"On the Colonisation of India": Public Meetings, Debates and Disputes (Calcutta 1829)

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Tuesday 7th June, 2 p.m.
Fellows’ Dining Room,
St Antony's College

On December 15th, 1829, a large public meeting was held amidst much excitement at the Town Hall in Calcutta. The speakers, principally from the British mercantile community in Calcutta, but including, prominently, Dwarakanath Tagore and Rammohun Roy, spoke on behalf of a petition to be sent to the English Parliament arguing for what they called ‘The Colonization of India’. The debate centred on the upcoming renewal of the Charter Act, and this community pressed for further abolishing remaining monopolies the East India Company held. I will show how the disputes generated on the subject played out in Calcutta at the time, and also, crucially, show how Rammohun’s involvement in the event and his later evidence before the Select Committee was misread by leading Marxist historians affiliated to the CSSSC in the 1970s.


She has also translated and introduced the complete text of the letters Rabindranath Tagore wrote his niece Indira Debi as a young man, calling it Letters from a Young Poet (1887-94) (Penguin Modern Classics, 2014); this received an Honorable Mention in the category A.K. Ramanujan Prize for Translation (S. Asia) at the Association for Asian Studies Book Prizes 2016. Currently, she is editing and introducing An Acre of Green Grass: English Writings of Buddhadeva Bose for Oxford University Press, New Delhi. Her current research is tentatively titled Young Bengal and the Empire of the Middle Classes.

All are welcome

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This seminar series is organised with the support of the History Faculty.
Picture: "A Meeting of the Inhabitants of Calcutta", Bengal Hurkaru, 1826.