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Call for Papers for an interdisciplinary conference on

Cultural Encounters during Global War, 1914-1918:

Traces, Spaces, Legacies

Date: 21 – 23 January 2016

Place: London, United Kingdom

Convenors: Dr Santanu Das, *King's College London*

Prof Andreas Gestrinch, *German Historical Institute*

Dr Daniel Steinbach, *King's College London*

The First World War resulted in an unprecedented range of encounters between peoples from different ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds. Soldiers from across the globe travelled to different theatres of war – Europe, the Middle East, East Africa, Egypt, Gallipoli – where they not only encountered fellow-soldiers and non-combatants with different languages, religions or customs, but also interacted with friendly or belligerent civilians. Between 1914 and 1918, on French soil alone, there were over 1 million Asian and African men, both soldiers and non-combatants, in addition to soldiers from Australia, New Zealand and North America.

Europe would never be the same again not just in terms of the war's wreckage but in terms of people, ethnicities and cultures that were encountered, manipulated, studied, befriended. These encounters not only affected the individuals involved, but left deep traces in the literature, arts and culture of the times.

Simultaneously, a different kind of 'cultural encounter' was being engineered within Europe: the belligerent states were each trying to win over the neutral nations by funding cultural institutions and trying to influence artists, writers and opinion makers throughout the war. Neutral countries, particularly Sweden and Switzerland, became hubs for the activities of anti-colonial revolutionaries from Asia and North Africa. Furthermore, belligerent countries carried out intensive propaganda in Europe as well as in the colonies to ensure either imperial loyalty or to mobilize anti-colonial feelings and actions.

This interdisciplinary conference seeks to investigate the different kinds of encounters, exchanges and entanglements happening during wartime. What particular pressures did the conditions of war put on such encounters? What is the relationship between 'forced encounters' (as in camps for POW or civilian internees), 'voluntary' encounters (as in towns, markets, billets) and the state-sponsored ideologically motivated 'indirect' encounters (in the neutral countries)? Does encounter always involve exchange? What were the structures of power and how did they navigate the prevalent ideologies of race?

How did the encounters and exchanges occur across linguistic, national, religious, ethnic and social barriers, and what were their post-war legacies in terms of social, cultural, artistic and literary memory for Europe? Papers which pay attention to encounters or exchanges which involve colonials and neutrals – which is still a largely under-researched area – are particularly welcome.

The conference aims to overcome the dominant national and geographical approaches to the First World War and seeks to investigate moments and processes of cultural encounters, exchange, porosity and (mis-)understanding from different disciplinary perspectives, including history, geography, literature, anthropology, cultural, area, visual and gender studies. We would like to invite papers on the following themes, but are also open other aspects of cultural exchange during the First World War:

- Spaces of cultural encounters and exchange (e.g. ships, trenches, camps, billets, hospitals)
- Cultural encounters and/or exchange among soldiers at the front and between soldiers and civilians
- Occupation, captivity, deportation and cultural exchange
- Medium of cultural exchange (e.g. newspapers, letters, journals, films)
- Propaganda and cultural exchange
- Contemporary public and private reaction to and reflection on cultural exchange
- Intellectual, literary and artistic exchanges and networks during the war
- Transnational movements (Pan-Asianism, Pan-Africanism, Pan-Islamism) and anti-colonial networks
- Impact of the cultural exchanges and their post-war legacies

Accommodation will be provided for speakers for the duration of the conference and speakers' travel expenses will be reimbursed within reason.

Proposals from scholars at any stage in their career are invited and papers with an interdisciplinary approach are particularly welcome.

Participants should send abstracts of up to 300 words for a 20-25 minute paper, a short biography, and any enquiries to daniel.steinbach@kcl.ac.uk by **14 September 2015**.

