



Australian  
National  
University



## Indians in War and Revolution in the Asia-Pacific Region

On 20-21 February 2017, historians from Germany, Australia and India met at the Australian National University to discuss the role and experience of Indians in the vast region east of India during the Second World War and its aftermath.

The workshop was organized and sponsored by the University of Marburg with financial support from the **German Research Foundation** (DFG) in collaboration with the Australian National University (ANU). Lead centres were Marburg's International Research and Documentation Centre War Crimes Trials (ICWC) and ANU's Southeast Asia Institute. Co-conveners of the workshop were Dr Wolfgang Form (ICWC) and Professor Robert Cribb (ANU), with support from Dr Kerstin von Lingen (Heidelberg University) and Professor Sandra Wilson (Murdoch University).

The workshop opened a new phase of collaboration among the ICWC, the Cluster of Excellence Asia and Europe in a Global Context (Heidelberg University) and researchers funded by the Australian Research Council from ANU, Murdoch University and Curtin University. Scholars from Ludwig-Maximilian's University in Munich/Presidency University in Kolkata and the University of Technology Sydney also contributed presentations. The workshop attracted additional participants from ANU, Monash University, RMIT University, and the Australian Command and Staff College.

In the turbulent years after 1941-42, when the Japanese imperial forces rapidly conquered much of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific, Indians in the region had an unusually large number of roles. They were combatants, deserters, prisoners, labourers, rebels, and prison guards and, after the war, occupation troops, journalists and diplomats, as well as judges, investigators, informants, witnesses, lawyers, and victims in war crimes trials.

The discussion focussed especially on the conflicted loyalties of and difficult pragmatic choices faced by Indians in the region, whether as soldiers or as civilian residents, as the strategic and political situation changed dramatically. It also addressed the ambivalent attitudes of Japanese authorities, indigenous residents, and Allied commands towards Indians.

The wartime and post-war experiences of Indians – whose own identity was being shaped by the tangled processes of decolonization and partition in British India – highlight the complexity and dynamic nature of the Second World War in the Asia-Pacific region and of the conflicts that succeeded it.

Focussing on the contradictions between transitional justice and decolonization, the workshop identified new possibilities for innovative collaboration in research on the specific roles of Indians in this period, especially as judges and victims of war crimes and as nationalist activists.

ANU Southeast Asia Institute Workshop  
International Research and Documentation Centre War Crime Trials (ICWC), University of Marburg

**Indians in War and Revolution in the Asia-Pacific Region**

Regional Institutes Boardroom

Coombs Extension Building

20-21 February 2017

**Program**

**Monday 20 February**

- 12.45 Registration
- 13.00 Opening (Wolfgang Form, ICWC/Marburg University)
- Chair Robert Cribb**
- 13.30 – 16.00 Panel 1: ***Indians in Southeast Asia in Time of War***
- Sandra Wilson (Murdoch University): ***“Indian Prisoners of the Japanese Military”***
- Takuma Melber (Heidelberg University): ***“The ‘Indian role’ in the Fall of Singapore and the Japanese occupation of the Malay Peninsula”***
- Helen James (ANU), ***“Indians and the trek out of Burma”***
- Afternoon tea break
- 16.30 – 17.30 Milinda Banerjee (LMU Munich): ***“South-East Asian Nationalisms, Japanese Colonialism, and the Ambiguities of Indian Victimhood: Three Indian Representations”***

**Tuesday 21 February**

**Morning Session (chair Kerstin von Lingen)**

- 09.00 – 11.00 Panel 2: ***Tangled allegiances***

Heather Goodall (UTS), **“Deserters, Heroes and Martyrs: the changing representations of Indian troops who chose to fight alongside Indonesian nationalists”**

Lisette Schouten (Heidelberg University): **“Shifting loyalties? Desertion among British and Indian troops on Java and Sumatra, 1945-1949”**

Morning tea break

11.30 – 12.30 Panel 3: ***The persecutors on trial I***

Wolfgang Form (ICWC, Marburg University): **“Indians as victims within the Allied war crimes trials program after WWII – Asia-Pacific-Region”**

Lunch break

**Afternoon Session (chair Sandra Wilson)**

14.00 – 16.00 Panel 4: ***The persecutors on trial II***

Narrelle Morris (Curtin) **Indians in Australian cases in Rabaul (Papua New Guinea)**

Robert Cribb (ANU): **“Out of the mouth of death: the trial of Yamawaki Hifumi”**

Afternoon tea break

16.30 – 18.00 Round table discussion (all speakers): Summary of the workshop – 1st ideas for common research project prospective

Further topics:

- Indian judges in war crime trials after WWII
- Indian POW and civil victims
- Indian POW camps (such like Babeldaob, Palau)
- Indians as minorities in Japanese occupied regions

Other registered participants:

Meera Ashar (ANU), Joan Beaumont (ANU), Dan Marston (ANU), Maria Myutel (ANU), Caroline Norma (RMIT University), Garth Pratten (ANU), Anthony Reid (ANU), Christina Twomey (Monash University)

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