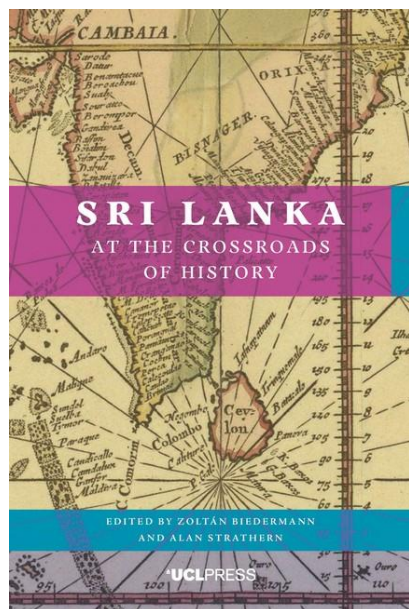




Querying the Cosmopolitan in Sri Lankan and Indian Ocean History



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2 p.m., Tuesday 6th February
Headley Lecture Theatre,
Ashmolean Museum

The presenters will reflect on their proposal to draw Sri Lanka into the paradigm of global history through the recently published edited collection *Sri Lanka at the Crossroads of History* (UCL, 2017 - the full volume can be downloaded free of charge at tinyurl.com/SLCrossroads).

Sri Lankan history has been somewhat isolated not only from recent developments in connected and comparative history but even from the wider historiography of South Asia. The presenters will show how recent scholarship has sought to open up Lanka as a space across which Indian Ocean and even global currents moved and intermingled and also to use the island as a test case for thinking through larger debates and conceptual issues relevant to historians of Asia. In particular, a major concept both deployed and critiqued by the authors – working in periods ranging from the archaeology of the first millennium BCE to the nineteenth century – is that of cosmopolitanism.

After introducing the book, each presenter will speak about their particular contribution. Alan Strathern will speak about the role of ethnicity and providentialism in Lankan history, engaging the work of Sheldon Pollock and the fundamental contrasts he has drawn between Indic and European forms of identity creation. Zoltán Biedermann will explore the history of Lankan exiles who, from early times, used the possibility of displacement to South India as a means to further local political projects. The question arises to what extent it is legitimate to theorize the culture of exile as cosmopolitan when it cohabited with various forms of coercion, especially during the early colonial period.

All are welcome

Convenors: Matthew McCartney, Mallica Kumbera Landrus and Rosalind O'Hanlon.

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