

Online Conference

Thursday October 2nd to Friday October 3rd, 2025

THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETIES AND NINETEENTH CENTURY SCIENCE

How did Imperialism shape science, and how did science, in turn, shape Empire(s)? This conference invites scholars of Asian Studies, the history of science, and the history of the British Empire to explore these questions through the lens of the Royal Asiatic Societies.

Rather than focusing on cultural go-betweens or the circulation of texts, we turn attention to the institutions that structured imperial knowledge. From the late eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, nine scholarly societies dedicated to the study of Asian science, literature, and the arts were founded: Calcutta (1784), London (1823), Ceylon (1845), Hong Kong (1847), Shanghai (1857), Japan (1872), Malaysia (1877), North Borneo (1893), and Korea (1900). Linked to the Royal Asiatic Society in London, these institutions offer a vital lens for understanding the intersections of nineteenth-century imperialism, Orientalism, Asian cultural exchange, and scientific development.

Speakers and Paper Titles

Sarah Qidwai, University of York, “Oriental Knowledge and Imperial Authority: The Asiatic Society of Bengal and its Intellectual Networks”

Jessica Ratcliff, Cornell University, “The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland within Local and Imperial Politics, 1827-70”

John McAleer, University of Southampton, “A Colonial Institution: The Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society”

Christine Luk, Tsinghua University, and Bernard Lightman, York University, “Science and Sinology at the Colonial Frontier: The Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society”

Qian Yibing, Zhejiang Normal University, “A Scientific Hub in 19th- and 20th-Century China: The NCBRAS and Its Museum”

Annabel Storr, Durham University, “Facilitation, Exploration and Exchange: The Asiatic Society of Japan in late Nineteenth-Century British Scientific Networks”

Chen Che-Wei, National Chi Nan University, “Malayan Natural History and the Straits/Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (1877-1928)”

Manyong Moon, Jeonbuk National University, “*Transactions* and the History of Science in Korea: Korean Studies and Research on Korean Nature”

Timothy P. Barnard, National University of Singapore, “The Anomaly of North Borneo”

For conference schedule and zoom information please go to the following website: <https://sites.google.com/view/rasconference>