



## Before the Nation-State: Christian Internationalism and the Inter-War Years



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Syndicate Room, Old Main Building,  
St Antony's College

Historical scholarship increasingly shows that anti-colonial mobilisation in the early 20th century was both transimperial and transnational (Alavi 2015, Aydin 2007, Manjapra 2014). This scholarship also increasingly argues that visions of Pan-Asian and Pan-Religious solidarity in this period unsettled the idea that geopolitically-bounded nation-states should necessarily succeed imperial regimes. In this paper, I build on these debates to focus on the Christian Internationalist ethic articulated by Indian Student Christians in the 1920s and 1930s. Addressing the question, 'where was the International?' the paper unpacks a geography of anti-colonial political futurity that contested both the geopolitical form of the nation-state and that of British imperialism. To both of these, the figure of the Indian Christian convert – typically a member of the lowest castes – was a problematic subject. In focusing on Student Christians, the paper argues that the 'where' of this International imaginary was simultaneously in the embodied cultivation of Internationalist life in the everyday, and in the collective politics of solidarity-building through conferences and meetings that brought Indian Christians in dialogue with their counterparts elsewhere in the British Colonial world.

Sneha Krishnan is Associate Professor in Human Geography at the University of Oxford. She is interested in how histories of colonialism and imperial afterlives shape the experience of childhood. She is currently writing a book about women's hostels in Southern India, and has ongoing projects on childhood and geopolitics, as well as on gender and archival practice.

**All are welcome**

Convenors: Faisal Devji, Polly O'Hanlon, Kate Sullivan de Estrada, Nayanika Mathur,  
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