

TRANSIMPERIAL TRAJECTORIES

*Colonialism and Anticolonialism across the
British and Japanese Empires*

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Presentation Roadmap

1

INTRODUCTION

Core argument & the transimperial prism

2

KEY CONCEPTS

Dual awareness · Entanglement · Politics of comparison

3

BOOK STRUCTURE

Three modalities across six chapters

4

CONCLUSION

Multicentric colonialisms & crosscolonial resistance

PART I

Introduction

*Transimperial Entanglements
and the Politics of Comparison*

The Central Claim

Certain aspects of colonialism and anticolonialism have hitherto eluded adequate historicisation — and can be effectively brought into sight through the prism of transimperial history.

What it is NOT

Not a simple comparative paradigm in the conventional sense; does not merely place two empires side by side

What it IS

Prioritises interactions — including acts of comparing — as enacted by historical actors themselves, rulers and ruled alike, situated across different imperial contexts

Dual Awareness

Those who lived through the age of imperialism were acutely sensitive to — and deeply interested in — colonial affairs in other empires. Far more so than most present-day scholars have assumed.

Imperial Consciousness

British and Japanese citizens were conscious of colonial others within their own empire — a finding established by scholars since Said's *Orientalism*



Transimperial Awareness

They were equally conscious of what was happening in other colonial empires — neither the British nor the Japanese gaze was limited to their own colonial possessions



Dual Awareness

A working hypothesis applicable to any imperial nation: citizens apprehend their own condition through constant reflection on others living in different empires

Transimperial Entanglement

DEFINITION

Moments of subjective experience and accompanying emotion concerning others in empires beyond one's own: subtle, often fleeting, and not necessarily tied to institutionalised relations.

Distinct from mere sympathy — entanglement arises from one's own lived experience of colonial rule, not hypothetical imagination.

EXAMPLES

INSTITUTIONALISED

Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902) — entanglement between British and Japanese governing elites, leading to a formal treaty

PRE-INSTITUTIONAL

Indo-Korean solidarity — a profound affective bond catalysed by shared colonial trauma, suppressed before it could institutionalise

▀ *Why 'entanglement' and not 'network'? To capture oppressed voices never crystallised into institutional forms.*

Three Modalities of Transimperial Interaction

COOPERATION

Part I

Colonial administrators learn from, model, and normalise one another's practices. Japan learns the art of colonial rule from Britain.

COMPETITION

Part II

Empires compete for territory and prestige. Anglo-Japanese rivalry intensifies; Pan-Asianism emerges as an exceptionalist counter-claim.

RESISTANCE

Part III

Colonised peoples compare their subjugation, forge crosscolonial solidarity — Indians and Koreans see each other's struggles as sources of hope.

These three modes must be examined together — each is irreducibly entangled with the others.

The Politics of Comparison

Following Ann Stoler: comparison is not a scholarly tool but a mental operation enacted by historical actors themselves — with political stakes.

ANALOGICAL

COOPERATION

Emphasises similarity. Practitioners model one empire's practices on another. Japanese colonial experts repeatedly look to British rule in Egypt as a template for governing Korea.

EXCEPTIONALIST

COMPETITION

Stresses difference & incommensurability. Asserts one's own empire's superiority; discredits rivals. Used by both British and Japanese commentators — and by some Indian critics of the Raj.

OPPOSITIONAL

RESISTANCE

Juxtaposes colonial situations to denounce colonialism itself and forge crosscolonial solidarity. Indian and Korean writers insist all empires are structurally alike as systems of domination.

All three types co-existed simultaneously and actors were often mutually aware of one another's comparative schemes.

From Inverted Eurocentrism towards Multicentricity

THE PROBLEM

Postcolonial and new imperial history have taken British colonialism in India as their primary theoretical point of reference.

Japanese colonialism — though extensively studied — has rarely served as a theoretical touchstone.

As Leo Ching argues: 'Radical anti-Eurocentrism turns out to be the ultimate consolidation of Eurocentrism.'

THE SOLUTION

A multicentric model that treats both established and less-established empires within a shared analytical field.

Insights grounded in research on Japanese colonialism — published in Japanese, Korean, Chinese — are brought into dialogue with Anglophone theoretical debates.

Result: a richer, more complete account of how colonialism operated globally.

Book Structure: Three Parts, Six Chapters

PART I · Cooperation

Ch. 1

Diplomacy & Colonialism

Decision-makers engage in comparative thinking that actively shapes imperial policy — not merely reflects it

Ch. 2

Colonial Knowledge

Knowledge production is shaped not only by ruler–ruled interactions within one empire but through transimperial exchange

PART II · Competition

Ch. 3

Atrocity Narratives

Atrocity stories become transimperial tools: used to undermine the rival empire while asserting moral superiority

Ch. 4

Colonial Collaboration

Anticolonial actors cooperate with a competing empire as strategic leverage against their own coloniser

PART III · Resistance

Ch. 5

Anticolonial Print Media

Crosscolonial resonance: writers and readers develop emotional entanglement with colonised peoples in other empires

Ch. 6

Anticolonial Solidarity

Pre-institutional solidarity among colonised peoples — decades before decolonisation came into view

Key Events Shaping the Analysis

1894–5	First Sino-Japanese War	1910	Annexation of Korea
1902	Anglo-Japanese Alliance	1919	March First Movement · Amritsar Massacre
1905	Russo-Japanese War · Swadeshi Movement	1926	All Asian Peoples' Conference
1907	Hague Secret Emissary Affair	1937–45	Second Sino-Japanese War → Indian National Army (1942)
1909	Assassination of Itō Hirobumi		

A single event could elicit heterogeneous — often mutually conflicting — senses of entanglement, depending on the actors involved.

PART II

Conclusion

*Transimperial Trajectories
in a Multicentric World*

What Each Chapter Revealed

Ch. 1

Diplomacy itself — both diplomatic and colonial — can be conducted comparatively, actively shaping imperial policy

Ch. 2

Colonial knowledge is shaped not only within a single colonial site but also through transimperial exchanges

Ch. 3

Atrocity narratives acquire a transimperial dimension: strategic tools to discredit the rival empire and assert moral superiority

Ch. 4

Collaboration can be transimperial when anticolonial actors work with a competing empire to drive out their own coloniser

Ch. 5

Anticolonial print culture enables crosscolonial structures of feeling — readers develop emotional entanglement across empires

Ch. 6

Solidarity among the colonised takes embryonic, pre-institutional forms decades before decolonisation comes into view

Three Interrelated Claims

1

Historical actors were transimperially alert

People in the age of imperialism were far more sensitive to colonial affairs in other empires than most scholars today assume. Their self-knowledge was not only imperial but also transimperial — dual awareness.

2

Three modes of interaction & politics of comparison

Cooperation, competition, and resistance each correspond to analogical, exceptionalist, and oppositional politics of comparison. These modes co-existed, generating tensions that actors themselves recognised.

3

Trajectories intersected, not merely coexisted

Actors invested in different entanglements were mutually aware of one another's positions. Gandhi openly rejected the Pan-Asianist invitation; Ōkawa responded directly. Different trajectories collided.

Multicentric vs. Unicentric Models

UNICENTRIC MODEL

- ▶ Treats a small number of 'Western' and 'liberal' empires as archetypes
- ▶ Leaves Japanese, Russian, Italian, Ottoman colonialisms theoretically marginalised
- ▶ Risks 'inverted Eurocentrism': radical anti-Eurocentrism consolidates Eurocentrism
- ▶ Pan-Asianism misread as anticolonial when it defended Japanese imperial expansion

MULTICENTRIC MODEL

- ▶ Treats all colonial formations — hegemonic and peripheral — within one analytical field
- ▶ Illuminates forms of colonialism deemed 'less typical': Russia, Italy, Germany, Japan, US, Ottoman, Israel...
- ▶ Reveals how 'catching-up' empires intensified comparative colonialism
- ▶ Shows that Pan-Asianism was not anticolonial in the eyes of many anticolonial actors themselves

Case Study: Intersecting Trajectories over Pan-Asianism

GANDHI

Oppositional politics of comparison — refuses Pan-Asianist collaboration citing Japan's own colonialism of Korea and China.

'To Every Japanese' (1942): India cannot support Japan's aggression.

Categorically rejects the transimperial invitation, aware of its implications for India.

V
S.

ŌKAWA & RASH BEHARI BOSE

Exceptionalist politics of comparison — Japan's colonialism is fundamentally different from Western colonialism because Japanese are not 'white'.

Ōkawa responds to Gandhi in Mainichi Shimbun (Dec. 1942): accuses him of accepting 'British propaganda'.

Both sides aware of each other's incompatible transimperial stances.

Trajectories did not merely coexist — they intersected and collided.

Crosscolonial Resistance Persists in the Shadows

Between 1931 (Manchurian Incident) and 1945, the Japanese regime in Korea suppressed resistance and left little room for free speech — Indo-Korean entanglement became almost invisible.

1931

1942

1945

1947

Manchurian Incident
Repression intensifies

Gandhi rejects
Indo-Japanese
collaboration

Japan loses Korea
Britain leaves India

Asian Relations
Conference:
Indians & Koreans
together again

Conclusion: Resistance — one of the three modes of transimperial interaction — was neither passive nor lacking in potential. It persisted in the shadows of empires and resurfaced at the moment of decolonisation.

Theoretical Implications for Postcolonial Scholarship

⊕ Expand the archive of theory

Histories of Palestinians under Israeli rule, Filipinos under American rule, Kazakh under Russian rule, Taiwanese under Japanese rule — all become theoretically significant, not merely 'area studies'

⦶ Avoid 'catching-up' colonialisms being invisible

Nations learning from, imitating, and competing with hegemonic empires intensify comparative colonialism — this is theoretically generative, not marginal

⊛ Read Pan-Asianism critically

Pan-Asianism's proponents did not oppose but in fact defended Japanese colonialism. A multicentric lens exposes this — which a unicentric, anti-Eurocentric reading obscures

⦿ Recover suppressed voices

The analytic of transimperial entanglement — not just institutionalised 'networks' — captures oppressed voices that never crystallised into archival-ready forms

In Summary

PRISM	Transimperial history reveals dimensions of colonialism and anticolonialism invisible within single-empire frameworks
CONCEPT	Dual awareness: people in the age of empire apprehended their own condition by constantly reflecting on others' empires
METHOD	Three modalities — cooperation, competition, resistance — and their corresponding politics of comparison must be studied together
CLAIM	Different transimperial trajectories intersected: actors were mutually aware and consciously chose their entanglements
THEORY	A multicentric model — not a unicentric one — best captures how colonialism operated as a globally entangled, multi-directional phenomenon

Questions for Discussion

Q1

How does 'entanglement' as an analytic category differ from 'network' or 'relation' — and what does this difference reveal about suppressed voices?

Q2

Can the multicentric model proposed here be applied to other sets of empires? What would change if we centre, say, the French and Ottoman empires instead?

Q3

Mizutani argues that Pan-Asianism was not anticolonial in the eyes of many anticolonial actors. How does this challenge recent revisionist readings?

Q4

What methodological challenges arise when studying transimperial entanglements that left no institutional or archival traces?