

THREADS OF EMPIRE: MODES, MATERIALS AND THE MAKING OF TEXTILES

Call for Papers

Commodities of Empire Workshop, University of Glasgow

8-9 Sep. 2025

The British Academy 'Commodities of Empire' Academy Research Project invites paper proposals for an international, two-day workshop on the theme: Threads of Empire: Modes, Materials & the Making of Textiles. The workshop will be hosted at the University of Glasgow (Scotland) on **8-9 September, 2025**. The deadline for submitting a paper abstract is **28th March 2025**. The lead organisers are Dr Jelmer Vos (Jelmer.Vos@glasgow.ac.uk), Dr Sally Tuckett (Sally.Tuckett@glasgow.ac.uk) and Dr Meha Priyadarshini (meha.priyadarshini@ed.ac.uk).

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The significance of textiles as global and colonial commodities from c.1450-1850 is well established, with cotton and silk providing particularly cogent lenses through which to consider the movement of goods, fashion and technology, as well as means by which colonial connections and systems were initially established and evolved.

Threads of Empire is an international workshop where new and emerging research can examine how textiles built, supported and challenged empires. When thinking about textiles and empire the emphasis has often been on the role of the metropole as driver of trade, exchange and innovation. This workshop will shift the focus to the perspective of the colonised populations. What can the materials, making, movement and use of textiles *within, across and between* colonial systems add to our understanding of the wider role that textiles played from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

Highlighting the inherently interdisciplinary nature of textiles and textile history, the workshop encourages proposals that explore textiles from a range of perspectives, including economic and social history, global history, colonial and post-colonial studies, cultural history, art history and conservation science.

Papers are invited on, but not limited to, the following themes:

- Materials (including fibres and dyestuffs) and materiality of textiles. Papers on fibres other than silk and cotton are especially welcome
- Making textiles – technological innovations, craft and skill (e.g. processes such as dyeing and spinning, as well as crafts such as embroidery and lace-making)
- Communities of production (e.g. gender, formal and informal networks, social groups, such as castes, classes, diasporas, or religious communities)
- Fashion (broadly interpreted) and its meanings in colonial contexts

- South to south connections, broadly defined
- Textiles and the dynamics of agency or resistance
- Impacts of colonialism on pre-colonial production, consumption and trade

Proposals of 200 words max can be sent to: Jelmer.Vos@glasgow.ac.uk by **28 March 2025**. Proposals should formulate a clear research question or problem, be clear about its aims, and its contribution to historiography. Please include a short biography (max 50 words). Full drafts of accepted papers (about 5,000 words) must be submitted by 31 July 2025.

Following the long-standing practice of Commodities of Empire workshops, papers will be grouped in thematic panels, pre-circulated to all workshop participants, and panel discussions will be opened by a chair or discussant. Paper-givers will then have the possibility to reply succinctly, and this will be followed by open discussion. Paper-givers will not deliver a formal presentation of their paper at the workshop because all papers will be pre-circulated and read by participants. Papers presented at the workshop may be considered for publication in the Commodities of Empire Working Papers series:

<https://commoditiesofempire.org.uk/publications/working-papers/>.

We strongly encourage graduate students and other early career scholars to propose papers. Commodity of Empire workshops are self-funded, but some limited funding is available to cover travel and accommodation expenses, prioritizing early career scholars coming from the Global South, followed by scholars from the Global South more generally and early career scholars more generally. We also envisage the possibility of holding at least one panel in hybrid format to enable remote participation by speakers who may not be able to travel due to caring responsibilities, health issues, climate concerns, financial or other considerations.

Please contact Dr Jelmer Vos (Jelmer.Vos@glasgow.ac.uk) for questions.