cut across the partitioned Pacific, creating numerous connections that defied these seemingly solid borders.

[1]J.P. Thomson, 'The Islands of the Pacific', *National Geographic* XL, no. 6 (1921): 549. Thomson was a self-trained, 'amateur' geographer, who began his career as a surveyor: W.S. Kitson, 'Thomson, James Park (1854–1941)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/thomson-james-park-8797/text15427, published first in hardcopy 1990.

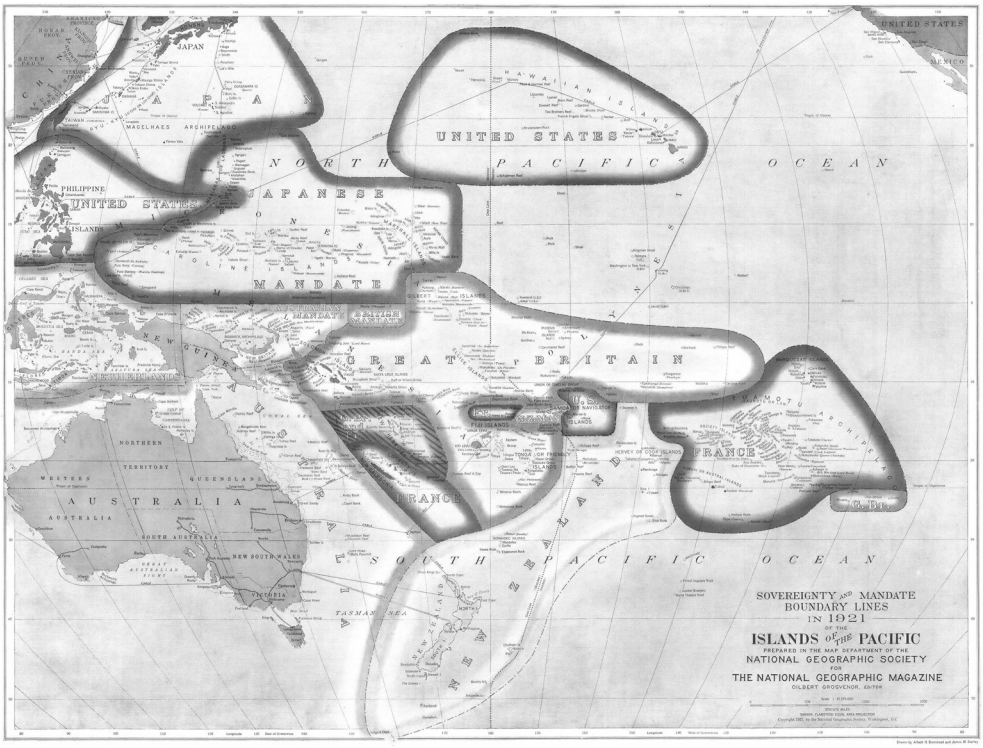


**Figure 1.** 'Sovereignty and Mandate Boundary Lines in 1921 of the Islands of the Pacific', Special Map Supplement, National Geographic Magazine XL, no. 6 (December 1921), np.

This map, in centring island territories under colonial rule and decentring distant imperial metropoles, offers a suggestive visual cue for this special issue of *History Australia* on 'colonial formations'. Our focus here is on colonial dynamics in their local and regional aspects alongside the more studied arena of 'imperial formations'. We continue the work of taking empire seriously from its so-called peripheries. In decentring the British metropole, while shedding light on its enduring power, contributors variously chart mobilities and connections across different colonial spaces – predominantly the Australasian colonies, as well as in their relation to islands in the Pacific, to India, and to China. Read together, the articles in this special issue operate across a wider Asia Pacific regional arena to connect historiographies and diverse colonialisms that are so often discussed separately.

These articles are animated by border crossings and the intermixing of diverse peoples, whether in contexts of labour, education, touring, courtrooms or anticolonial struggles. These processes, as we are concerned to unpack, stimulated attention to questions of belonging and its limits – from cultures of sociability, to citizenship and its attendant benefits and rights. Contributors chart the trajectories of ideas, experiences, and claims of colonial belonging and the associated boundary work. They explore how colonised peoples, both Indigenous and 'coloured' migrants, mobilised, challenged and critiqued imposed strictures on their life possibilities, in

individual colonies, in cross-colonial networks and across the imperial arena, and beyond.

Many of the articles in this special issue had their origins in the conference *Colonial Formations: Connections and Collisions*, held at the University of Wollongong in November 2016. This was the inaugural conference of the Centre for Colonial and Settler Studies (CASS), established at the University in 2015.[2] CASS was formed to bring together interdisciplinary research in the history, theoretical framing and contemporary manifestations of colonialism, with a predominant focus on Australia, the Asia Pacific region and the wider British Empire. Members are drawn from history, literary studies, cultural studies and art theory, with sub-disciplinary expertise in economic history, the study of emotions, mobility and Indigenous studies. CASS particularly fosters work that places colonial and settler colonial formations in comparative and connected frames of analysis, and promotes collaboration between scholars of diverse colonialisms. In doing so it seeks to interrogate a range of claims that are commonly made about the distinctiveness of specific colonial formations.

The conference theme encapsulated the broad aims of CASS, and allowed participants to explore a range of historical, contemporary and interdisciplinary perspectives. The framing sub-themes of 'connections' and 'collisions' encouraged enquiry into processes of borrowing, negotiation and collaboration on the one hand, and contestation, conflict and Indigenous resurgence and mobilisation on the other.[3] The articles gathered here continue this discussion of the critical importance of colonial formations.

***

Our focus on 'colonial formations' emerges in conversation with, and in reaction to, key trends that have come to dominate approaches to history writing over the past two decades. As Ann Curthoys has noted, in the 1990s the 'yearning to escape the national boundaries that mark history-writing seem[ed] to be shared by historians in many places'.[4] Since then a series of paradigm shifts have radically reshaped the terrain of historical scholarship. Two major shifts particularly emerged that sought to break through national borders. The juggernaut of transnational history, alongside and in cross-fertilisation with the rise to dominance of the 'new imperial history', has produced a vast array of scholarship that moves beyond the apparently distorting limitations of national and colonial borders as the basis for writing history. Instead, this work traces mobilities, circulations and flows of people, ideas, objects, capital, commodities and technologies across borders. In the fields of colonial and imperial history, a range of new interventions deploying these methods have simultaneously

[2]See https://www.uowblogs.com/cass/.

[3]For a conference report, see Adam J. Barker's blog post, 'Reflections on Colonial Formations', http://www.uowblogs.com/cass/2017/11/10/reflections-on-colonial-formations/.

[4]Ann Curthoys, 'We've Just Started Making National Histories and You Want Us to Stop Already?', in *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 70. As Curthoys further noted, this was not simply the result of shifting theoretical paradigms, but equally 'a desire among us historians to communicate our craft beyond national boundaries. We are chafing at the international bit, wanting international readers to engage with our ideas and dilemmas … At least I am' (70).

sought to de-centre the metropole, provincialise Europe, or bring centre and periphery into the same analytical frame.[5]

Our purpose in this brief introduction is not to provide a comprehensive overview of all of the literature that has contributed to these developments. Rather, we pick up on some of the key moments and objectives that inspired these shifts, and recent debates that have begun to raise questions about the directions this scholarship has taken, and suggest new arenas that remain underexplored.

In 1990 Shula Marks' landmark essay, 'History, the Nation and Empire: Sniping from the Periphery', expressed reservations about the 'nation' and 'national identity', particularly 'what seems to be a distorting insularity about the[se] conception[s]'. Reflecting on the recent introduction of a new national history curriculum in Britain, Marks outlined 'the divorce between imperial and British history' that had taken place in the years since World War II, coinciding with decolonisation: 'With the loss of empire, so imperial history has lost its coherence'.[6] The following year, Ian Tyrrell (a founding figure of transnational history) similarly chided American historians for their insularity – an adherence to models of 'American exceptionalism' had meant US historians felt no need to engage with scholarship from elsewhere, even for the pre-revolutionary colonial period: 'nowhere has a nation-centered historical tradition been more resilient than in the United States'. 'History', he argued 'is not a set of data to be deposited into tidy boxes, of which the national box is the most obvious and sensible'.[7] He enjoined US historians to recognise and pursue the transnational connections that had shaped the American nation, including its imperial past.

It was not only metropolitan scholars who were chafing at the limitations of the nation as the basis for their work. In 1986, Pacific historian Donald Denoon reflected that 'the decline of imperial publishing has stranded Australian [historians] like shags on a rock'.[8] He bemoaned the 'isolation of Australian history' which reflected both the inward-looking stance adopted by Australian historians and the 'decline and fall of British Imperial and Commonwealth history' as a 'wider framework' that had previously provided 'an obvious niche for Australian history'. With the decline of the imperial frame, there was no obvious wider 'container' into which Australia could be inserted: 'The popular division of the world into North and South leaves Australia as an anomaly; and Australia is equally awkward in either the First or the Second or the

[5]See, for example, the introduction and various essays collected in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), and of course Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[6]Shula Marks, 'History, the Nation and Empire: Sniping from the Periphery', *History Workshop*, no. 29 (1990): 111–12.

[7]Ian Tyrrell, 'American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History', *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (1991): 1031, 1033.

[8]Donald Denoon, 'The Isolation of Australian History', *Australian Historical Studies* 22, no. 87 (1986): 252. Denoon began his career as a historian of South Africa in the 1960s. His early career was thus framed by the emergence of 'nation-based histories' as 'perhaps an inevitable consequence of the foundation of national universities in newly independent African countries. One of the demands made of historians in that environment is to provide a history of the nation'. Donald Denoon and Adam Kuper, 'Nationalist Historians in Search of a Nation: The "New Historiography" in Dar es Salaam', *African Affairs* 69, no. 277 (1970): 329.

Third World'.[9] Denoon himself had recently proposed a new model of 'settler capitalist societies', which he observed had 'received the usual polite response of Australian scholars when outsiders express an interest'.[10] Denoon was concerned that no scholars outside of Australia were at all interested in Australian history. He for one clearly wanted to engage in larger, global conversations.

Denoon drew in part on British historian David Fieldhouse who had recently decried the disintegration of British imperial history into a series of separate national histories of the new states that had emerged through decolonisation. European historians had also, therefore, 'turned inwards again and studied their own countries as individual nation states'. Thus, 'European and "Third World" historians [had] combined to break the tablets on which the traditional imperial history had been written'.[11] Scholars from the former colonies had their own agendas, disengaged from, and often hostile to, metropolitan scholarship.

Shula Marks further noted that imperial history for the most part remained 'history from above'. The 'periphery' she referred to in her provocative title was thus not necessarily geographic. Rather, it signalled the exclusions that flowed from academic hierarchies within Britain, and the continuing subordination of approaches that centralised race and gender.[12] In the UK, a wave of new scholarship in British imperial history, much of it by feminist and women's historians, began to redress precisely these exclusions.

The 'new imperial history', as it has come to be termed, sought to demonstrate the 'formative impact of empire on the imperial metropole … [and] to situate the history of Britain within an imperial framework', as Mrinalini Sinha put it. She contended:

> The dominant 'centrifugal' mode of analysis, which studies the radiation of imperial influence from the metropole to the colonies, is now being complemented with more 'centripetal' analyses of the impact of imperialism 'at home'.[13]

This was reflected in the work of key scholars including Catherine Hall, Antoinette Burton and Kathleen Wilson.[14] But this new work did not simply re-envisage the relationship between metropole and colony. It drew on new arenas of theory and

[9]Denoon, 'The Isolation of Australian History', 252–53. Denoon omitted the category of the Fourth World which had been developed by Indigenous activists and scholars in the late 1970s to describe precisely settler societies including Australia: George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1974).

[10]Denoon, 'The Isolation of Australian History', 253; Denoon, *Settler Capitalism: The Dynamics of Dependent Development in the Southern Hemisphere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[11]David Fieldhouse, 'Can Humpty-Dumpty Be Put Together Again? Imperial History in the 1980s', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12, no. 2 (1984): 10.

[12]Marks, 'History, the Nation and Empire', 112.

[13]Mrinalini Sinha, 'Britain and the Empire: Toward a New Agenda for Imperial History', *Radical History Review*, no. 72 (1998): 163.

[14]See, for example, Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Madhavi Kale, *Fragments of Empire: Capital, Slavery, and Indian Indentured Labor in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830–1867* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002); Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, ed., *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

interdisciplinary influences that were antithetical to the empirical commitments of many 'traditional' historians. As Kathleen Wilson puts it, the new imperial history deploys 'feminist, literary, postcolonial, and non-Western perspectives and utilises local knowledges to reassess the relations of power underwriting and sustaining perceptions of modernity'.[15]

New spatial and networked approaches also emerged, providing important new understandings of the range of official and unofficial networks on which colonial governance relied, and how webs of connection formed horizontally between different colonial sites, rather than only via the metropole.[16] Beyond offering new insights into the dynamics of empire, Alan Lester's work particularly makes important spatial interventions. As he notes, 'networked approaches … emerged explicitly as a way of circumventing the *a priori* imposition of any particular spatial container'.[17]

After decades of deliberate separation, encouraged by the seeming commitment of the new imperial history paradigm to expansive inclusion and reciprocity, scholars of the former British colonies thus began to re-engage with metropolitan imperial scholarship. The colonies emerged as sites of innovation and experimentation, with colonial inventions circulating and impacting the centre and cross fertilising horizontally as well. Thus, even in 1998, Sinha could suggest that perhaps the 'sniping from the periphery' was finally being heard.[18]

However, 'those of us who write from and about the "periphery"', as Jane Carey and Jane Lydon have emphasised, can forget that the new imperial historiography is 'primarily concerned with the metropolis', and that 'the colonies are still being used for metropolitan purposes … rather than being treated as significant sites in and of themselves'.[19] Durba Ghosh has similarly reflected that 'many scholars have noted that the new imperial history does a great job of telling us about Britain … but it is relatively less informative about Africa, Asia, or Latin America' – or, we might add, the Pacific.[20] Reading this agenda at the most cynical level, one could suggest that the 'new imperial history' is simply another guise for British scholars to continue talking about, and among, themselves. But we need not deem this a 'failure' or 'declare the end of the imperial turn', Ghosh suggests, but instead 'examine where future imperial turns might take us, particularly as we imagine a way to decolonise historical scholarship from its Europe-centered moorings'.[21]

As early as 1984, Fieldhouse had urged that, rather than taking a narrow 'metrocentric approach', it was 'essential to see imperialism as a double-ended process, in which the colonies play as dynamic a role as the metropolis'. He concluded that the 'colonies' must

[15]Kathleen Wilson, 'Old Imperialisms and New Imperial Histories: Rethinking the History of the Present', *Radical History Review*, no. 95 (2006): 212.
[16]Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001); Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections 1815–45: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
[17]Alan Lester, 'Spatial Concepts and the Historical Geographies of British Colonialism', in *Writing Imperial Histories*, ed. Andrew Thompson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 125.
[18]Sinha, 'Britain and the Empire', 164.
[19]Jane Carey and Jane Lydon, 'Introduction: Indigenous Networks: Historical Trajectories and Contemporary Connections', in *Indigenous Networks: Mobility, Connections and Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 6.
[20]Durba Ghosh, 'Another Set of Imperial Turns?', *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (2012): 773.
[21]Ibid., 773.

be studied 'in their own right' and 'from within'.[22] This echoes J.W. Davidson's vision for Pacific history, one that rejected overarching frames of European imperial expansion narrated from distant metropolitan capitals, for an island-centred focus on local 'multi-cultural situations'.[23] Fieldhouse particularly advocated the study of interactions 'between the component parts of imperial systems' as the most productive path forward for new forms of imperial history.[24] As Sinha herself observed, 'It can never be enough … simply to document the impact of imperialism within Britain'.[25] While welcoming this development, she argued that this is 'by no means a sufficient basis for a radical agenda for imperial history', particularly if this simply served as 'a resource for rethinking the Western Self'.[26] Robert McLain thus asks:

> does empire only matter in terms of its effects on those living at the center of power? What about its effects on the hundreds of millions of royal subjects? Should the Indians, Africans, Irish, and white colonial settlers who vastly outnumbered the citizens of the metropole fade into the past, back to where they were when whiggish historical interpretations reigned supreme?[27]

Antoinette Burton goes further in this vein of critique: 'even a "reformed" imperial history is still imperial history because it does not imagine non-Western subjects except as colonial subjects'. Moreover, despite its claims to expansiveness, the new imperial history retained an 'India-centric' nature – what Burton refers to as the 'doubly imperial character of a British imperial history in which the Raj is the presumed center'.[28] Large portions of the empire do not feature significantly. Moreover, colonised peoples, particularly the Indigenous peoples of settler societies, often remain only superficially sketched. As much as the new imperial history has engaged with postcolonial scholarship, it has not taken on board its key imperative regarding the centrality of 'native' or subaltern voices and experiences. And it has yet to engage with the piercing critiques emerging from a new wave of Indigenous studies scholarship. Work by Audra Simpson, Jodi Byrd and Kehaulani Kauanui, among many others, rejects or 'refuses' the frames through which Indigenous lives and sovereignties have been read by 'others'.[29]

Outlining the various debates in the field in 2010, Stephen Howe described the 'family' of British imperial history scholars as 'large, quarrelsome, and perhaps quite dysfunctional; while some members seem not to talk to one another at all'.[30] The major 'split' remains between geopolitical and economic approaches to empire, and

[22]Fieldhouse, 'Can Humpty-Dumpty Be Put Together Again?', 22.
[23]J.W. Davidson, 'Problems of Pacific History', *Journal of Pacific History* 1, no. 1 (1966): 10.
[24]David Fieldhouse, 'Imperial History in the 1980s', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12, no. 2 (1984): 10.
[25]Mrinalini Sinha, 'Teaching Imperialism as a Social Formation', *Radical History Review*, no. 67 (1997): 178.
[26]Sinha, 'Britain and the Empire', 164. She is quoting Ruth Frankenberg and Lata Mani, 'Crosscurrents, Crosstalk: Race, "Postcoloniality" and the Politics of Location', *Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (1993): 301.
[27]Robert McLain, *Gender and Violence in British India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 121.
[28]Antoinette Burton, 'Introduction: Imperial Optics: Empire Histories, Interpretive Methods', in her *Empire in Question: Reading, Writing, and Teaching British Imperialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 16–17.
[29]J. Kehaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).
[30]Stephen Howe, 'Introduction: New Imperial Histories', in *The New Imperial Histories Reader*, ed. Howe (London: Routledge, 2010), 9.

the cultural history approaches of new imperial history.[31] 'Depending on which scholars you ask and in which subfields of history you read', Durba Ghosh observed, 'the "imperial turn" and its close cognate, the "new imperial history," are either in decline or just emerging'.[32] This reflection continues to hold true. Indeed, the new imperial history seems to be in retreat. Many of its most prominent exponents have recently turned back to the nation (or the metropole), withdrawing from their previous expansive engagements with scholars and scholarship from elsewhere.

Our theme of 'colonial formations' obviously speaks in relation, and reaction, to the much more studied arena of 'imperial social formations' which also has its origins in the work of Mrinalini Sinha and the broader field of the new imperial history.[33] It also responds to a quite separate arena where the concept of 'colonial formations', and connections between different colonial sites, has emerged strongly – settler colonial studies. This field too emerged in the 1990s when 'a range of scholars began to view the singular category of "colonialism" as too blunt a tool'.[34] They argued that colonies where the settlers 'came to stay' were distinctive colonial formations with specific dynamics that required separate interrogation.[35] This field also has grown exponentially. And while its early focus was on the British settler colonies, it has since expanded to look well beyond this sphere, creating connections between diverse geographical and temporal locations. Settler colonial studies too has been the subject of significant critique from a number of different directions. But for our purposes, it is the critiques of its 'siloing' effects that are the most relevant. Settler colonialism is not hermetically sealed off from other modes of imperialism. In the Pacific context, as Tracey Banivanua Mar has argued, 'in spite of the imposed distinction drawn between settler and other colonies, Indigenous and colonised peoples have found and built networks and bridges across imagined colonial divides'.[36]

If we return to consider the colour supplement map of the islands of the Pacific discussed earlier, it places the Australasian settler colonies in their wider Pacific regional arena. This mapping is also cognate with the 'island-centred' scholarship of Pacific history that originally developed at the Australian National University from the 1950s. This occurred largely in parallel to the emergent national historiographies of Australia and New Zealand, despite early forays into the study of settler colonial regional 'sub-imperialisms'.[37] This partitioning of histories of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, and the myopic 'monograph' effects of the latter, immersed in 'internal complexities', as K.R. Howe critiqued, have since been challenged. Newer work has attended to what Howe advocated: a 'wider geographic, economic and political' framing of the Pacific that

[31]For discussion of this ongoing, sometimes acrimonious division, see the roundtable discussion of John Darwin's book *The Empire Project* in the *Journal of British Studies* 54, no. 4 (2015), particularly Alan Lester, 'Comment: Geostrategy (and Violence) in the Making of the Modern World', 977–83.
[32]Ghosh, 'Another Set of Imperial Turns?', 772.
[33]Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*.
[34]Penelope Edmonds and Jane Carey, 'A New Beginning for Settler Colonial Studies', *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 1 (2013): 2.
[35]The scholarship is vast but see, for example, Patrick Wolfe's definition of settler colonialism originally set forward in 'Nation and MiscegeNation: Discursive Continuity in the Post-Mabo Era', *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, no. 36 (1994): 93–152.
[36]Tracey Banivanua Mar, 'Author's Response: Transcendent Mobilities', in 'Review Forum: *Decolonisation and the Pacific*', *Journal of Pacific History* 51, no. 4 (2016): 461. See also Tracey Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
[37]Angus Ross, *New Zealand Aspirations in the Pacific in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); Roger C. Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era, 1820–1920* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1980).

involved 'its adjacent shores', so as to avoid parcelling out seemingly-autonomous regions 'for purposes of historical investigation'.[38] This has generated a rich body of work on the networks that connected colonial sites and settler states in the Pacific, including with respect to American insular imperialism.[39] Furthermore, the Pacific is increasingly approached through ever-more expansive perspectives of world, global, oceanic and environmental histories that seek to integrate islands, rim and ocean and advance 'pan-Pacific histories'.[40] But these approaches have also revealed tensions and generated questions about 'knowing Oceania', for they can mark a kind of belated discovery of the Pacific from centres of power largely 'off the map'. Moreover, 'broad synoptic accounts' typically struggle to 'communicate the particularities of place', as Tony Ballantyne puts it,[41] and risk sweeping over longer traditions of locally generated scholarship, and the deep histories of Pacific Island peoples themselves across many 'native seas'.[42]

This brief overview thus indicates ongoing critical reflection about where and how the particular and the general meet in our work, and which scales and optics are the most meaningful, and for whom. Contributors to this special issue start to explore some of these pressing issues from a range of perspectives, all of which focus specifically on negotiated colonial formations beyond the British metropole.

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The opening two articles are situated in Indigenous history, a field that is still too rarely incorporated into broader colonial much less imperial histories. Both trace the persistence of Indigenous world views (in Aboriginal Australia and Aotearoa) in the face of settler inundation, via seemingly unlikely sources. Paula Byrne observes this in missionary and court records that have more typically been read as evidence of the growth of settler power, and thus the destruction of Indigenous identities and sovereignties. Her article on Aboriginal encounters with the NSW Bar from 1830 to 1866 reads the records of the NSW Supreme Court alongside those of the 'erratic Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld', a missionary who was based at Lake Macquarie near Newcastle. Byrne highlights how, despite the apparent weight of the forces against them, Aboriginal people 'creatively negotiated' their way through the NSW legal system, in ways that indicated an incorporation of British law into Indigenous systems rather than the reverse. She observes that 'in reading Threlkeld's letters and reports we discover that white people

[38]Kerry R. Howe, 'Pacific Islands History in the 1980s: New Directions or Monograph Myopia?' *Pacific Studies* 3, no. 1 (1979): 81–90, here 88. See also K.R. Howe, 'Two Worlds?', *New Zealand Journal of History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 50–61.

[39]Recent monographs include Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific*; Patricia O'Brien, *Tautai: Sāmoa, World History, and the Life of Ta'isi O.F. Nelson* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017); Katerina Teaiwa, *Consuming Ocean Island: Stories of People and Phosphate from Banaba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); Frances Steel, *Oceania under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism, c. 1870–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Gary Y. Okihiro, *Island World: A History of Hawai'i and the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[40]David Armitage and Alison Bashford, 'Introduction: The Pacific and Its Histories', in *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People*, ed. Armitage and Bashford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 7.

[41]Tony Ballantyne, 'Perspectival Histories', in 'Review Forum: *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People*', *Journal of Pacific History* 50, no. 2 (2015): 234.

[42]Damon Salesa, 'The Pacific in Indigenous Time', in Armitage and Bashford, *Pacific Histories*, 31–52. See also Damon Salesa, 'The World from Oceania', in *A Companion to World History*, ed. Douglas Northrop (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 392–404; Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994): 148–61; Matt K. Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples and Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).