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CONTESTED SPACES IN LONDON: EXHIBITIONARY REPRESENTATIONS OF INDIA, c. 1886-1951

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CONTESTED SPACES IN LONDON: EXHIBITIONARY REPRESENTATIONS OF
INDIA, c. 1886-1951

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
Alayna Heinonen

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Phil Harling, Professor of History

Lexington, Kentucky

2012

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

CONTESTED SPACES IN LONDON: EXHIBITIONARY REPRESENTATIONS OF INDIA, c. 1886-1951

Following the first world exhibition, the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition in London, exhibitions became routine events across the West that merged both education and entertainment to forward political and economic goals. For the most part scholars have taken the frequency, popularity, and propagandistic efforts of exhibitions at face value, viewing them as successful reassertions of the imperial, industrial, and technological superiority of Western nation-states. Though offering valuable insights into the cultural technologies of imperial rule, these works miss the complexities of imperial projects within specific temporal and geographical contexts.

This manuscript traces the historical dynamics of India at exhibitions held in London during and after imperial rule: the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition, the 1924-25 British Empire Exhibition, and the 1951 Festival of Britain. In historicizing the exhibitionary administration and display of India over time, this study argues for a more complex reading of exhibitions in which displays invoked a *mélange* of meanings that destabilized as well as projected imperial hierarchies. It also examines the ways in which Indians administered, evaluated, and contested imperial displays. Rather than seamlessly reinforcing imperial dominance, exhibitions, located within specific historical contexts, emerged as contested, multifaceted, and even ambiguous portrayals of empires

KEYWORDS: Exhibitions, India, British Empire, Cultural Representation, Postcolonial

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CONTESTED SPACES IN LONDON: EXHIBITIONARY REPRESENTATIONS OF
INDIA, c. 1886-1951

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In her recent semi-fictional autobiography, *Alfred and Emily*, British novelist Doris Lessing reflects on the extraordinary events of her parents' lives, detailing the story of her family's past as it actually happened, and as it might have taken place, if not for the First World War. As was the case for many at the time, the war was hard on Lessing's parents; her mother Emily served as a nurse and her father Alfred as a soldier. Lessing's father, who "never recovered from the trenches," lost his leg in combat. Memories of the war plagued Alfred, but Emily was, as well, a "victim of the war" that "ravag[e]d her from within."¹ Within a few years after the war, Lessing's parents moved from England to Iran (where Lessing was born) and ultimately to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Inspired by the 1924 British Empire Exhibition held in Wembley, London, Alfred and Emily hoped to rival the financial success of their predecessors' in maize and tobacco farming. A stall for Southern Rhodesia at the Exhibition advertised "Get rich on maize," and enticed them to set out for the distant, unfamiliar terrain of Africa. At the British Empire Exhibition, Alfred and Emily, who, as Lessing puts it, "believed in empire and its benefits," initiated their dream of running a profitable farm in Rhodesia with their daughter.²

Lessing's family joined the growing number of white settlers who arrived in Southern Rhodesia after the First World War in search of agricultural work and lucrative farm ownership.³ Though intended as a temporary detour in a long-term plan to buy a

¹ Doris Lessing, *Alfred and Emily* (New York: Harper, 2008), 170-172.

² Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, vii-viii and 172-174.

³ White settlers in Southern Rhodesia who met a minimum income requirement attained responsible self-government in 1923. Dane Kennedy, *Britain and Empire: 1880-1945* (London: Pearson Education, 2002), 66; Stephen Constantine, "Migrants and Settlers," in *The Oxford History of the British*

farm in England, Lessing's parents ended up living in Southern Rhodesia for the remainder of their lives. They entrusted their futures in the potential profitability of a distant colony, but their disappointments upon settling in Africa were at odds with the Exhibition's assurances of a post-war recovery. For Alfred and Emily, the Exhibition did not fulfill its promise to restore their war-damaged lives. Instead, the guarantees of the stall for Southern Rhodesia proved a farce for Lessing's parents, who struggled to maintain their unsuccessful farm in an "uncharted, unworked wilderness."⁴ Alfred never earned enough money to buy a farm in Essex or Norfolk; nor did Emily, overwhelmed by loneliness and (later) her husband's diabetes, fulfill her expectation of reproducing a "civilized" existence in Africa.

Lessing's unhappy childhood in Africa—a consequence of her parents' belief in the ability of empire to rebuild their war-ravaged lives—serves as a stark contrast to the hubristic boasts of the contemporary press, which largely portrayed the Empire Exhibition as evidence of the Empire's continued profitability and stability. As a "huge imperial advertisement" staged on 216 acres, the Exhibition had been "professedly designed to stimulate British trade" and to promote the belief that, through the imperial economy, "every human need can be supplied."⁵ Held at the moment of the Empire's broadest territorial extent, the Exhibition represented practically all British colonies in pavilions adorned in their respective architectural styles. These buildings, British and

Empire: The Twentieth Century, vol. 4, eds. Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998-1999), 168-171; Shula Marks, "Southern Africa," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 548-549 and 552.

⁴ Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, 157.

⁵ "An Empire in Miniature. Special Correspondence from Harold E. Scarborough," *Outlook* 137, no. 7 (June 18, 1924): 278 and 280. Scarborough explained that "First and foremost, the British Empire Exhibition is an advertisement. It is professedly designed to stimulate British trade." In "Two Weeks on Our Planet," *The Independent* 112, no. 3865 (March 29, 1924): 179, Henry W. Bunn described the Exhibition as a "huge imperial advertisement."

colonial alike, housed exhibits explicitly devoted to marketing colonial products, advertising advances in industry, and exalting the benevolence of imperial governance. American, French, and British journalists congratulated the instructional success of the Exhibition in both its economic and ideological objectives. As just one example, American journalist Harold Scarborough viewed the Exhibition as “a gigantic object-lesson of imperialism. No British subject can see it without some feeling of pride.”⁶ The Empire Exhibition was truly an effort to minimize the globe for the purpose of propagandizing the Empire’s self-sufficiency and economic potential after the First World War.

The Empire Exhibition also sought to promulgate a view of the Empire as a racially-unified “Family Party.” It emphasized imperial cohesion as a result of the massive efforts put forth across the Empire towards winning the First World War. The official rhetoric of the Exhibition narrated a “Family Party,” in which war had unified the diverse populations of colonized territories, Dominions, and Britain. One *Official Guide* claimed that the Exhibition displayed “a Family Party of the British Empire—its first Family Party since the Great War, when the whole world opened astonished eyes to see that an Empire with a hundred languages and races had but one soul and mind, and could ... concentrate ... all its power for a common purpose.”⁷ The Empire Exhibition purported to strengthen the economic and political cohesion of empire fostered during the First World War.

⁶ Scarborough, “An Empire in Miniature. Special Correspondence from Harold E. Scarborough,” 280.

⁷ Marjorie Grant Cook and Frank Fox, *The British Empire Exhibition 1924: Official Guide* (London: Fleetway Press Ltd., 1924), 10.

Ironically, the Exhibition's celebration of imperial unity coincided with nationalistic calls for self-rule in some colonies. Despite its grandiose staging of imperial territories and rhetoric of racial cohesion within a "family party" of empire, the Exhibition emerged in the immediate aftermath of the First World War and a related series of colonial disputes. Between the initial planning of the Exhibition in 1913 and its opening in 1924, the white-settlement Dominions more assertively demanded increased political autonomy; the Empire grew to its historically largest size with the attainment of former Ottoman and German colonies (via the League of Nations mandate system); and the Raj began to devolve political power to native Indians.⁸ Britain's industrial supremacy declined with the continued competition from European and American industries and the destabilization of the economy as a result of the First World War. As the status quo of the imperial system came into question, colonial territories became more crucial to Britain's position as an international power. The 1924 Exhibition demonstrated the urgency of bolstering trade relationships and asserting the Empire's ongoing utility in a post-war context.⁹

The strengthening of imperial cohesion was a common goal of European exhibitions, but it took on new meanings as a result of the economic and military support given by colonies to the Allied efforts during the First World War. Reconfigured in a post-war context, exhibitionary displays in Britain and France celebrated the importance

⁸ For an overview of Britain's relationship with the Dominions in the post-war period, see Kennedy, *Britain and Empire*, 67-70.

⁹ Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester University Press, 1988), 58. The *Daily Mirror* explained that "the Prince said he would be content if the triumph of 1851 was repeated in 1924, for the exhibition of 1851 had helped British trade and industry enormously" and "it might well make a new era in Imperial trade and point the way to new paths by which to repair the ravages of the war." See "Prince Supports Great Pageant of Empire. Wembley Exhibition as Aid to British Trade. Challenge to World," *Daily Mirror*, 28 July 1923, p. 3.

of colonies to the metropole. Several inter-war exhibitions in France featured empire and emphasized the “service” of colonized peoples as workers and soldiers during the War. France, for example, hosted the 1922 National Colonial Exposition in Marseilles and the (much larger) 1931 International Colonial Exposition in Paris, viewed by contemporaries as an international counter-part to the British Empire Exhibition.¹⁰ Although French exhibits continued to situate Asian and African peoples within a racial hierarchy, they also portrayed colonized peoples as vital to France’s commercial and political security.¹¹

The Empire Exhibition, then, typified a broader initiative in Europe after the First World War to reassert the political and economic importance of empire through large-scale exhibitions.¹² When the Empire Exhibition officially closed in November 1924, though, it had lost £1,842,806 and suffered from an unexpectedly low attendance.¹³ Although 17 million visitors came to the 1924 Exhibition, officials had anticipated 30 million visitors to such an extravagant event. In an unusual exhibitionary undertaking, officials agreed to re-open for another six months in 1925, with hopes of reducing the deficit. By its final closing, the British Empire Exhibition garnered a total of 27 million visitors but had only managed to lower the deficit to £1,581,905.¹⁴ The 1931 Paris

¹⁰ Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, and the United States participated in the Exposition, which was held in Vincennes, a suburb of Paris.

¹¹ Dana S. Hale, *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples, 1886-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 4-5, and 91-180.

¹² Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-Of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 6-7, 18, and 61. Of the non-U.S. exhibitions held in the inter-war period, about half were explicitly devoted specifically to empire, and many of the remaining exhibitions had major colonial components.

¹³ This figure includes the Guarantee Fund, in which the British government was responsible for £600,000.

¹⁴ For an official assessment of the Exhibition’s finances, see “British Empire Exhibition Guarantee,” Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 10 December 1925, Hansard, vol. 189, cc. 802-36.

Exposition, in contrast, made an enormous profit of 33 million francs, and garnered 33 million visitors in six months, surpassing those to Wembley over its two-season stretch.¹⁵

Official and public commentary on the 1924 Empire Exhibition blamed the low attendance on bad weather, but there may have been other reasons for non-attendance. The Exhibition's very focus on empire may have resulted from official concern over the public's ignorance of (or indifference to) empire.¹⁶ Historians continue to debate the effects of exhibitionary display on visitors in the context of empire. As one notable expert on the attempts to popularize and legitimize empire in Britain, John MacKenzie argues that it was through exhibitions and other forms of popular imperialism that Britons saw their imperial status as "central to their perceptions of themselves."¹⁷ Conversely, Bernard Porter argues that the pervasive class divisions within Britain precluded any significant influence of empire on the national consciousness of Britons, especially the working classes.¹⁸

There is certainly a middle ground between these two arguments. Visitors came to frequently-held imperial and international exhibitions for many reasons, ranging from entertainment, to the serious study of the colonies and metropole, to the pursuit of

¹⁵ Patricia Morton, *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 313.

¹⁶ Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005).

¹⁷ John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester University Press, 1984), 2.

¹⁸ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Andrew Thompson questions the edifying success of exhibitions for constructing national and imperial identities. See "A Tale of Three Exhibitions': Portrayals and Perceptions of 'Britishness' at the Great Exhibition (1851), Wembley Exhibition (1924) and the Festival of Britain (1951)," in *Angleterre ou albion, entre fascination et repulsion: de l'Exposition universelle au dome du millenaure, 1851-2000*, ed. Gilbert Millat (Université Charles-de-Gaulle-Lille III, 2006), 97. Also see Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

economic goals.¹⁹ The experiences of exhibitionary visitors varied greatly and, for many, memories of exhibitions were as transient as the exhibitions themselves. Even though administrators ascribed to the exhibitions the heavy task of educating the public about empire, visitors could easily be distracted by the amusements sections. During the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, for example, intellectuals and critics formed the Won't Go to Wembley Society, envisioning the Exhibition as a mere "funfair by the populace."²⁰ In Noel Coward's play *The Happy Breed*, a father who brings his children to the Wembley Exhibition bemoans that "I've brought you here to see the wonders of Empire, and all you want to do is go see the dodgems."²¹ Even if visitors to exhibitions viewed imperial sectors, one cannot know for certain that they knew any intricate details about colonial governance or particular territories. John MacKenzie acknowledges that "the British public never came to grips with the principles or practice of imperial rule." Rather "than any sophisticated concept of Empire," they had a "generalised imperial vision."²² It is difficult to discern exactly what visitors took from the exhibitions.

Particularly after the First World War, moreover, exhibitions in Europe vied with other forms of popular entertainment. Mass forms of leisure and communication—such as radio, cinema, and the popular press—"came of age between the wars."²³ Originating in the late nineteenth century, film burgeoned in the inter-war era. The British Broadcasting Company, established in 1923, also flourished after the First World War.

¹⁹ Of course, entertainment at the exhibitions did not preclude education, and vice versa. In *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 63, Annie Coombes explains that the effectiveness of imperial spectacle relied upon its ability to instruct and amuse.

²⁰ John MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester University Press, 1986), 7.

²¹ Both Porter and MacKenzie reference this quote in their works. Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 265; MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 7.

²² MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 8-9.

²³ Brad Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-class Men in Britain, 1850-1945* (Manchester University Press, 2005), 180.

Without stepping foot into Wembley, Britons could listen to the opening ceremony and featured events of the 1924 Exhibition through BBC broadcasts, although the widespread ownership of radios did not occur until the 1930s.²⁴ At the same time that newspapers and public broadcasts reinforced the national and imperial themes of exhibitions, they may have also contended with actual attendance to the exhibitionary spaces.

The regularity of exhibitions fashioned on an increasingly extravagant scale in *fin-de-siècle* Europe had also accompanied an “exhibition fatigue.”²⁵ Following the success of the first world exhibition, the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition in London, imperial and international exhibitions became routine events across the West that merged both education and entertainment to forward political and economic goals. A testament to the sustainability and popularity of exhibitions in the era of imperial rule is that of the 300 exhibitions held between 1851 and 2001, 210 of these occurred between 1880 and 1945.²⁶ Though these exhibitions demonstrated a remarkable durability in the inter-war era, they had “passed their zenith” and no longer resonated with colonial tensions and challenges to imperial rule.²⁷

Despite its financial success, for instance, the 1931 Paris Exposition incited a counter-exhibition, *La Vérité sur les Colonies* (Truth on the Colonies). Staged by anti-imperial communists and surrealist artists, this (much smaller and less successful)

²⁴ John MacKenzie, “The Popular Culture of Empire in Britain,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 212-231; John MacKenzie, “‘In Touch with the Infinite’: The BBC and the Empire, 1923-53,” in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, 169; Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-class Men in Britain, 1850-1945*, 180-210.

²⁵ Alexander Geppert, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 206-212. Geppert argues that even the earliest international exhibitions accompanied criticism, including those associated with “exhibition fatigue.”

²⁶ Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-Of-Progress Expositions*, 6-7, 18, and 61.

²⁷ Geppert, *Fleeting Cities*, 198-199.

exposition displayed the violence and oppression of colonial expansion.²⁸ Though lacking an anti-imperial stance comparable to the counter-exposition in France, the 1924 British Empire Exhibition spurred criticism as well as protests. West African students in London objected to racially-offensive press coverage of West Africans on display in a “walled village.” Culminating in the premature closure of the model village, their dissent publicized the contradiction between the Exhibition’s pretense of racial unity under a “Family Party” of empire and the racial discrimination of imperial governance on the ground.²⁹

The British Empire Exhibition sought to project an immense confidence in empire, but could not entirely mask the insecurities of the inter-war years. As an American commentator on the Exhibition, Harold Scarborough reaffirmed the objectives of the Exhibition as proof of the Empire’s triumphs and capabilities. His endorsement of the Exhibition, however, accompanied a realistic characterization of the uncertainties of the inter-war Empire. Scarborough viewed the Exhibition as a much needed strengthening of empire at a time “when in at least two Dominions separate nationalism is a live issue, and when in other parts of the Empire the heady wine of self-determination has gone to the heads of the natives.”³⁰ As an outsider looking in at the Empire Exhibition, Scarborough contemplated and foreshadowed the conflicts of empire in the aftermath of the First World War.

In this context, the British Empire Exhibition attests to the importance of viewing exhibitions as contested and variable events, and through the unique perspectives of their

²⁸ Ibid.; Morton, *Hybrid Modernities*, 96-110.

²⁹ Sarah Britton, “Come and See the Empire by the All Red Route!: Anti-Imperialism and Exhibitions in Interwar Britain,” *History Workshop Journal* 69, no. 1 (2010): 68-89.

³⁰ Scarborough, “An Empire in Miniature. Special Correspondence from Harold E. Scarborough,” 280.

visitors within specific locales and time periods. At the Empire Exhibition, Doris Lessing's parents had an illusory hope that the Empire would secure their futures. British writer Raymond Mortimer, in contrast, criticized the Exhibition's pretense of imperial enrichment. Mortimer, like many returning from service disillusioned by the First World War, viewed the Exhibition as an embodiment of "the failure ... of the whole of Western Civilization." A hospital worker in France during the War, Mortimer perceived the Exhibition as a veil for the ominous realities of the inter-war period: "what wonder if some of us are more inclined than ever to believe that industrial civilization is hopeless . . . and that it will destroy itself."³¹ To Mortimer, the Exhibition was "a confession" of the exploitation and destruction inflicted upon Britons as a result of Britain's industrial, imperial arrogance.

As an anomaly in the incessant praise of the 1924 Exhibition in the press, Mortimer's article served as a bleak foretelling of what would become of Lessing's family. He unraveled the propaganda of the British Empire Exhibition through a grim post-war commentary. Of course, the Empire Exhibition did not lead many of its visitors to publish chilling forecasts about the catastrophic consequences of industrial technology and imperial ambitions that might lead to a Second World War. Nor did the Exhibition affect many of its visitors in such substantial, long-term ways as it had Lessing and her family. The accounts of Lessing and Mortimer, viewed through the lens of the evident tensions of the inter-war era, provide an unusual perspective on the otherwise acclaimed Empire Exhibition. They also provide insights into the diverse perspectives of

³¹ Raymond Mortimer, "London Letter," *The Dial* LXXVII (July, 1924): 59-60; J. W. Lambert, "Mortimer, (Charles) Raymond Bell (1895–1980)," rev. P. J. Connell, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online ed., <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31471>, accessed 5 October 2011.

exhibitionary viewers, and testify to the complex nature of imperial and international exhibitions. Rather than seamlessly reinforcing industrial and imperial dominance, exhibitions, located within specific historical contexts, emerged as contested, multifaceted, and even ambiguous portrayals of nation-states and their empires.

Mindful of the myriad experiences of exhibitionary visitors and the particular historical lenses through which they viewed exhibits, this study examines select exhibitions within specific geographical and temporal contexts. It traces the historical dynamics of India at exhibitions held in London during and after imperial rule: the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition, the 1924-25 British Empire Exhibition, and the 1951 Festival of Britain. The evolving political and economic climate of empire shaped portrayals of India and their embedded imperial discourses. In historicizing the exhibitionary administration and display of India over time, this study argues for a more complex reading of exhibitions in which displays invoked a *mélange* of meanings that destabilized as well as projected imperial hierarchies.

Prior to the First World War, Indian exhibits in London denoted a virtually unreformed autocratic rule, in which a Viceroy governed India and reported to the Secretary of State of the India Office in London. With exhibitionary administration largely in the hands of British “experts” and officials, pre-war exhibitions were intended to facilitate the contemporary objectives of the imperial government and economy. As a common thread tying together imperial renderings of India, the exhibitions relied largely upon Britain’s appropriation and manipulation of three iconic representations of Indian “tradition”: the village, bazaar, and palace. As products of the official preoccupation

with organizing “knowledge” about India in order to assert greater political control, these representations aimed to portray an unchanging India, fundamentally “different” from the modern metropole in its supposedly innate tradition of a pre-modern history.³² This difference reinforced British claims to governance in India, in which India’s historical immobility rendered it incapable of self-rule in the modern era. Cultural representations of India frequently conflated various time periods in India, ignoring Indian conceptions of their own history and the specificities and complexities of India’s past. The British appropriation of Indian history within a teleological framework placed Britain at the apex of modernity and represented India as fixed in an array of “pre-modern”—traditional, feudal, and princely—pasts.

The ideological and strategic methods of the Raj, however, did not transfer flawlessly into the exhibitions, nor did they eradicate contrasting narratives on India. Rather, administrators and visitors publicized oppositional discourses at the exhibitions that argued for positive connotations of Indian “tradition” that validated India’s “difference.” The deliberate efforts of exhibition authorities could not wholly control the responses to exhibits, the alternative meanings they signified, or the ways that Indians shaped exhibits on their own terms. This study, then, brings Indians to the forefront of the exhibitions as “actors” who administered, evaluated, and contested imperial displays.³³

Although depictions of Indian tradition were intended to naturalize hierarchical constructions of India’s “difference” from the West’s industrial modernity, the

³² According to Edward Said, “culture” is a product of particular historical processes (such as the political context of imperialism), and therefore “pure” and “political” knowledge are always intertwined. *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 9-11.

³³ Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-century World’s Fairs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 3.

exhibitions also invited visitors to imagine the potential for an Indian “similarity.” The idea of India’s “difference,” viewed in racial terms by the late Victorian era, persisted in the exhibitions and justified Britain’s longstanding rule in India. Each exhibition, however, also embodied the ongoing contradiction between imperial notions that regarded Indians as fundamentally different from Britons, and thus incapable of self-rule, and those that regarded Indians as similar to the extent that they could progress into modernity. The ideological basis for empire, then, shifted in tandem with the changes in British-Indian relations over time. If, as Thomas Metcalf argues in *Ideologies of the Raj*, views of Indian similarity remained in tension with (the dominant) views of Indian difference in the late-nineteenth century,³⁴ the former made a remarkable comeback after the First World War. Concurrently, the 1924 British Empire Exhibition manifested ideological, as well as political and economic, changes in the inter-war Indian Empire.

The display of India at the British Empire Exhibition relied on familiar representations of a “traditional” India popularized at pre-war exhibitions, but it also challenged (hitherto dominant) imperial ideologies that rendered India incapable of a “modern” self-rule. Through a comparative framework that considers pre-war exhibitions, this study shows the colonial relationship of Britain and India in transition by the inter-war period, and analyzes British and Indian attempts to regulate exhibitionary spaces at the 1924 Empire Exhibition. It pays particular attention to the inter-war development of a more potent Indian nationalism, indigenous economic growth, and political devolution after the First World War. Just as Indian elites were being granted

³⁴ For a thorough analysis of this tension, see Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Metcalf argues that after the 1857-8 Indian Rebellion and after the emergence of nationalist appeals by educated Indians for self-rule in the 1880s, British officials more stringently declared the fixity and inferiority of Indian civilization.

limited administrative authority within India, so too were they granted authority to manage the exhibitionary spaces devoted to India at the 1924 Exhibition. Their management led to the diversification of exhibits in the Indian Pavilion, enabling a more nuanced reading of India in the inter-war era.

Such changes resulted largely from shifts in the strategies of British governance, and an increasing Indian opposition to this governance, during and after the First World War. The War provoked a more visible anti-imperial nationalism fueled in part by imperial repression under a violent, exploitive government. It also contributed to unprecedented indigenous industrial and commercial growth. The decentralization of the Raj government under the 1919 Government of India Act gave Indians unparalleled opportunities to decide the extent and content of India's participation in the Exhibition. These changes shaped portrayals of India at the 1924 British Empire Exhibition in ways that challenged imperialist discourse and offered new meanings to familiar representations of India. Debates about the Exhibition dovetailed into critiques of imperial governance, in which Indian businessmen, nationalists, and officials put forth a variety of perspectives. The vast range of Indian responses to the Exhibition show that Indian participation was controversial, and led to a fragmented portrayal of India in the metropole.

Although the 1924 Empire Exhibition serves as a telling cultural moment for examining the transformations in British India after the First World War, the Second World War undoubtedly accompanied the most significant rupture in British-Indian relations with the independence and partition of India. This study, then, assesses the 1951 Festival of Britain. Held in the immediate aftermath of decolonization in India,

Ceylon, and Burma, the Festival of Britain largely marginalized empire. Through its exhibits, nonetheless, administrators continued to espouse rhetoric about the ways in which British modernity, in its industrial and technological strength, had made benevolent contributions across the Empire-Commonwealth. In the course of determining the extent of direct colonial and Dominion participation, India and Pakistan, as the newest members of the Commonwealth, protested post-war imperialist motives and conceptions in ways that unraveled the Festival's depiction of a munificent and just empire.

“Othering” in Theory and in Practice

Serving the purposes of industrial capitalism and imperial, nationalistic governments, exhibitions featured hierarchical depictions of colonized territories, and expanded in their imperial and international scope to serve as practically self-sustaining cities.³⁵ The construction of European modernity and its contrasts with colonial difference at exhibitions aimed to sustain imperial dominance, whilst demonstrating the benevolence of imperial governance and strengthening the commercial profits of empire. Administrative officials and entrepreneurs in the era of imperial rule, then, viewed exhibitions according to their “educational opportunity,”³⁶ wherein exhibits inscribed messages of power to their visitors. In the past twenty years, there has been a substantial increase in the number of studies that detail the cultural technologies of imperial rule at

³⁵ Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford University Press, 1990), 5; MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 2 and 99; Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, 59.

³⁶ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide, 1924*, 10.

international and imperial exhibitions. This scholarship often adopts a Saidian method, surveying the displays of African and Asian colonies as strategically-designed contrasts to European nation-states. In his seminal works, *Culture and Imperialism* and *Orientalism*, Edward Said drew upon Michel Foucault's notion of the mutual reinforcement of power and knowledge, and argued that political relationships are always embedded in constructions of "knowledge." According to Said, hierarchical power relations inform cultural representations of this knowledge. In the context of empire, culture reinforced the dominance of the Western "self" over the colonized "other" and equated the difference of the latter with its weakness.³⁷

The instructional aspect of exhibitions has received substantial attention in scholarship, which asserts that cultural displays converted knowledge into power and reified prevailing assumptions about the deserved hegemony of Western nation-states. For the most part scholars have taken the frequency, popularity, and propagandistic efforts of imperial and international exhibitions at face value, viewing them as successful reassertions of the imperial, industrial, and technological superiority of Western nation-states. John Mackenzie, for example, has published several works arguing that, through popular media, imperial propaganda successfully convinced its viewers to believe in the significance and profitability of empire, fulfilling the imperialist and economic motives of entrepreneurs and officials alike. In his pivotal work on "The Exhibitionary Complex," Tony Bennett asserts that exhibitionary displays "formed vehicles for

³⁷ See Said, *Orientalism*, 2-7 and *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xii-xiii and xxi. In *Orientalism*, 204, Said argued that nineteenth-century Orientalist views created a "cultural hegemony" over colonized peoples that naturalized an unequal political relationship between the East (Orient) and the West (Occident).

inscribing and broadcasting the message of power” in the public arena.³⁸ Imperial knowledge, embedded in the exhibitions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, encouraged European colonizers to envision themselves simultaneously as imperial, industrial, modern- the opposite of the colonized, pre-industrial, pre-modern “other.”³⁹ Scholars argue that this knowledge about colonized territories, which precluded their historical, economic, and racial development, underlined their incapacity for political self-rule and reinforced imperial power.⁴⁰

Said’s theoretically-groundbreaking work contributes to a historical understanding of diffuse and cultural forms of power that did not rest solely within the state, but continued to buttress the West’s hegemonic influence. As self-congratulatory reconstructions of nations, empires, and the world, exhibitions of imperial and international character included arrays of buildings devoted to the showcasing and enrichment of nation-states, imperial prowess, and industry and worldwide trade. Featuring grandiose renditions of empires, European exhibitions offered seemingly formulaic displays of imperial territories. Even as nationalism and competition spurred the growth of exhibitions, they served common objectives using common models.

³⁸ Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 82.

³⁹ The construction of both internal and external “others” shaped the fashioning of national identities. In his pivotal article, “The World As Exposition,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 2 (April 1989): 217-236, Timothy Mitchell examines the implications for this exhibitionary separation of the Oriental “Other” from the European “observer.” The embedded imperial hierarchies of exhibitions persisted outside of exhibitions, in which Europeans continued to view the world as if in an exhibition. Anne McClintock examines the ways in which images of empire in the metropole helped define the “Western, industrial modernity” of Britons, especially of the middle class. See *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 5.

⁴⁰ Nicholas Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 2-4 and 9-10. In *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton University Press, 1996), 121, Bernard Cohn explains how the British configured their history in India, which equated the European (feudal) past with the Indian present.

The very nature of exhibitions, as “near-universal”⁴¹ models used to bolster individual nation-states and their empires has led historians of the Saidian method to paint portraits of exhibitionary display with broad strokes. Despite the centrality of Said’s work to scholarship on exhibitions, his work simplifies Western discourse about the “other” over time and place and exaggerates the hegemony of the West over the East.⁴² In studying exhibitions through a strictly-defined Saidian method, scholars tend to focus on the contemporary objectives surrounding exhibitions and their formulaic schemas for contrasting modern, European governance with historically- and racially- “backward” colonies. Though offering valuable insights into the cultural technologies of imperial rule, these works miss the subtleties and complexities of imperial projects within specific temporal and geographical contexts. They also overlook the meanings of exhibitions for both colonizing and colonized peoples.

There is an ongoing push in more current scholarship to go beyond Saidian binaries to provide more complex readings of imperial and international exhibitions. The transnational makeup of exhibitions has become the subject for recent studies, which argue for the historical richness of viewing exhibitions comparatively rather than through the “nation-state.” Matthew Stanard, for instance, provides a comparative study of European exhibitions in the inter-war era, arguing that they shared common methods and

⁴¹ Matthew G. Stanard, “Interwar Pro-Empire Propaganda and European Colonial Culture: Toward a Comparative Research Agenda,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 44, no. 1 (2009): 27.

⁴² Dennis Porter, “Orientalism and its Problems,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 150-161. Porter argues that Said’s Orientalism is too monolithic and hegemonic. For a concrete example of a revisionist approach to Saidian theory, see Choi Chatterjee, “Transnational Romance, Terror, and Heroism: Russia in American Popular Fiction, 1860-1917,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 3 (July, 2008): 756-757. Chatterjee assesses how Russians participated in the American construction of knowledge about Russia. Her study modifies the theories of Said, and his assertion that Orientalist views were “so pervasive and all encompassing that they prevented the Orient from describing itself.”

practices.⁴³ Because imperial and international exhibitions encouraged the movement of ideas, objects, and peoples across national borders, Stanard's argument resonates with recent shifts in cultural histories towards transnational frameworks.

Cultural studies that employ a transnational framework argue that transnationalism shaped, produced, and regulated boundaries even as it moved across borders.⁴⁴ Orvar Lofgren, for example, explains that tourism and exhibitions in European nation-states used transnational models of "cultural distinctiveness" as a process of nation-building. The simulation of "native villages" at exhibitions, as well, utilized a transnational framework that consistently represented colonized people in generic, racialized terms. Raymond Corbey examines the display of colonized peoples at international exhibitions, comparing English, German, American, and French exhibits.⁴⁵ Although imperial countries adopted generic frameworks for representing their national and imperial importance, their unique methods of rule shaped exhibitionary display. As Corbey points out in his work, British exhibits stressed the racial fixity of colonial societies because the assimilation of colonized peoples, a priority of the French and the American colonial regimes, was less important to British imperialism.

What is often absent from this comparative scholarship of exhibitions, however, are the distinct histories and methods of showcasing individual colonies over time.

⁴³ Stanard, "Interwar Pro-Empire Propaganda and European Colonial Culture: Toward a Comparative Research Agenda," 27-48.

⁴⁴ Patricia Clavin, "Defining Transnationalism," *Contemporary European History* (2005): 421-439; In *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 220, Tim Cresswell demonstrates that transnational mobilities accompany the policing of movements that facilitate "asymmetrical fields of power."

⁴⁵ Raymond Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930," *Cultural Anthropology* 8, no. 3 (August 1993): 338-369; Orvar Lofgren, "Know Your Country: A Comparative Perspective on Tourism and Nation Building in Sweden," in *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*, eds. Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004). Also see Burton Benedict, "International Exhibitions and National Identity," *Anthropology Today* 7, no. 3 (June 1991): 5-9.

Matthew Stanard recognizes the shortcomings of such an approach, which “can lead one to miss out on the specific context out of which an idea emerges, or to lose sight of the uniqueness of particular situations and specific national contexts.”⁴⁶ Many studies continue to generalize about exhibitions of imperial territories. In chronicling exhibitionary representations of India over time, this study demonstrates the historical importance of locating exhibitions within their distinct temporal and territorial contexts. Although exhibitions across Europe adopted comparable templates for contrasting the modernity of their nationhoods with the supposed backwardness of their colonies, the unique historical environments of individual colonies had a direct effect upon the methods and meanings of their display.

In many instances, displays of colonies emerged during, and even spurred, conflict and crisis, and challenged illusions of imperial harmony. Scholars who are more attentive to historical context argue that the conflicts within empire were mirrored in exhibitions. As Nicholas Thomas explains, viewing cultural productions through a “colonial discourse” that homogenized racial differences and reinforced the “totalizing” power of imperial rule overstates the seamlessness of cultural display.⁴⁷ Saloni Mathur’s *India by Design*, as just one example of this latest re-reading of imperial display,⁴⁸ examines cultural representations of Indian “tradition” as unstable projects of imperial dominance. Her work brings to light the vulnerabilities of imperial discourse in the context of India in late-nineteenth century exhibitions in London. It offers a comparative

⁴⁶ Stanard, “Interwar Pro-Empire Propaganda and European Colonial Culture: Toward a Comparative Research Agenda,” 47.

⁴⁷ Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism’s Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Princeton University Press, 1994), 40-46 and 105.

⁴⁸ Saloni Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). Also see Morton, *Hybrid Modernities*. As another example, in *Reinventing Africa*, Annie Coombes examines the dissemination of popular images of Africa over time, arguing for a more complex analysis of racial ideology as it pertained to British colonization there.

evaluation of displays of India in the twentieth-century, shifting her focus from the venue of exhibitions to renderings of colonial and post-colonial India in stamps, art, postcards, and museums. This study draws upon and expands Mathur's insights into the centrality of a contested Indian "tradition" to imperial representations of India.

In doing so, it emphasizes the political importance of views about Indian tradition to the competing claims of imperial governance, anti-colonial nationalism, and the Indian nation-state. In order to bolster imperial rule, British officials constructed and preserved Indian "tradition" both in India and at the exhibitions. The deliberate (re)production of Indian tradition at the exhibitions did not represent India's inferior difference, but rather how the manipulation of particular village industries, political hierarchies, and cultural systems facilitated British economic and political dominance.⁴⁹ In order to better consolidate rule in the mid and late nineteenth century, British officials allied with Indian princes and landed elites who were subordinate to imperial governance but retained substantial authority in their territories. Although not entirely a creation of British rule, the generalized conception of native, princely states encompassed "diverse political entities" in India that included pre-Mughal and Mughal-era territories.⁵⁰ As Nicholas Dirks and Bernard Cohn have shown, British officials also catalogued "knowledge" about India so that local tribal and caste divisions became totalizing representations of India's complex socio-cultural systems. Economically, the colonial regime fortified India's commercial agriculture and landed systems, importing British industry into India and

⁴⁹ For examples of this, see Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1983), 17; Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*; Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁵⁰ Barbara Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and their States* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

weakening indigenous industrial development. India's relative lack of modernity, one might say, was a product of Britain's self-sustained presence on the subcontinent.

As the British government consolidated political and economic dominance over India in the late nineteenth-century, it organized "knowledge" about the potentially unruly and under-known locales of the subcontinent. Strategically important to the consolidation of imperial rule in India, British officials claimed ownership over the meanings of colonial "tradition," aligning it with a European past and Indian "difference." The acquisition and organization of "knowledge" about India by Britons, a mechanism for asserting imperial power, rigidified the differences between colony and metropole and assigned to the former inherently subordinate qualities. The construction of India's historical backwardness within a "universal narrative of history" precluded India's ascent into modernity and eclipsed Indian conceptions of history, modernity, and nationhood.⁵¹ The imperial retrenchment of India's social, cultural, and political systems into a series of categories and classifications perpetually labeled India as "traditional" and facilitated British rule.⁵² Although this study recognizes the complexities of Indian history when relevant to the exhibitions, it frequently references *British perceptions* of India that were embedded in the visual rhetoric of exhibits.

⁵¹ In *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), Prasenjit Duara characterizes the exclusionary practices of the teleological construction of "History" as part of the process of nation (and empire) building.

⁵² Even as the exhibitions contrasted European and colonial identities by depicting the former through representations of "modernity," they celebrated the distinctive, "traditional" cultures of European states as evidence of a long-held nationhood that had progressed into modernity. Unlike European exhibits, displays of colonial "tradition" served as proof of their economic and political pre-modernity. As Shanny Peer demonstrates in her analysis of the 1937 World's Fair in Paris, Europeans reconciled their continued tradition with markers of their modern nationhood. They integrated "tradition" into a national identity rather than viewing it in opposition to modernity. Peer, *France on Display: Peasants, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair* (Albany: University of New York Press, 1998), 2-3 and 9. Markus Heinonen also demonstrates this point in his analysis of Germany's promotion of its nationhood at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair in "An Exhibitionary Expression of the German National Experience: A Study of Germany's Participation at the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904" (M.A. Thesis, University of Kentucky, 2006).

Reassured by notions of racial and cultural difference, the sustainability of imperial depictions of Indian tradition at the exhibitions testifies to their ongoing importance to British colonial power. The contrasts of Indian “tradition” and British “modernity” at the exhibitions, however, portrayed unstable, variable notions of Indian difference. This manuscript, then, approaches British exhibitions through the lens of Postcolonial Studies, which examine contestations to imperial rule and to the hierarchical division of East-West thereafter. Colonial discourse theory, as one strand of postcolonial scholarship, reveals the ambiguities of an imperial discourse that separated the European “self” from the colonized “other.” Scholars of this theory portray Indian history outside the supposed certainties of Western historicism, and deny the exclusivity of “modernity” to the West. They argue that Indian “difference,” rather than signaling Indian inferiority, enabled subversions to Western power. In *The Location of Culture*, for example, Homi Bhabha asserts the ambivalence of imperial discourse and its ability to be problematized by the colonized. Producing an “otherwise to modernity,” colonial subjects defied Western boundaries and trajectories. Bhabha demonstrates the importance of a hybridity that “unsettles” Western, knowledge-based categories.⁵³

This study employs different strands of postcolonial scholarship that argue for the fragility of imperial discourse, subaltern perspectives,⁵⁴ and a dominant but not

⁵³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004). In a “psychoanalytic” vein of colonial discourse theory, Bhabha argues for the “in between” of cultural hybridity that destabilized colonial categories separating the European self from the colonized “other.” Colonized peoples responded to the colonialist presence with an “imitation” or “mimicry” that distorted the original discourse rather than producing a “copy of the original.” This altered discourse enacted a more subtle opposition to colonialism. The “mutation” or “hybrid” that colonized subjects produced challenged the fixities of colonial discourse and its construction of “otherness.”

⁵⁴ For a discussion of subaltern studies, see Ranajit Guha, ed., *A Subaltern Studies Reader: 1986-1995* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). The importance of subaltern studies rests in their emphasis on the resistances to colonial rule by subaltern Indians who, although obscured in British-imperial and Indian-nationalist versions of history, acted politically and shaped historical processes.

hegemonic British power.⁵⁵ It engages such postcolonial methods by re-evaluating historical approaches that solely document dominant (social elite, male, official, and European) views and experiences. Although the obvious power over the exhibitions and in the Empire rested within British officials and, at times, comprador (collaborative class of English-educated) Indians, this study locates the instabilities of this power and its discourses. It also examines the differing levels of power held by Indians who participated in and responded to the exhibitions. Indians had complex influences on the colonialist regime. They reaffirmed, and disrupted imperialist discourse in the context of the exhibitions. The following chapters therefore emphasize the historical importance of destabilizing the perceived political and ideological hegemony of empire through the case study of India at the exhibitions.

In taking a postcolonial perspective, this manuscript poses similar methodological questions to those of postcolonial studies in general. If the obvious power rested with British officials and their ability to display colonized Indians, what other forms of power were there? If Indians (or at least non-elite Indians) were not “heard” or their perspectives were not articulated, were they still meaningful or historical? Can the historian effectively interpret them? What differing imperialist, nationalistic, and

Postcolonial scholarship of the “subaltern” strand, however, debates whether historians can effectively interpret and uncover the voices of Indians who were not “heard” during colonial rule. They question the effectiveness of a subaltern framework that purports to represent a marginalized group. Historians, these scholars argue, simply (re)produce another, knowledge-based discourse. In her article “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak inaugurated a debate on the futility of the subaltern project, although she did not intend to discredit subaltern studies. Spivak deconstructs the “re-presentation” of the Subaltern who had a “not-speakingness” implicit in its historical identity. She thus assesses the difficulties of unveiling a subaltern perspective, as subaltern studies cannot actually speak for the subaltern that, by definition, has “not been heard.” See *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (New York: Routledge, 1995), 24-28.

⁵⁵ Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). Guha argues that because the Raj did not rule by consent, its dominance via persuasion (of the upper and middle classes) did not eliminate the use of coercion (directed toward the lower-classes).

economic goals did Indians present at the exhibitions? While this study will not claim to represent the perspectives of subaltern Indians, it will elucidate some degree of Indian agency during British exhibitions. In doing so, it considers the various perspectives of Indians who helped administer, were on display within, and critiqued the exhibitions. This study also recognizes that without access to subaltern perspectives within the context of the exhibitions, its arguments rest to a large degree on the voices of Indian elites and the deconstruction of colonialist discourse.⁵⁶

With these postcolonial queries in mind, the following chapters examine the impact of imperialism on exhibitions held after Indian independence in 1947. The political and economic vestiges of empire, according to postcolonial works, have left former colonies such as India in positions of ideological relegation and material deprivation. In *Provincializing Europe*, for example, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that histories of India obscure Indian conceptions of history and modernity, portraying India's "transition" into the modern world through Western conceptions. Such histories view modern India as "incomplete" and perpetuate the imperial notion of India's difference as its weakness. Chakrabarty, like Bhabha, denies the authority and objectivity of a continued colonial discourse and the ideological monopoly of the West.⁵⁷ Other scholars argue that the inheritance of the structures of the colonial economy and imperial

⁵⁶ It is important to note that, according to Sudipta Kaviraj's "On the Construction of Colonial Power," the lower classes (the subalterns) of India retained a separateness and distinctiveness from the indigenous and imperialist elite. Kaviraj argues that the "Westernized" elite in India did not carry their ideological engagement with Western discourse "downwards toward the people." This hindered the ability of the Indian elite to create its own hegemony and dialogue with the lower classes before and after independence. See *Contesting Colonial Hegemony: State & Society in Africa and India*, eds. Dagmar Engels and Shula Marks (London: British Academic Press, 1994), 19-54.

⁵⁷ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000). In *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), Uma Narayan details the continued effects of colonial, and nationalist, discourses about "cultural difference" on perceptions of Indian women. Also see Mary John, *Discrepant Dislocations: Feminism, Theory, and Postcolonial Histories* (London: University of California Press, 1996).

governance hindered the development of alternative models for Indian democracy, development, and nationhood.⁵⁸ By examining exhibitions held during and after imperial rule, this study traces the impact of imperialist ideologies over time. It also pluralizes power within the context of India at the exhibitions.

The Exhibitions

As this manuscript de-emphasizes the security of European empires and their discourses, it historicizes Indian exhibits within the context of imperialism in India over time and the exhibitionary landscape of Britain. Undertaken through a collaboration of public and private initiative, imperial and international exhibitions in Britain were administered frequently through private organizations, but were often state-sanctioned and served public goals. British officials served on the administrative committees of the exhibitions, colonial governments subsidized exhibits, and the exhibitions had official opening processions. British officials, along with Indian representatives, administered Indian exhibits. With funding from the India Office and the Government of India, exhibitions of India undoubtedly provide insights into the aims, conflicts, and cultural technologies of British imperial governance over time. As unsteady projects of British rule, exhibitions in London were shaped by the contemporary realities of colonial governance.

⁵⁸ See the articles in *Nationalism, Democracy, and Development: State and Politics in India*, eds. Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal (Oxford University Press, 1998); Sudipta Kaviraj and Martin Doornbos, eds., *Dynamics of State Formation: India and Europe Compared* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997).

1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition

The first exhibition in this study, the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, occurred during a high point of exhibitionary activity and after the establishment of governmental rule in India. Held within the district of South Kensington, the Exhibition represented colonial India and other British colonies in the metropole. From May 4th to November 10th, approximately six million people visited the Exhibition. As the first exclusively imperial exhibition held in London, it provides a cornerstone for analyzing India at subsequent exhibitions. India occupied the largest space of over 100,000 square feet.⁵⁹ The Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition organized the Exhibition overall, with British administrators overseeing Indian exhibits under the auspices of the India Office in London and the Government of India.

The Exhibition coincided with Britain's final consolidation of Indian territories under the Raj, as well as the emergence of Europe's "new imperialism." Its displays depicted an imperial confidence in the ability to "know" and classify India following the suppression of the 1857 Indian Rebellion.⁶⁰ Thereafter, under the newly-formed Raj government in India—in which the British government appropriated the political power of the East India Company in 1858—British narratives stringently asserted and institutionalized India's ostensibly unchanging hierarchies, its divided and agrarian communities, and its reliance on "natural" leadership.⁶¹ As a product of these imperial

⁵⁹ Peter Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 9.

⁶⁰ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*; Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, 15. Britain made its last major acquisition of Indian territory in 1885, with the conquest of Upper Burma.

⁶¹ Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of India* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 133. Sumit Sarkar explains that the "divide and rule" policy of the Empire, for example,

classifications, prominent exhibits in 1886 situated India as a pre-modern and pre-industrial subcontinent of villages, bazaars, and princely states. The Indian section included a simulated Indian palace and durbar, reconstructed agricultural and artisanal scenes, and models of villages encompassing local societies. Although housed in “courts” rather than a separate pavilion, the Indian section enclosed an architectural schematic that rendered India as a feudal land, dominated by princely and local politics. Economic exhibits of India, moreover, catalogued Indian agriculture and artisanal wares, preserved under India’s supposedly timeless bazaars and villages. Indian artisans demonstrated the making of local crafts within a Palace Forecourt, and displayed their racial “difference” from imperial visitors. Archetypal depictions of Indian “tradition” at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition served as a model for future exhibitions and their popularization of Indian crafts.

The perceived difference of Indian “tradition,” however, co-existed with views of a possible Indian similarity, as well as critiques of a British rule that, far from a non-interventionist presence, significantly altered the political and economic landscape of India. Though successful overall in creating for its visitors a contemporary India “preserved” in its cultural tradition and feudal politics, some critiques of the Exhibition viewed Indian exhibits through changes wrought by empire. Even as administrators used the Exhibition to propagate the benevolence of British rule, visitors noted the negative effects of the imperial economy on Indian artisanal wares and industrial capacities. They lamented the decline of India’s “traditional” crafts as a result of their competition in an

constructed ‘martial races’ based on divisions of caste, religion, race, and region. See *Modern India*, 16 and 33.

international economy dominated by manufactured goods. In doing so, contemporaries appreciated “authentic” Indian artwares even as they confined India to a pre-modern era.

1908 Franco-British Exhibition

The second exhibition in this study, the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition, held prior to the unprecedented destruction of the First World War, marketed colonial spectacle and enabled comparisons of the French and British empires. Like the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition took place in the British metropole and represented French and British colonies as anachronistic presences in a “modern” city. The Exhibition opened on May 14th 1908 at Shepherd’s Bush in west London, with twenty palaces and eight exhibition halls situated on 140 acres, and garnered approximately 8.5 million visitors in six months.

The main objective of holding a co-organized exhibition arose from the *Entente Cordiale* of 1904, a Franco-British agreement against German expansionism and potential colonial conflict. As a co-managed event, the Exhibition attempted to solidify and foster the bond between England and France primarily through commercial relations.⁶² Nonetheless, the Franco-British Exhibition demonstrated competitive French and British nationalisms even as it attempted to transcend imperial rivalries and

⁶² *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and the Franco-British Exhibition, 1908* (London: Ward Lock and Co., 1908), D; F.G. Dumas, ed., *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908), 4. Dumas explained that the Exhibition stood for “mutual appreciation and good-will, for common aims and interests; it cover[ed] sentiment, understanding and material relations.”

boundaries.⁶³ Though administered privately overall under the supervision of Hungarian-born exhibitionary impresario Imre Kiralfy, the financing and organization of the Exhibition resembled the different approaches of the French and British governments to exhibitions. The former offered direct government support and the latter decentralized the Exhibition, relying mostly on private sponsorship and the cooperation of colonial governments. The British government remained directly involved in the Exhibition. It established an official guarantee fund, the Exhibition explicitly served official goals, and colonial governments headed their respective sections.

The abundant and manipulable space of Shepherd's Bush, transformed into a "White City" by Kiralfy, enabled the representation of different colonies in their respective buildings. Separate colonial buildings contrasted with the modern environment of London and differentiated the political statures of the colonies. The Franco-British Exhibition also enlarged reconstructed "native" scenes of the late nineteenth century, and added live performances of Indians. The numerous British and French buildings, demonstrating their arts, industries, and governance, enabled hierarchical comparisons of European "modernity" with the political and economic standings of their colonies.

In many ways, Indian spaces at the Franco-British Exhibition expanded upon depictions of India popularized at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Supervised by a British-dominated committee in London, the administration of the Indian Pavilion mirrored the autocratic rule of the Raj prior to the First World War. British-run exhibits reinforced imperial notions of a feudal and traditional India. Agricultural and artisanal

⁶³ The spatially opposed British Palace of Industries and French Palace of Industries, situated on the sides of the Court of Honour at the Exhibition's entrance, evinced this Franco-British relationship that attempted to mediate imperial and industrial tensions through economic and colonial cooperation.

wares dominated the provincial and state courts of the Indian Pavilion. In the absence of the sort of taxonomic classification schemes of model colonial “races” prevalent at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the Franco-British Exhibition relied upon “live” renditions to denote racial difference, such as privately-administered colonial performances. The presence of separate villages devoted to Ceylon and Senegal invited visitors to make generic distinctions between the “racial” capacities of Asians and Africans. Visitors also differentiated these colonial dependencies from Ireland, which had its own model village. Despite its subordinate position in the Union, Ireland did not portray “savage” or “primitive” peoples, but rather an Irish heritage that denoted its “traditional” national past.⁶⁴ In contrast to Ceylon and Senegal, India did not offer a “primitive” village. The privately-run Indian Arena, however, continued to situate India in the past through “native” performances from the Mughal era. Press coverage generalized the diverse populations of colonial Asia, mistaking the Ceylon Village for an Indian Village.⁶⁵

1924 British Empire Exhibition

As an even larger effort to propagandize British governance, its industries, and the Empire, the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley offered the first exclusively imperial exhibition held in London after the First World War. Held from April 23rd to November

⁶⁴ David Fitzpatrick, “Ireland and the Empire,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 3, ed. Andrew Porter (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998-1999), 494-521. According to Fitzpatrick, Ireland occupied an ambiguous position within the Empire, in which British methods of rule included colonization, relegation, and coercion.

⁶⁵ “Franco-British Exhibition 1908,” *Times* (London), 14 May 1908, p. 4.

1st 1924, the Empire Exhibition, with its pavilions representing imperial territories, purported to offer each colony “in its habit as it thrives to-day.”⁶⁶ The Exhibition not only promised to provide a “microcosm” of empire, but included the (now reconstructed) Wembley Stadium, an amusements section, and British buildings of Government, Industry, and Engineering.

As one of the most visible and popular features of the Empire Exhibition, the Indian Pavilion housed renditions of India’s “traditional” and “feudal” past as reasons for British rule. Similar to pre-war exhibitions, the Exhibition featured India as an anachronistic presence in the metropole. India’s seventeenth-century Pavilion of the Mughal-era, situated around artificial lakes, contrasted with the nearby “modern” architectural schemes of the Dominion buildings of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The Pavilion housed models of local villages and bazaars, agricultural and handmade products, and “living displays” of Indian artisans that fashioned the illusion that non-colonial visitors had entered a changeless India. In these ways, the Exhibition contrasted the “modernity” of Britain’s urban, industrial nationhood with the enduring “tradition” of a provincial India.

In its renditions of Indian “tradition,” the British Empire Exhibition relied upon familiar representational strategies established in exhibitions of the late nineteenth century that emphasized India’s “difference” from modern Britain. The Empire Exhibition, however, differed from previous exhibitions in London because it publicized Indian similarity to Britain in its political and economic modernization. With the First World War, the visibility of Indian adaptations of “modernity” and “progress”

⁶⁶ G.C. Lawrence, ed., *British Empire Exhibition, 1924: Official Guide* (London: Fleetway Press Ltd., 1924), 13.

problematized monolithic constructions of India's racial "difference" and notions of its immobility within "tradition."⁶⁷ Upon entering the princely façade of the Indian Pavilion, advertised as "a playhouse of truly Oriental splendor," visitors could experience, too, a modernizing, complex, and contested India.⁶⁸ Indian officials independently ran provincial exhibits, demonstrating their leadership in the government. Indian businessmen also constructed exhibits to develop their export and industrial markets. The Indian Pavilion showcased the substantial gains made by Indians in diversifying and expanding their industries by including manufactured products alongside models of textile mills, ports, and urbanization schemes. The Exhibition could not exclude new ways of imagining post-war India within the visible forces of Indian industrial expansion and political participation.

Overall, the inter-war growth and viability of Indian nationalism, the burgeoning of Indian industry and commercial pursuits, and the increased political autonomy of elite Indians led to visible changes in cultural representations of India. Indian participation in the First World War helped spur these changes. India contributed both manpower and financial assets to Britain's efforts in the First World War, in which the Allies claimed to protect the self-determination of nations. Although India had defended British interests abroad in previous wars, it made a massive contribution to the imperial war effort. India assembled the largest colonial army in the world for the First World War, which resulted

⁶⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London: Verso, 2006); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 26; Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 205-227. Duara and Chatterjee modify the Andersonian approach to nation-building, rejecting his argument that colonies imported Western modes of nationalism, primarily in opposition to imperialism. These scholars assert that India's cultural specificities, such as the pervasiveness of religion in Indian society, enabled Indians to cultivate a national identity separate and different from the material dominance of Britain.

⁶⁸ "India at Wembley. Splendour of the East. A Bazaar in Being," *Times*, 24 May 1924, p. 7.

in the deaths of approximately 62,000 Indians. As a result of the economic transformations during the First World War, India developed a more varied and competitive economy, one that was less complementary with Britain's economic interests. Prior to the inter-war period, Britain's capitalist industrialization drove India's economy by exporting raw materials and importing British industry. The First World War, however, raised the price of imported manufactured goods, aiding India's industrial and commercial growth as separate from, and less controlled by, British economic aims.⁶⁹

Even as India contributed significantly to the Allied war effort, the possibility of Indian discontent festering into a revolt compelled British officials to reconsider governance in India. The War provoked a more visible anti-imperial nationalism fueled in part by imperial repression under an autocratic rule. The Indian National Congress (established in 1885) posed a more forceful opposition to British rule during the inter-war period and demanded a more participatory politics through constitutional reform. Hindered by regional and communal divisions, the Congress—basically composed of male, western-educated Indians—made limited political demands until the First World War. Despite its inter-war potency, the Congress chronically suffered from internal fragmentation.⁷⁰ It also clashed with the Muslim League (1906), which, under the leadership of M.A. Jinnah in the inter-war years, became increasingly frustrated with the Hindu-dominated Congress.⁷¹ India's struggle for self-rule therefore drew momentum from movements that were independent from the Congress, including religious, local,

⁶⁹ Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of India*, 161; Kennedy, *Britain and Empire: 1880-1945*, 44; Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), 245.

⁷⁰ See Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of India*, 137; Judith Brown, "India," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 432-434; Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics, 1915-22* (Cambridge University Press, 1972), xiv and 21-22.

⁷¹ Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 5-11.

labor, and more radical campaigns and uprisings. Nationalist movements in India also employed diverse tactics, ranging from agitation from within the colonial government, to non-cooperation, to violent revolt. Rather than providing a comprehensive account of these particularities of anti-colonial nationalism, this study concentrates on broader nationalist movements and perspectives, such as those of the Indian National Congress, when directly relevant to the exhibitions. Nationalism in India was undoubtedly more complex than the space and focus of this manuscript affords.

With the help of Gandhi's nationwide non-cooperation movements, the Congress posed a more forceful opposition to British dominance. During the First World War, Gandhi's opposition to British acts of brutality and repression rallied Indians around the nationalist movement and gave him widespread prominence.⁷² From 1920 to 1922, for example, Gandhi launched a widespread satyagraha (non-violent resistance) campaign, endorsed by Congress members. Indian nationalists after the First World War, aided by Gandhian movements, asserted that the abuses of imperial rule necessitated concrete steps toward Indian independence.

The Empire Exhibition coincided with the burgeoning of nationalist movements, as well as the devolution of imperial governance. The war-time urgency to collaborate with moderate nationalists, temporarily allied with the Muslim League under the Lucknow Pact (1916) and demanding progress towards self-government, led to a declaration of constitutional intent in 1917.⁷³ As a strategic attempt to safeguard imperial order and deter Indian nationalism during the First World War, British administrators

⁷² Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics, 1915-1922*, 123, 159-160, and 307.

⁷³ Robert Holland, "The British Empire and the Great War, 1914-1918," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 123-124; John Darwin, "A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics," in *Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 78; Wolpert, *Shameful Flight*, 2-3.

promised eventual responsible government for India within an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, timeframe. The British government officially affirmed India's capacity for constitutional devolution, though not political independence, in the 1917 Montagu Declaration. The Government of India Act (1919), which gave Indians more legislative power in the provinces, began the process of decentralization in the Raj government.⁷⁴

Western-educated Indians became even more significant in the inter-war period as participants in the Raj government. Constitutional reforms benefited these elites by giving them a voice in some fiscal and legislative policies. The Act enlarged provincial legislatures, and set up a bicameral system in the central government consisting of a Council of State (the upper house) and Legislative Assembly (the lower house). The elected members of the Legislative Assembly had a majority over nominated members.⁷⁵ The Act also granted provincial governments, led by ministers responsible to legislative assemblies, control over less-influential sectors like public health, agriculture, and education. It enfranchised over five million Indians in the provincial governments—about one-tenth of the adult male population.

Indian provinces attained a larger measure of independence, while the central political and economic power of British ministers remained intact. Although the 1919 Act opened up Indian participation in provincial legislatures, it was a far cry from independence. In order to preserve imperial authority in the central government, British officials retained control over foreign policy, defense, and finance. The Act included provisions to secure the veto—and ultimate authority—of the Viceroy and his Council

⁷⁴ R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-1940* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 2-3.

⁷⁵ As stipulated in the Government of India Act, there would be about one hundred elected members and forty nominated members. Mohinder Pannu, *Partners of British Rule: Liberators or Collaborators?* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 2005), 330; Manoranjan Jha, *Role of Central Legislature in the Freedom Struggle* (New Delhi: Thomson Press, 1972), 40.

over the newly-created Legislative Assembly. In the new self-governing provinces, the Viceroy also had power to veto legislation and to suspend provincial councils. The Act, moreover, divided provincial authority (over departments such as education and public works) between elected and non-elected officials. The 1919 reforms continued to exclude Indian politicians from influential departments of the government and subjected them to governors' vetoes.

British administrators, then, did not intend the reforms of 1919 as a move towards immediate self-rule in India but rather as a means of allying more closely with Indian elites and thus safeguarding the foundations of Empire.⁷⁶ The Act kept British officials in control of the executive council and gave Indians minimal power in provincial councils. This diarchy system restricted the self-government of the new Legislative Councils of Indian provinces and the Central Indian Legislature. The new government, in many ways, continued to relegate Indian initiative and authority. British officials also clung to established tactics of repression and violence on the ground. The 1919 reforms, instituting only minor changes in power structures, coincided with imperial repression and violence. In 1919, the Rowlatt Bills extended wartime restrictions on individual liberties, including the suspension of due process. In the same year, General Dyer's troops fired upon a peaceful crowd in Amritsar, killing at least 379 Indians.⁷⁷

Britain's colonial project in inter-war India, then, left an "imprint of ambiguity" on the administration as well as the exhibits of the Empire Exhibition, cultivating a

⁷⁶ Brown, "India," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 437-438; John Gallagher and Anil Seal, "Britain and India between the Wars," *Modern Asian Studies* 15 (1981), 399.

⁷⁷ Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, 237-238; Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-1940*, 4; Wolpert, *Shameful Flight*, 4.

mosaic of contradictory images of India in the metropole.⁷⁸ Imperial displays adjusted to the inter-war ambiguities of India's place in the empire, as neither a Dominion nor a colonial dependency. As D.A. Low details in *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, India's struggle for self-rule in the inter-war era was met with a British policy of "ambiguity" that, in the long-term, hastened India's independence. Restrictive measures of the inter-war era were coupled with a gradual political and economic devolution. The repression of civil liberties accompanied, for example, the constitutional reforms of the 1919 Government of India Act. British officials, moreover, variously responded to the growing nationalist movement with accommodation as well as coercion. Such palpable inconsistencies of British policies in India after the First World War led to a complex and even contested participation of India in the British Empire Exhibition.

Indian and British administrators simultaneously assumed responsibility for representing India at the Empire Exhibition, and thus had competing claims to ownership over "progress" on the subcontinent. Imperialist notions continued to emphasize a "traditional" India that needed evolutionary steps towards self-rule under British guidance. British officials explicitly recognized that exhibits promoted the new political and economic status of India in the inter-war period, but asserted that Indian progress resulted from British intervention there. Austin Kendall's report to the Royal Society on India at the 1924 Exhibition asserted that during the First World War, "the people of India came to a more complete realisation of their comradeship with the rest of the Empire ... their troops fought side by side with their brothers of the Empire in many fronts; and this ... gave a sudden acceleration to the pace of both political and industrial

⁷⁸ D.A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity, 1929-1942* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

advancement.”⁷⁹ British officials believed that India’s new representative institutions, as an extensive 1924 survey of the British Empire put it, “[were] not indigenous in Indian soil.” The official rhetoric of the 1919 reforms, therefore, viewed “the widening political liberty in British India” as “*the outcome* of British administration and control.”⁸⁰

The administration of the Indian section at the Empire Exhibition, however, illustrated the limitations to Britain’s political and ideological “hegemony” over India in the inter-war period. The management of the Indian Pavilion rested largely in the hands of Indian, rather than British, officials who put forth comprador as well as oppositional narratives of British rule. Administered overall by an Exhibition Board, which included prominent British officials, the 1924 Exhibition decentralized many of its sections, including the Indian Pavilion. The Board of Trade did not initially offer official sponsorship or financing, but approved a proposal to hold an exhibition in 1921.⁸¹ Private sponsors, backed by ever-increasing government contributions to a Guarantee Fund, financed the Exhibition. The Dominions, as well as India, financed and fashioned their own buildings.

Indian officials had gained a remarkable amount of authority over Indian participation in the Empire Exhibition. The ability of the Legislative Assembly to approve the Exhibition, and the oversight of Indian officials over the exhibits of Indian provinces, demonstrated the restricted political devolution in the Raj and the acceptance of educated Indians as legitimate spokesmen for a modernizing India. The volatile

⁷⁹ Austin Kendall, “The Participation of India and Burma in the British Empire Exhibition, 1924,” *Royal Society of Arts* 71 (Aug., 1923): 648.

⁸⁰ Emphasis mine. Sir Charles Lucas, *The Story of the Empire*, vol. 1, in *The British Empire: A Survey*, ed. Hugh Gunn (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1924), 263.

⁸¹ D.B.T. Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition, 1924: Report by the Commissioner for India for the British Empire Exhibition* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1925), 1.

political terrain of India in the inter-war period, however, made it difficult for the Raj to project the illusion of imperial integration at the 1924 Empire Exhibition. The Indian Commissioner, T. Vijayaraghavacharya, promoted the Exhibition as a demonstration of India's political and economic modernization, and its satisfaction under the rule of a benevolent empire. In contrast to the wholehearted support offered by administrators like Vijayaraghavacharya, many Indians in provincial governments and the Legislative Assembly, especially nationalists, contested the 1924 Exhibition as a protest to Britain's continued autocracy in India. Although exhibitionary rhetoric largely marginalized nationalist opposition to imperial rule, it did not entirely obscure the fractures in imperial governance and its ideologies. While many Indian provinces funded extensive sections in 1924, some provinces declined participation entirely. The conflicts of imperial governance that shaped Indian representation at the British Empire Exhibition lessened the Exhibition's ability to portray imperial unity.

When the Empire Exhibition opened, comprador Indian officials and economic elites ran displays of provinces in the Pavilion. Under this Indian authority, the Pavilion displayed signs of Indian modernization in its indigenous industry and political participation. Economic exhibits manifested the increasingly divergent interests of Indian and British businessmen, as Indian entrepreneurs used the Exhibition to expand and advertise their industries in international markets. The growth of Indian industry emerging out of the First World War blurred the stringent separation between "pre-industrial" India and industrial Britain.

Indian businessmen and provincial officials, though conspicuous at the Exhibition, often sold India's "traditional" products in order to make profits. By the

inter-war era, Indian “tradition” had long been a source of admiration in the West for skillful, handmade goods that derived from distant, exotic lands. Indian administrators and elites who ran exhibits purposefully reproduced iconic images of Indian tradition through bazaar scenes, filled with artisanal goods and populated by “natives.” They perpetuated Indian tradition in the metropole in order to advertise their provinces and sell products. Although Indian “natives” who demonstrated their trades and offered performances continued to be a source of Western observation and evidence of India’s “difference,” exhibits largely abandoned the overt racialization of Indians.

After a modicum of renovations, the Empire Exhibition reopened in 1925 with promises to further stimulate the imperial economy and educate more Britons about the Empire. In response to the Exhibition’s loss of money in 1924, William Lunn, the Parliamentary Secretary of Overseas Trade, explained that “it seems clear that there will be considerable outcry when the financial results are known, both from the guarantors and from other critics, especially in view of so large a loss having been incurred as against only some six months enjoyment by the public.” A re-opening in 1925 promised to reduce the deficit of the 1924 Exhibition, and spread it over two years instead of one.⁸²

In hopes of enhancing the success of the 1925 re-opening and enticing colonial and Dominion governments to participate, and even remodel their exhibits, for another year, the British government offered financial subsidies. The government’s offer of monetary assistance, however, excluded India. In 1925, India did not officially sponsor a

⁸² “Report by his Grace the Duke of Devonshire (Chairman) to the Meeting of the Executive Council, 3 March 1925,” British Library (BL), India Office Records (IOR) L/E/7/1186; William Lunn, “The Future of the British Empire Exhibition: Memorandum by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Dept of Overseas Trade,” 31 July 1924, The National Archives, Kew (TNA), T 161/153; *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and the British Empire Exhibition, 1925* (London: Ward, Lock and Company, 1925), E; Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?*.

re-opened Exhibition, as both British and Indian officials refrained from offering financial support to maintain the Pavilion. Instead, the Indian Pavilion, directed overall by the Exhibition Board, housed provincial displays and private exhibits run by Indian businessmen who hoped to expand their markets and sell Indian goods. In these ways, the 1925 Indian Pavilion typified the broader goals of the Exhibition to advertise and buttress colonial economies. It did not, however, demonstrate a “Family Party” of racial cohesion in the Empire fostered during the First World War. The divergent goals of Indian businessmen and comprador officials on the one hand, and Indians who allied with the nationalist movement and its boycott of the Exhibition on the other, culminated in 1925 with a non-official representation of India.

1951 Festival of Britain

Prior to Indian independence, the 1924 British Empire Exhibition noticeably challenged assertions of the stability and even permanence of British dominance in India. After Indian self-rule, exhibitions continued to negotiate the changing power dynamics of Britain and India in the world, and showed the instabilities of the Empire-Commonwealth in the post-war era. A testament to the importance of historical context to exhibitionary portrayals of the Empire, the 1951 Festival of Britain emerged out of the Second World War, at a time of undisputable political change within the Empire and across the globe. Britain experienced a series of decisive moments as a result of colonial conflicts, economic emergencies, and the growing influence of American policy on British finances and colonial entanglements. The precipitous withdrawal of Britain from India, Burma,

and Ceylon immediately after the Second World War serves as one of the starkest examples of post-war colonial change, and signaled to some a moment of crisis in, or even the virtual collapse of, the Empire. Britain, nonetheless, persisted as a world power and British officials clung to remaining colonial territories, retained spheres of influence alongside America's growing presence abroad, and negotiated new avenues of power through alliances with Commonwealth members.

Following Indian independence in 1947, the Festival of Britain surfaced as an "inward-looking" demonstration of Britain's continued economic and political modernity after the Second World War. As a highly contested event developed under a Labour government in an "age of austerity," the Festival served as an official attempt to reinvigorate Britain's domestic economy and worldwide importance. Initiated as an international event similar to pre-war exhibitions, the government reinvented the Festival as a nationalistic depiction of Britain. British official and administrative circles restricted the Festival to displays of British culture, technological and scientific ingenuity, and industrial development; consequently, they debated the extent of Empire-Commonwealth representation. Though they hoped to include some form of imperial participation, administrators did not permit Commonwealth countries to demonstrate their modern nationhoods separate from the metropole, unless these countries directly financed exhibits.

Such restrictions, and the declining authority of Britain over Commonwealth countries, led to an almost absent empire at the Festival of Britain, including the newest members of the Commonwealth, India and Pakistan. The Festival did not include nationalistic portrayals of independent, Commonwealth members. They opposed the

very nature of the Festival as a product of Britain's one-sided perspective of modernity, and the inequalities inherent in the Commonwealth. When the Festival opened, it narrated a fictionalized and problematic story of British imperialism, in which the colonial regime fostered democracies and economic development in the Empire-Commonwealth. India and Pakistan, as recently autonomous states renegotiating relations with Britain and their potential entry into the Commonwealth, scarcely participated in the Festival's depiction of empire.

Summary of Chapters

The first three chapters of this study are organized thematically, each devoted to a specific mode of representing colonial India. Each of these chapters is structured chronologically, beginning with the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition and concluding with the 1924-1925 British Empire Exhibition. Chapter One provides an overview of the exhibitions and their management, which increasingly co-opted Indian administrators. It examines the architecture and spatial terrain of the exhibitions and how they set up experiential hierarchies of the Empire. Exhibitionary architecture and spatial landscapes simulated travel through space and time, in which observers viewed colonies as anachronistic presences within the modern metropole. The exhibitions in particular located India within a feudal past through princely architecture and through the created environments of pre-industrial villages and bazaars. By the 1924 Empire Exhibition, the Oriental façade of the Indian Pavilion situated India in a pre-modern era, but the devolved administration over exhibits also evidenced India's (long-term) path to self-

rule. Prior to 1924, only select, comprador Indians had a modicum of influence over the exhibitions. As a result of the 1919 Government of India Act, Indians had provincial autonomy and an overall authority to approve and oversee Indian representation at the 1924 Empire Exhibition.

Chapter Two details Indian representation at the exhibitions through concepts of race embedded in imperial exhibits. Indians participated in the exhibitions as administrators and as “living” displays, performing their cultural difference to Western observers. This chapter, then, examines the cultural entrenchment of Indian “natives” into racialized villages and cultural performances, but also the nuances of such ethnographic displays. The more cautious approach to ethnographic depictions of Indians and the importance of comprador Indians to the Raj government in the inter-war period more clearly represented notions of Indian similarity alongside those of racial difference. Protests against the 1924 Empire Exhibition, moreover, served as a rallying cry for Indians who opposed a British rule that used repressive measures and secured the dominance of British officials. Indian nationalists and officials increasingly objected to the 1924 Exhibition, and likened their protests of the Exhibition to their protests against the racial inequalities of the Empire. The political changes of the inter-war period engendered visible, even conflicting, changes in the displays and the administration of the 1924 British Empire Exhibition.

Chapter Three examines economic exhibits of India, comparatively over time and in comparison with Dominion and British exhibits. The exhibitions infused India’s economic displays with contested and complex Orientalist knowledge about India’s traditional, pre-industrial systems. The image of the Indian artisan embodied India’s

unchanging economic systems of a British past at the same time that it contrasted with the problems of British industrialization. The Indian bazaar, as well, signified the supposed changelessness of India's traditional economy, but progressively conveyed the commercial and industrial entrepreneurship of Indian merchants. Indian industrialization remained a minimal feature of exhibitions prior to the First World War, but became a notable exemplar of Indian modernization and economic initiative at the British Empire Exhibition. In 1924, Indian businessmen and officials ran provincial and private stalls, showcasing artwares as well as expanding their international markets. Paradoxically, these elite Indians constructed bazaar renditions in order to appeal to the popularized notion of Indian "tradition." Even as Indian businessmen and officials demonstrated their ability to diversify and expand markets, they often resorted to familiar depictions of India in order to sell goods. The economic motives of Indian businessmen and some Indian officials who participated in the Empire Exhibition contrasted with the political contestations of Indian nationalists in the newly created Legislative Assembly and provincial legislatures.

Chapter Four is devoted to an exhibition held during India's post-independence era: the 1951 Festival of Britain. It details the planning of the Festival of Britain, including its origins as an "international" exhibition and its complex transformation into a nationalistic portrayal of Britain. In particular, this chapter focuses on debates in the Festival Office, and across various colonial, foreign, and commonwealth offices, over the extent of imperial representation. A plethora of British officials supported various forms of colonial and Commonwealth participation. However, Commonwealth countries, especially India, Pakistan, and Canada, did not want to participate in an exhibition of

British contributions to modernity. Rather, they pushed, albeit unsuccessfully, for their ability to portray their own modernity. As the newly-independent India and Pakistan negotiated their entry into the Commonwealth and stance in Cold War politics, they, in turn, re-negotiated their participation in exhibitions held in London. Consequently, India and Pakistan used the 1951 Festival of Britain as a forum to voice their dissent against their unjust treatment in the Commonwealth.

CHAPTER TWO: EXHIBITIONARY LANDSCAPES

The first world's fair, the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition, presented "an ideal industrial world," largely rendered for visitors in economic terms, and to a lesser degree, through imperial exhibits.⁸³ Held within nineteen acres of Hyde Park in London, it provided the most comprehensive display of colonial territories at the time, drawing in six million visitors to see exhibits from nation-states and colonies across the globe. The East India Company governed India and managed the 24,000 square feet of Indian courts. It "assembled an exhaustive array" of raw materials, artisanal crafts, and ornate exhibits that denoted India's "Oriental splendor" as well as its economic profitability.⁸⁴ Thereafter, Indian exhibits at imperial and international exhibitions would be under the authority of the Raj government, with its intent to classify "knowledge" about the subcontinent and render it understandable and observable in the West. Imperial themes became ever more prevalent at national and international exhibitions in the second half of the nineteenth century. The volume of interest directed at colonial exhibits in 1851 led officials and administrators to expand exhibitionary sections devoted to colonized territories. They claimed to provide "microcosms" of empire, serving as "tours" to distant and exotic territories, and brought "native" peoples to the exhibitionary spaces to perform their daily living conditions.

⁸³ Louise Purbrick, ed., "Introduction," in *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester University Press, 2001), 2.

⁸⁴ Lara Kriegel, "Narrating the Subcontinent: India at the Crystal Palace," in *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, 146-150. Also see Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*; Jeffrey A. Auerbach and Peter H. Hoffenberg, *Britain, the Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008); Abigail McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

As a “tour” of the British Empire, the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition at South Kensington promised to transfer visitors from the imperial metropole to the differing temporal and spatial locations of the colonies. Intended as an instructional experience for visitors that would also stimulate the imperial economy, the Exhibition produced, according to the *Times*, a “real educational effect” in which visits “formed the best possible substitute for a tour through the British Empire.”⁸⁵ Upon entering the Exhibition, visitors “arrived” in India, transported from “the ever changing West into the stately splendor of that unchanging antique life of the East, the tradition of which has been preserved in pristine purity.”⁸⁶ Exemplars of this “enduring” Indian tradition, as a contrast to the modern progress of Britain, included architectural styles of the Mughal era, feudal settings from princely states, and pre-industrial milieus of villages and bazaars populated by model and living “natives.” These supposedly untouched scenes of Indian tradition, located within over 100,000 square feet, signaled to visitors the historical stagnation of colonial India.

Subsequent exhibitions in London, housing colonial courts within separate buildings, expanded as “tours” to the various spatial and temporal locations of colonies. After the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, exhibitions moved out of the city center and became part of suburbanization schemes in London. British administrators and financiers urbanized and imperialized the London districts of Shepherd’s Bush and Wembley in order to construct the 1908 and 1924 Exhibitions as “tours” of the Empire.⁸⁷ The 1908 *Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and the Franco-British Exhibition*

⁸⁵ “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *Times*, 10 November 1886, p. 4.

⁸⁶ “Indian Art at The Colonial And Indian Exhibition,” *Times*, 22 May 1886, p. 5.

⁸⁷ *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and the British Empire Exhibition, 1924*, 45th ed. revised (London: Ward, Lock and Company, 1924), E.

discussed the Franco-British Exhibition as a tourist site, offering first a section on the Exhibition, a “city in itself,” and a second section on London.⁸⁸ As with the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition, the 1924 *Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and the British Empire Exhibition* offered a two-section guide to both the Exhibition and to London. The *Chicago Dial*, moreover, explained hyperbolically that Wembley had been a “rural outskirts of London,” but became a city in itself, transforming the center of London into “a suburb of Wembley.”⁸⁹

As practically self-sustaining cities, the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition, on 140 acres, and the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, on 216 acres, cultivated grandiose “microcosms” of empire that also featured amusements sections and buildings devoted to the arts and industries of Britain. Elaborate schemes fashioned the 1908 and 1924 Exhibitions into simulated tours of empire, wherein each colonial building served as a portal into a different geography and historical era. The architecture of buildings and their location within the exhibitionary space demarcated the temporal and spatial distance of the colonies from the industry and modernity of Britain. The *Illustrated Review* of the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition advertised the Indian section as “a hundred guinea Eastern ‘Cook’s trip’ and more, this tour of an hour or so round the Indian Pavilion.”⁹⁰

The 1924 Empire Exhibition produced the hitherto largest rendition of the Empire for “tours” by visitors. The *Official Guide* to the Empire Exhibition stressed this linkage between travels in the Empire and the Exhibition. It declared that “in the old days, the Grand Tour was the prize of the fortunate few,” however “to-day the Grand Tour is

⁸⁸ *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and the Franco-British Exhibition, 1908*, E.

⁸⁹ Mortimer, “London Letter,” 59.

⁹⁰ Herbert Shaw, “The Indian Pavilion,” in *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review*, 266.

within the reach of all; and the actual cost of it is just eighteenpence!”⁹¹ The 1924 Exhibition substituted for and democratized such Grand Tours to various colonies. The famous travel agency, Thomas Cook and Son, established two offices at separate entrances to the Exhibition, provided “a staff of interpreters and guides to take visitors around the Exhibition,” and offered “‘Conducted Tours’ of the Empire” during the day.⁹² The *Official Guide* boasted that “To visit the Exhibition is to visit every Continent on earth.”⁹³

The 1924 Exhibition edition of *Metroland* spoke of visiting exhibits and colonial countries synonymously because the grounds at Wembley constituted a “microcosm” of the Empire.⁹⁴ Several restaurants in colonial pavilions served the “national dishes” of the colonies, including New Zealand, Australia, and India.⁹⁵ The *Times* advertised that “visitors to Wembley may lunch in South Africa, take tea in India, and dine in New Zealand, Australia, or Canada.”⁹⁶ Boats plying the artificial lakes at the center of the Exhibition conveyed visitors across simulated oceans to view the principal colonies. Petty officers of the Royal navy manned the electrically-driven boats, on which “visitors [could] travel from India to New Zealand, the entire length of the lake, or around the Empire, visiting in turn India, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and returning again around the islands to India.”⁹⁷ An article in *L’Illustration*, reprinted in America’s *Living*

⁹¹ Lawrence, ed., *The British Empire Exhibition, 1924: Official Guide*, 13. Admission to the Exhibition was 1 shilling and 6 pence for adults, and 9 pence for children. *Illustrated London News*, 24 May 1924.

⁹² Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 109.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹⁴ *Metroland: British Empire Exhibition Number* (Southbank Publishing, 1924), 12.

⁹⁵ *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and the British Empire Exhibition, 1924*, G.

⁹⁶ “The British Empire Exhibition (Display Advertising),” *Times*, 2 April 1924, p. 13.

⁹⁷ Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 103.

Age, noted that the pavilions “of Canada, of Australia, and of India are regular exhibitions in themselves, worlds within a world.”⁹⁸

As demonstrations of imperial hubris, these miniature “worlds” within London produced vast mobilities of peoples, objects, and ideas across the boundaries of nation-states and their colonies. Exhibitions relied upon the capacity of Western governments to bring peoples (as tourists or as “living” displays) and objects from across the world into a single locale. They shared representational methods and designs, and even impresarios of exhibitionary display. Exhibitionary mobilities also maintained and regulated boundaries and hierarchies.⁹⁹ The management of who was on display (the colonized) and who observed displays (the colonizer) reified the imperial hierarchies embedded in exhibitions even as they transcended national borders. The exhibitions also differentiated colonized subjects, largely confined to the exhibitionary spaces, from imperial officials and administrators who ran exhibits in the metropole.

The assertion of imperial power in British exhibitions necessitated clear depictions of colonial hierarchies. In order to naturalize these hierarchies, exhibitionary authorities carefully managed the placement of objects and peoples from the Empire in the metropole. The temporal and the spatial demarcation of colonial sections also had a significant impact on how the exhibitions set up experiential hierarchies. British authorities carefully designed the architectural and spatial terrains of the exhibitions—and their related narratives of travel—so that archetypal depictions of colonial territories would differentiate them from the metropole. At the exhibitions, the separate spaces allotted to colonial territories both substituted for and encouraged actual travel to the

⁹⁸ Ludovic Naudeau, “The British Empire at Wembley. From *L'Illustration*, May 17 (Paris Illustrated Weekly),” *The Living Age* 322, no. 4174 (July 5, 1924): 31.

⁹⁹ Clavin, “Defining Transnationalism,” 421-439; Also see Cresswell, *On the Move*.

colonies. The constructed geography of the exhibitions simulated travel through both time and space, charting imperial hierarchies by designating the colonies as anachronistic presences within the imperial metropole.¹⁰⁰

In doing so, the exhibitions ranked colonies according to their (lack of) progress towards “modernity” and their subservient political position relative to Britain. As a visible mapping of the Empire’s political and economic structures, the temporal and spatial locations of colonial spaces at the exhibitions contrasted with those of Britain.¹⁰¹ Exhibits fashioned the illusion that visitors could enter the “frozen times” of African and Asian colonies within the modern, urban environment of London.¹⁰² As the exhibitions manifested Western narratives of temporal progress, they characterized the East’s lack of political and economic modernity as symptomatic of its inferior difference. Such trajectories of a teleological history placed colonies within eras of “pre-modernity” and in perpetual stagnation.¹⁰³ The exhibitions displayed colonial time as archaic and European

¹⁰⁰ Scholars examine various linkages between travel and exhibitions, including the ways that colonial exhibits substituted for and promoted tours to the colonies and the metropole. As such, exhibitions were intended to reinforce imperial hierarchies and national identities. See Antoinette Burton, “Making a Spectacle of Empire: Indian Travelers in Fin-de-Siècle London,” *History Workshop Journal* 42 (1996): 127-146; Alexander C.T. Geppert, “True Copies: Time and Space Travels at British Imperial Exhibitions, 1880-1930” in *The Making of Modern Tourism*, eds. Hartmut Berghoff, Barbara Korte, Ralf Schneider, and Christopher Harvie (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 223-248; Ellen Furlough, “*Une leçon des choses*: Tourism, Empire, and the Nation in Interwar France,” *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 441-73.

¹⁰¹ In *Hybrid Modernities*, 6, Patricia Morton explains that “The key to maintaining colonial power was absolute visibility of its hierarchies.” Morton explores the 1931 Colonial Exposition through its visible maintenance of colonial hierarchies, as well as its (ambiguous) manifestations of France’s colonial projects of “association” (preserving colonial inferiority and difference) and “assimilation” (the “civilizing mission”). As an “authentic” representation of empire, the spatial and architectural landscape of the Exposition contrasted and separated French and colonial cultures. Morton argues, however, that the Exposition blurred colony and metropole, presenting *hybrids* of French and colonial cultures.

¹⁰² Geppert, “True Copies: Time and Space Travels at British Imperial Exhibitions, 1880-1930,” 223 and 228.

¹⁰³ For postcolonial analyses of Western conceptions of a linear, stage-driven history and its constructions of colonial pre-modernity, see Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*; Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*.

time as part of the “new” industrial modernity, signaling the evolutionary backwardness, and thus the racial difference, of colonized peoples.¹⁰⁴

The methods for representing colonial difference through exhibitionary landscapes had been established in the second half of the nineteenth century at colonial exhibitions in Europe. At the time, Western regimes consolidated vast empires based on assurances of their political superiority, the universal benefits of spreading modernity, and economic gains to be reaped from colonial expansion. Professing these certainties of colonial rule, the exhibitions strategically aligned colonies with pre-modern political systems and pre-industrial economies. The vast landscapes of early twentieth-century exhibitions—with separate and elaborate pavilions devoted to individual countries and themes—expanded upon these methods.

This chapter examines exhibitions, held prior to Indian independence, as constructed “tours” of the Empire that deliberately demarcated between spaces devoted to modern, imperial Britain and to pre-modern, colonial territories. In doing so, it analyzes the overall spatial and architectural organization of the exhibitions and, specifically, of the colonial Indian sections. Exhibitionary representations of British colonies, filtered through Western grids of knowledge based on a teleological history, placed modern Britain at the apex of historical progress. From the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition through the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, historical, princely architectural styles housed Indian exhibits. The architecture of the 1908 Franco-British and 1924 British Empire exhibitions situated contemporary India within the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Mughal era. This princely façade of Indian buildings at the 1908 Franco-British

¹⁰⁴ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 36-40.

and 1924 Empire exhibitions denoted India's continued ties to a "feudal" past, in contrast to the more modern architectural schemes of the Dominion and British buildings.

Within the Indian sections, the exhibitions carefully regulated the boundaries of colonial spaces and sections devoted to advances made on the subcontinent as a result of British rule. Fashioned as anachronistic presences in a modern metropole, colonial spaces featured agricultural products, artisanal wares, and ethnographic performances. Provincial and state sections largely depicted colonial India through ethnographic scenes, and simulated bazaars and villages with agricultural and handmade products. The spaces of the Raj government contrasted with these displays of Indian difference, exhibiting Britain's implementation of social, political, and economic modernity in India.

Political and economic circumstances following the First World War, however, loosened the strings of imperial authority over Indian exhibits and imparted new meanings onto the Indian sections at the 1924 British Empire Exhibition. As a testament to the inter-war changes in India, elite Indians gained active roles in overseeing and constructing exhibits. Although few Indian collaborators participated in the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, Indians of the Legislative Assembly and provincial legislatures gained supervisory responsibilities over the 1924 British Empire Exhibition. At the Empire Exhibition, a devolved exhibitionary administration challenged familiar depictions of a "different" India, presenting a more complex image of India as industrializing and modernizing under the guidance of both British and Indian officials. India's provincial exhibits included renditions of pre-industrial conditions as well as industrial pursuits and commercial trade. Indian "natives" produced their crafts for Western observers, and offered performances in bazaar and village scenes. The

unprecedented visibility of Indian administrators who ran exhibits, however, dislodged racialized discourses and their assertions of India's historical fixity.

1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition

The management of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition rested in the hands of the Royal Commission overall, with Indian spaces under the authority of British officials and administrators, assisted by a few comprador Indians. The Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition purchased buildings and galleries already erected at South Kensington—located within the broader boundaries of Exhibition Road and Queen's Gate—and built additions for the Exhibition, such as the Indian Palace and Courtyard.¹⁰⁵ Following London's Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, South Kensington expanded as a site for the showcasing of imperial collections. Prince Albert, as Chairman of the Commissioners of the 1851 Exhibition, used profits to purchase land in South Kensington later used for the building of museums. The South Kensington Museum opened in 1857, to be replaced in 1899 with the Victoria and Albert Museum. Its collections began with objects purchased from the Crystal Palace Exhibition and increasingly incorporated displays of the Empire.¹⁰⁶ Indian objects became more and more central to the South Kensington Museum, and the India Museum fell under its control in 1879. Located at the India Office, the India Museum housed collections previously owned by the East India Company. Museums and schools, rather

¹⁰⁵ *Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, 1886* (London: W. Clowes & Sons, 1887), xxx.

¹⁰⁶ Tim Barringer, "Leighton in Albertopolis: Monumental Art and Objects of Desire," in *Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity*, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 137-139.

than exhibitions, took up space in South Kensington following the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition.¹⁰⁷ Thereafter, international and imperial exhibitions became central to suburban development elsewhere in London, most notably the Franco-British Exhibition at Shepherd's Bush and the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley.

Although the Royal Commission organized the Colonial and Indian Exhibition overall, various colonial governments and committees arranged their respective sections. The Royal Commission established a Guarantee Fund to finance the Exhibition, which included contributions from the governments of colonies as well as private guarantors. The Indian Government guaranteed the most money for the Exhibition and India occupied the largest space. The India Office offered £20,000 and also authorized the Government of India to spend £7,500 to gather exhibitionary collections from India. Other colonial governments made smaller guarantees for the Exhibition, including Canada, New South Wales, Victoria, New Zealand, South Australia, Queensland, the Cape of Good Hope, and Mauritius.¹⁰⁸

British administrators in South Kensington became central organizers of the Indian section at the Exhibition. Philip Cunliffe-Owen, Secretary to the Royal Commission and Executive Commissioner for the Indian section, made arrangements for the Indian section with the assistance of J.R. Royle (Assistant Secretary to the Royal Commission and Official Agent for the Government of India) and Edward C. Buck

¹⁰⁷ Sophie Forgan, "From Modern Babylon to White City: Science, Technology, and Urban Change in London, 1870-1914," in *Urban Modernity: Cultural Innovation in the Second Industrial Revolution*, eds. Miriam R. Levin, Sophie Forgan, Martina Hessler, Robert H. Kargon, and Morris Low (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2010), 104-105.

¹⁰⁸ *Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, xxviii and 107; *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue* (London: William Clowes and Sons Ltd, 1886), 9.

(Commissioner for the Government of India).¹⁰⁹ In 1872, Cunliffe-Owen had taken over as Superintendent of the South Kensington Museum. Casper Purdon Clarke oversaw the merging of Indian collections from the South Kensington and India Museums, and in 1883, served as the Keeper of India collections in separate galleries to the west of Exhibition Road.¹¹⁰ Clarke visited India and formed a collection of objects for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, purchased by the Royal Commission through a supplemental grant of £3,000.¹¹¹ As the Honorary Architect of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, Clarke also designed the Indian Palace.¹¹²

Indians advised on the construction of certain sections of Indian exhibits, but British administrators retained central control. George Watt, as the Special Officer in charge of the Economic Court and Ethnological collections, was assisted by Babu Trailokya Nath (T.N.) Mukharji and by Mr. N.C. Mukharji. T.N. Mukharji, of the Revenue and Agricultural Department of the Government of India, took charge of the commercial enquiry office. The Government of Bombay also sent Mr. B.A. Gupte to take charge of their exhibits (specifically, the art-ware courts), and he also assisted Dr. Watt in the silk culture courts.¹¹³ M. M. Bhowndegree, who would become the second Indian to be elected to the House of Commons (as a Conservative) in 1895, served as Commissioner at the Exhibition for the state of Bhavnagar. Although the Royal

¹⁰⁹ Frank Cundall, ed., *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1886), 19-20 and 113.

¹¹⁰ Tim Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project," in *Colonialism and the Object*, eds. Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (London: Routledge, 1997), 20; P. G. Konody and Tessa Murdoch, "Clarke, Sir Caspar Purdon (1846–1911)," rev. Tessa Murdoch, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online ed., <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31471>, accessed 5 October 2011.

¹¹¹ J.R. Royle, *Report on the Indian Section of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1887), 10. An administrator of the Exhibition, Royle was the Assistant Secretary for India and the Official Agent for the Government of India.

¹¹² Cundall, *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 113.

¹¹³ Royle, *Report on the Indian Section*, 11; *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, xli, xiv, and 1.

Commission had originally hoped to include a “native of each province” from his respective government to assist in arranging and explaining the collections, only these few, comprador Indians assisted the Exhibition in an official capacity.¹¹⁴

The management of the Indian section at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition mirrored Britain’s autocratic governance in India, which made only a modicum of reforms in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Viceroy and his Executive Council governed India and reported to the Secretary of State of the India Office in London. The Indian Councils Act of 1861 expanded the Executive Council with “additional members” nominated by the Viceroy, forming a Legislative Council. Half of these members were “non-official” and could be Indian. The additional members had very limited power, and the Legislative Council served merely as an advisory body on legislation. Prior to the First World War, the colonial government favored collaboration with princely and other hereditary leaders in India who would presumably remain loyal to British rule. Representative of the late-nineteenth century preservation of a traditional authority, the initial Indian members nominated to the Council were princes and other “natural leaders” who supported and would promote loyalty to British rule.¹¹⁵

The Indian courts at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition rested in the hands of British officials with the help of a few Indian elites. Unlike later exhibitions, the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition did not separate colonies into their respective pavilions. Instead, economic and ethnographic scenes, enclosed in architecturally-distinct and interconnected sectors (courts) in South Kensington, indicated to observers the temporal

¹¹⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission*, 104.

¹¹⁵ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 12-13; Robin J. Moore, “Imperial India, 1858-1914,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, 424-427; Jha, *Role of Central Legislature in the Freedom Struggle*, 1-6.

and spatial placement of particular colonies. The Royal Commission allotted the spaces of South Kensington to the colonies, and set aside the South Galleries for India and Ceylon (Figure 1.1 below).¹¹⁶ The architecture of India's court enclosures signaled to visitors the varied cultural and racial differences of India. Each of the semi-independent states and provinces had an arch-like carved screen that decorated the entrance to their respective territories.¹¹⁷ Within these geographically and culturally defined spaces of the Indian section, the scenes of India's princely polities and pre-industrial economies visibly situated India within a pre-modern past.

The main entrance of the Exhibition brought visitors into the Indian Empire section. The London *Times* continuously advertised the Indian section as a tour through the subcontinent, declaring that "the principal entrance in Exhibition-road lands us at once in India."¹¹⁸ The vestibule in the entrance of the Exhibition displayed Indian "clay models of the military races which uphold the power of England in the East."¹¹⁹ After leaving this opening scene of British colonial power buttressed by consenting Indians, visitors immediately entered the "middle court," which displayed Indian artwares. A Jungle Exhibit and North Court of private exhibits resided to the right of the Artware Courts, near the Government of India exhibits in the Eastern Arcade. To the left of the Artware Courts, visitors viewed the "south court," of Economic Courts, containing "models of the various aboriginal races . . . interspersed among the products and

¹¹⁶ *Report of the Royal Commission*, xxxi-xxxii; Cundall, *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 2.

¹¹⁷ *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886, Empire of India Special Catalogue of Exhibits by the Government of India and Private Exhibitors* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1886), 2; "The English Colonial and Indian Exhibition," *The American* 12, no. 311 (July, 1886): 217.

¹¹⁸ "The Colonial and Indian Exhibition," *Times*, 15 March 1886, p. 3. For an account of the layout of the Exhibition, see Cundall, *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 19-31; *Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London*, xxxii-xxxiii; *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, 85-86.

¹¹⁹ T.N. Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe* (Calcutta: W. Newman and Co., 1889), 69.

manufactures of India.”¹²⁰ Proceeding beyond the Artware and North Courts, visitors experienced India’s “feudal” eras through a Durbar Hall, Indian Palace, and Palace Courtyard.

¹²⁰ Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, 71. As an Indian administrator of the Exhibition, Mukharji provided a fairly detailed account of the Indian section, describing what visitors could see throughout the South courts.

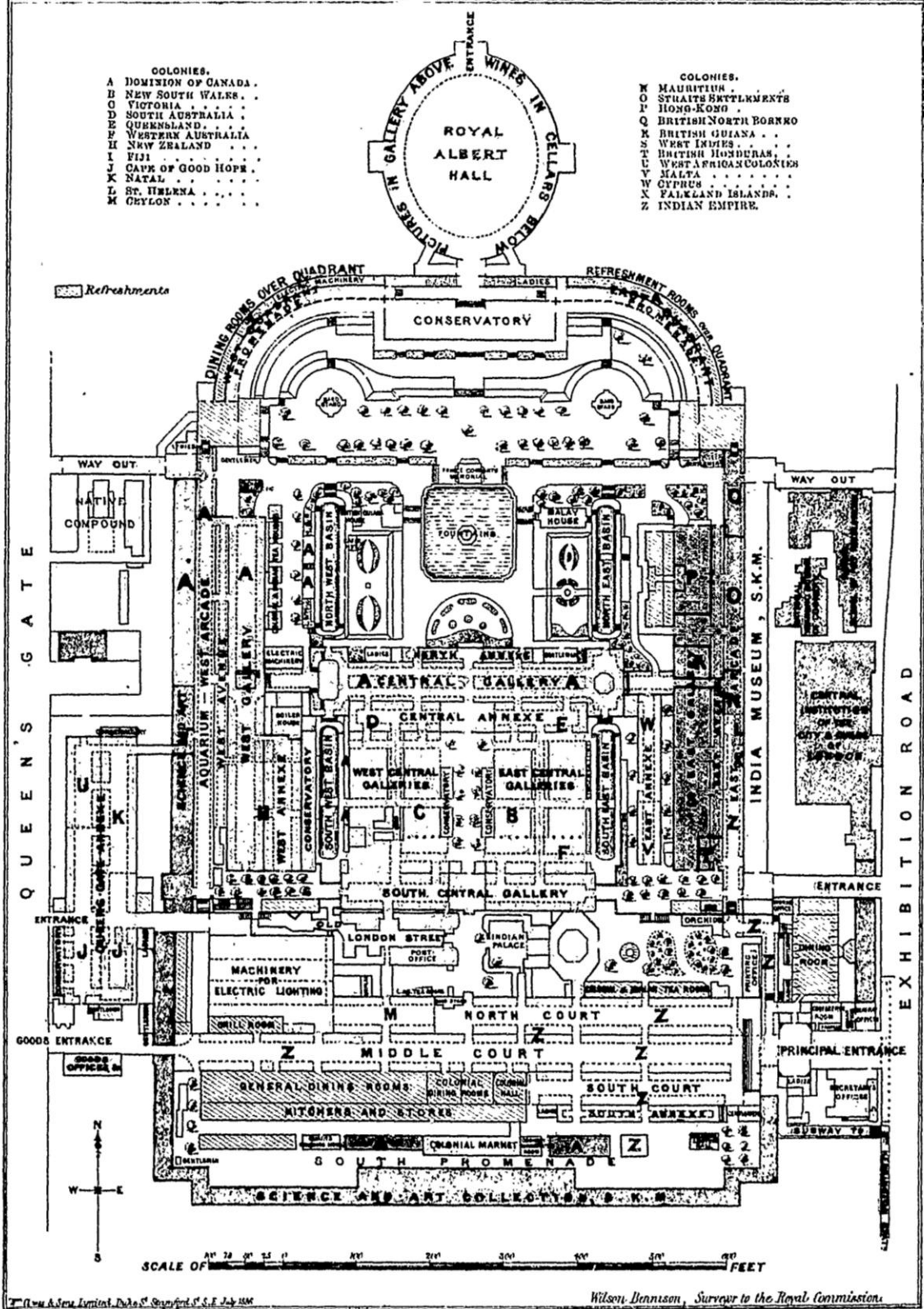


Figure 1.1. Plan of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition. *Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, 1886.*

The staging of an Indian Palace, Courtyard, and Durbar reified prevailing notions about India's historical fixity, based on assumptions about the persistence of "natural" hierarchies in India, as a remnant of its princely past. After the establishment of Raj governance in 1858, the hereditary princes of Indian states retained their territory (which comprised two-fifths of the subcontinent), and although they were loyal and bound to British rule, they did not abide by the legal codes or civic rights of British-Indian territories.¹²¹ Indian princes demonstrated the continuation of a stately rule, subordinated to, yet ostensibly collaborative with, imperial administration. Official Britons in India had appropriated the historical Indian Durbar, a ceremonial gathering between the ruler's court and the ruled, and used it as a ceremonial legitimation of British authority and its hierarchical incorporation of princely leadership.¹²² The Durbar Hall at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, accordingly, served as a reception room for the Prince of Wales.

Durbar Hall brought visitors into the Indian Palace, which reproduced "a typical Royal Residence in feudal India" rather than an existing building. It displayed portraits of Indian princes, as well as articles of bamboo, carved wood screens, and handmade objects.¹²³ Notably, the Indian Palace had a Courtyard containing Indian artisans at work, presumed by visitors to reenact authentically the production of handmade wares under the patronage of Indian princes. These forty artisans demonstrated their crafts in workshops,

¹²¹ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 64-65.

¹²² David Cannadine, *Orientalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 46.

¹²³ Royle, *Report on the Indian Section of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886*, 13-14; Cundall, *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 27; Nicky Levell, *Oriental Visions: Exhibitions, Travel, and Collecting in the Victorian Age* (London: Horniman Museum and Gardens, 2000), 71.

which visitors considered as “still common in many Indian Palaces.”¹²⁴ A Durbar Carriage from Bhavnagar driven by two Indian “natives,” moreover, paraded around the Indian Palace daily, presenting “a gorgeous sight, giving an idea of the splendour of an Oriental court.”¹²⁵

Durbar Hall and the Indian Palace led to “Old London,” a reconstructed street that provided visitors with a depiction of buildings and houses in London before the “Great Fire” of 1666. The proximity of Indian sections to “the medieval entrance of Old London” clearly portrayed imperial visions of a feudal India and its contrasts with modern, industrial Britain. As one review explained, the closeness of exhibitionary spaces dedicated to both a pre-modern India and an “Old” London enabled “visitors to contrast the different architectural treatment of buildings used for similar purposes under feudal governments in the East and West.” For visitors, “Old London” “represented European life in feudal times” just as “the palace courtyard . . . equally represent[ed] feudal India at the present day.” The comparable, feudal scenes of a historical London and a contemporary India illustrated the British narrative of Indian history, supposedly stagnated during the epoch of pre-British Mughal rule. The created landscape of the Exhibition thus helped to fashion an anachronistic India within the modern environment of the metropole.

The Exhibition had three main sections devoted to British India: the Artware Courts, the Imperial Economic Courts, and the Administrative Courts. The Artware and Economic Courts meticulously arranged India’s economy and ethnography, ostensibly preserved from the “pre-modern” era even under British rule. The Administrative

¹²⁴ “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *Times*, 1 April 1886, p. 3; “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *Times*, 24 April 1886, p. 7.

¹²⁵ Cundall, *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 31.

Courts—dedicated to British accomplishments in India—remained segregated from “authentic” exhibits of a pre-modern India.

The Artware Courts, located in the middle court, showcased handmade crafts and arts, subdivided by province and state. The Royal Commission viewed this division of the Artware Courts by locale as an atypical scheme for exhibitions, but as a necessary divergence for displays of such a pre-industrial subcontinent. The art manufactures of India varied from place to place, according to the Commission’s report, primarily because of the lack of communication throughout India, the importation of art trades into India by workmen of “some ruling prince,” and from the “custom, consequent on a caste system, of passing every trade from father to son.”¹²⁶ Just as such localized, princely, and hereditary crafts testified to the continuation of a pre-industrial India, the Economic Courts in the southern section displayed models of Indians within reconstructed bazaars and villages of a pre-modern past. The Economic Courts exhibited objects and samples of agricultural products alongside full-size models of “natives” in village tableaux.¹²⁷ Both the Artware and Economic Courts had extensive classification schemes developed by British “experts” on the subcontinent, included in the Exhibition for reference by visitors.

Just as the above scenes narrated India’s cultural and economic “tradition,” administrative sections narrated the modernity of British rule. The Administrative Courts, with exhibits contributed by departments of the Government of India, focused on economic and political progress in India enabled by large-scale projects of the Raj. The Eastern Arcade of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, which presented these

¹²⁶ *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, 10.

¹²⁷ “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *Times*, 24 April 1886, p. 7; *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, 10.

“official” aspects of the Indian Empire, portrayed the modern advancements brought to India through British intervention. Its courts included displays from the Revenue and Agriculture, Finance and Commerce, Legislative, Military and Marine, Foreign, and Public Works Departments.¹²⁸ Administrative sections, separate from the provincial and state courts, linked Britain to modernity and an “authentic” India to political and economic regression.

The Colonial and Indian Exhibition carefully circumvented the blurring of constructed spaces by demarcating British and colonial areas, aligning the latter with feudal polities and pre-industrial economies. The Exhibition, moreover, regulated the movement of colonial subjects across the boundaries of “colony” and “metropole.” A Compound “just outside the Exhibition buildings” housed the subjects of the Empire represented “live” at the Exhibition, including “Hindus, Muhammedans, Buddhists, Red Indians from British Guiana, Cypriotes, Malays, Kafirs and Bushmen from the Cape, and inhabitants of Perak and Hong Kong.”¹²⁹ The containment of colonial subjects who “lived” in the exhibitionary spaces segregated them from Western observers in the metropole and emphasized their racial difference. The Compound became a prominent feature of the Exhibition, as reporters and commentators viewed colonial subjects there as exemplars of backwards colonial cultures.

¹²⁸ *Empire of India: Special Catalogue of Exhibits by the Government of India and Private Exhibitors*, 12.

¹²⁹ Cundall, *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 5.

1908 Franco-British Exhibition

The 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition linked hierarchical images of India in the metropole to a carefully constructed virtual travel and related narratives of historical progress. In its separation of colonies into their respective buildings, however, the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition differed from the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. It featured spectacular, “living” displays within elaborate colonial pavilions, simulated villages, and ethnographic reproductions. Although the Colonial and Indian Exhibition narrated to visitors imperial knowledge through readily-available texts and categorized schemes, the Franco-British Exhibition incorporated more “living” scenes that emphasized entertainment more than instruction. Narrations of the Franco-British Exhibition differentiated the educational value of European and Dominion buildings from the amusement attractions of colonial scenes and performances. This merging of colonial exhibits and entertainment often overshadowed the lofty objectives of the Exhibition as an exemplification of the *Entente Cordiale*. The emphasis on entertainment can be largely attributed to the private endeavors of Imre Kiralfy as the Commissioner-General of the Exhibition.¹³⁰

By the Franco-British Exhibition, Kiralfy had already established his talents for marketing imperial spectacle and amusements at exhibitions held in Britain as well as the United States. Born in Budapest, Kiralfy formed London Exhibition Ltd. in 1895, which sponsored private exhibitions in London at Earl’s Court, including the Empire of India Exhibition (1895), the Empire of India and Ceylon Exhibition (1896), and the Greater

¹³⁰ Geppert, *Fleeting Cities*, 105-108, 110-111, and 117-118.

Britain Exhibition (1899).¹³¹ For the Franco-British Exhibition, Kiralfy renovated Shepherd's Bush into "White City," importing styles from the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago.¹³² He originally designed London's White City as a permanent exhibition venue, with buildings constructed with concrete and steel for reuse. Notably, White City hosted the Quadrennial Olympic Games, held during the Exhibition in the newly-built sports Stadium.¹³³ As a reusable site, subsequent exhibitions were held in White City every year until the First World War, including the Japan-British Exhibition (1910). During and after the War, the site served non-exhibitionary purposes, including a training ground for the military, a medical inspection center, an airplane factory, and a dog track. In 1945, the London County Council purchased the site for a housing project.¹³⁴

Inaugurating the opening of "White City" under the direction of Imre Kiralfy and his company Shepherds Bush Ltd., the Franco-British Exhibition served state goals. A collaborative undertaking of the British and French governments, the Franco-British Exhibition emerged as a remarkable feat of imperial hubris and private enterprise. It used appeals to spectacle and entertainment to facilitate the economic and political interests of the two nations as well as the commercial undertakings of Imre Kiralfy. Members of the British Empire League had proposed such an exhibition in 1902, and received official sanction from various government departments in France as well as the Board of Trade in Britain. From the outset, both states viewed the strengthening of trade

¹³¹ "Imre Kiralfy Dead in England," *New York Times*, 29 April 1919; Ayako Hotta-Lister, *The Japan-British Exhibition of 1910: Gateway to the Island Empire of the East* (Richmond: Japan Library, 1999), 39-40.

¹³² Javier Pes, "Kiralfy, Imre (1845–1919)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/53347>, accessed 25 July 2011.

¹³³ Shadwell, "Introduction," in *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review*, 8. The Stadium was demolished in 1986.

¹³⁴ Geppert, *Fleeting Cities*, 108 and 116-117.

as a main goal of the Exhibition. A typical undertaking in France, the French government directly supported the Exhibition and provided a grant of about £80,000. Despite the presence of many prominent British administrators on the Executive Committee of the Exhibition, the British government only sanctioned a guarantee fund.¹³⁵ The Prince and Princess of Wales, alongside French and British Cabinet members, opened the Exhibition.¹³⁶

Although Imre Kiralfy designed the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition overall, the Government of India, funded by the India Office in London, managed the Indian Pavilion. The Government of India did not decide to take part in the Exhibition until October 1907, when the Secretary of State for India sanctioned a modest grant of £10,000, less than half the amount granted by the Government in 1886.¹³⁷ The Secretary of State for India, Viscount Morley, appointed a small Executive and Finance Committee, consisting of Sir William Lee-Warner (a prominent official in India, who served as the chairman), Lieutenant-Colonel Sir David Barr, Sir Edward Law, and Benjamin Rose.¹³⁸ The committee for the construction of Indian exhibits included British administrators from the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, such as George Watt, Thomas Wardle, and Edward Buck. Several other Englishmen assisted in the Indian section with the collaboration of Indian princes and administrators in princely states.¹³⁹

The organization of the Indian Pavilion, as a British-managed representation, resembled the administration of Indian exhibits at the 1886 Colonial and Indian

¹³⁵ For an in-depth analysis of the overall organization of the Franco-British Exhibition, see Geppert, *Fleeting Cities*, 109-111. Also see Annie Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 187.

¹³⁶ *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and the Franco-British Exhibition*, D-E.

¹³⁷ *Report on the Indian Section: Franco-British Exhibition 1908* (S.I.: Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd, 1909), 9, BL, Mss Eur F92/28. They also gave an additional guarantee of £5,000 in case of a deficit.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, vii-viii and 9; "The Franco-British Exhibition. Their Majesties' Visit," *Times*, 28 May 1908, p. 5; "India and the Franco-British Exhibition," *Times*, 4 December 1907, p. 16.

¹³⁹ *Report on the Indian Section: Franco-British Exhibition*, vii, ix-xi, and xxi.

Exhibition. Similarly, the political system instituted by the British government in 1858 had remained largely the same into the early twentieth century. Between the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition and the First World War, the Raj only initiated moderate reforms with the 1892 and 1909 Indian Councils Acts. These acts, enabling comprador Indians to serve on the Secretary of State's Council of India and the Viceroy's Executive Council, were designed to strengthen British governance. They allied British officials with moderate Indian nationalists and divided (more oppositional) Indian nationalists along religious and tactical lines through a policy of "divide and rule." In addition, the 1909 Act included many restrictions devised to sustain British rule, keeping executive control and veto powers in the hands of British officials.

Prior to the 1909 Indian Councils Act, the anti-nationalist policies of Viceroy Curzon (1899-1905) had initiated "quite a new phase in the history of the Indian nationalist movement."¹⁴⁰ Curzon partitioned Bengal in 1905, spurring more radical action by the Indian National Congress. Prominent Bengali members of the Congress viewed the partition as a direct attack on English-educated, especially Hindu, Indians (*bhadralok*) who held political sway in the region. After the partition, non-Bengalis (of the newly included Bihar and Orissa) became the majority in western Bengal. The partition also created a separate Muslim-majority province in eastern Bengal. The partition angered the Bengali middle class, which saw the curtailment of their political power as representative of Curzon's antagonism towards Congress members and his attempts to strengthen British authority. In response to the partition, the educated elite of Bengal organized the first influential nationalist agitation, which included the boycott of

¹⁴⁰ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 101.

British goods, from 1905 to 1908.¹⁴¹ A united and more forceful Congress, however, did not last, as the Congress split in late 1907 between moderates and extremists, with the latter pushing for radical action outside of constitutional reform. Furthermore, the newly-established Muslim League (1906) divided the Congress along religious lines. Stemming from the Bengal partition, the Muslim League aimed to secure the political representation of Muslims.

In response to the more potent, albeit divided, Indian National Congress and the newly-established Muslim League, constitutional reform materialized in the 1909 Indian Councils Act (also known as the Morley-Minto Reforms). As an attempt by Secretary of State John Morley and Viceroy Minto to ally with moderate nationalists and strengthen British rule, the Act increased the number of members in the Viceroy's Council, with a majority of nominated over elected members. Members had the right to discuss the budget but the Viceroy retained veto powers. In the provincial councils, Indian non-officials had a majority.¹⁴² As a response to the demands of the Muslim League, the Act also established separate electorates for Muslims. The Act kept provisions intended to sustain an autocratic British rule. As Robin Moore explains, "the principle of responsible government was still wholly absent."¹⁴³ British officials held executive power, legislative councils were consultative, and elections were mostly indirect. Furthermore, the government under Lord Minto coupled reform with repression through curtailments on the press, emergency orders, and arrests of nationalists.

The exhibitionary administration of India at the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition, like British governance in India, continued to relegate Indian initiative and authority. It

¹⁴¹ Moore, "Imperial India, 1858-1914," 437-438.

¹⁴² Jha, *Role of Central Legislature in the Freedom Struggle*, 15-20 and 30-32.

¹⁴³ Moore, "Imperial India, 1858-1914," 439.

mirrored the limits to constitutional reform in India through a British-controlled administration. The Indian Pavilion rested in the hands of London-based committees, including a committee to supervise exhibits that included only one Indian, and an English-managed finance and executive committee. The Indian on the central Committee for the Indian section was Krishna Gobinda Gupta, of the Bengal Civil Service, who had been one of the first two Indians nominated to the Secretary of State's India Council in 1907. The inclusion of Gupta on the central Indian Committee for the Exhibition as a member of the India Council anticipated the governmental changes of the 1909 Indian Councils Act in its inclusion of comprador Indians in the Government.¹⁴⁴

Indian representation at the Franco-British Exhibition, under the control of imperial officials, was integral to a visual hierarchy that differentiated French and British buildings from colonial sections. Visitors to the Exhibition viewed at once the contrast between the Indian architecture of the Court of Honour and the modern architecture of nearby British and French buildings. The Mughal architecture of the Indian Pavilion, on about 20,000 square feet, and the Court of Honour entrance adopted versions of princely buildings in India (see Figure 1.2 below). As the *Report* for the Indian section of the Exhibition described, "this splendid Court was designed by Mr. Imre Kiralfy, and was altogether Indian in character being a kind of miniature Udaipur with a lagoon in the centre surrounded by buildings of Indian architectural design all in pure white."¹⁴⁵ The combined Mughal ("Mohammedan") and Dravidian Hindu architecture of the Court of Honour, the main entrance to the Exhibition at Wood Lane, contrasted with the British

¹⁴⁴ James S. Olson and Robert Shadle, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire*, vol. 2 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 759; Conjeeveram Hayavadana Rao, *Indian Biographical Dictionary, 1915* (Madras: Pillar Co., 1915), 170-171.

¹⁴⁵ *Report on the Indian Section: Franco-British Exhibition 1908*, vi and 2.

and French Palaces of Industry. These buildings flanked the Court of Honour and distinguished colonial India from imperial European governments. The art nouveau architecture of French buildings and the classicism of the British buildings represented forms of European architecture. As Robert Carden of the *Architectural Record* observed, French and British buildings employed two different, albeit “modern,” styles. The French evinced an architectural freedom of the modern era and the English, “loath to go further than a free translation of classic tradition” were “afraid to wander very far from the beaten track of stone and mortar.”¹⁴⁶

The Mughal architecture of the Indian Pavilion also adopted versions of princely buildings in India. The details of the Indian building, for example, were generally based on “the remains of the 16th century Mogul Architecture at Fathpur Sikri.”¹⁴⁷ The Indian Pavilion, of Saracenic design, contrasted with the architectural designs of British and French buildings (see Figure 1.3 below). It combined historical Mughal styles with English styles. This architectural approach created a hybrid of British and Indian cultures, evincing their shared commitment to the Empire and its hierarchies.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Robert Carden, “The Franco-British Exhibition,” *Architectural Record* 24, no. 2 (August, 1908): 90 and 92.

¹⁴⁷ *Report on the Indian Section: Franco-British Exhibition 1908*, 10-11.

¹⁴⁸ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 51.



Figure 1.2. The Court of Honour, Franco-British Exhibition. *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review*, 7.

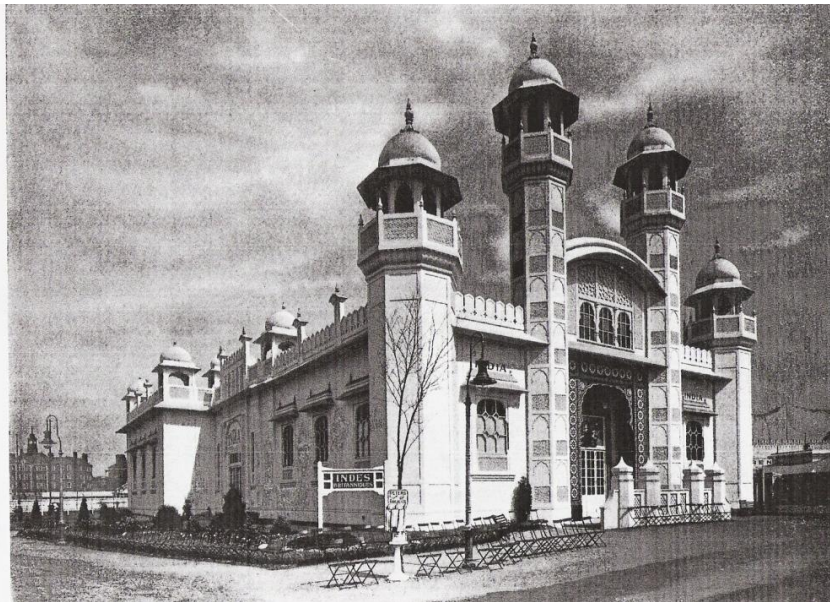


Figure 1.3. The Indian Building at the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition. *The Franco-British Exhibition: Official Souvenir* (London: Hudson and Kearns, 1908).

The *Times* favored such colonial architecture over that of the British and French buildings because of its exotic contrasts with the modern world: “By far the most pleasing and harmonious structures are the Court of Honour, which is Indian, the pavilion of India, which is Mahomedan in style, that of Ceylon, and those of the French colonial possessions. Beside them the modern buildings, whether plain or fanciful, look meaningless.”¹⁴⁹ Colonial pavilions of early twentieth-century exhibitions represented the historical architecture of their respective countries. Visitors recognized them as exotic versions, removing them from the modern, contemporary environment.

Through the use of different architectural styles, the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition represented the political statures of colonial territories and their temporal distance from European modernity. The spatial layout of the Franco-British Exhibition, moreover, juxtaposed the imperial nationhoods of France and Britain against the status of their colonies. The created landscapes of the Exhibition contrasted the exhibitionary spaces dedicated to imperial Britain with exhibits of colonial India. The Exhibition linked colonies, like India, to agriculture and rurality, and spectacle and entertainment. The French and British buildings, in contrast, housed instructive exhibits of modern arts and industries.¹⁵⁰

The Exhibition first displayed French and British buildings in the south end, then the amusement sections, and lastly the “crescent” devoted to the French and British colonies at the alternate, north end (see Figure 1.4 below). The southern sector, devoted to more serious, educational themes, served as the main entrance to the Exhibition. Once entering the Exhibition through the Court of Honour, visitors viewed the Palace of French

¹⁴⁹ “Franco-British Exhibition. French Colonial Section,” *Times*, 29 May 1908, p. 17.

¹⁵⁰ *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and the Franco-British Exhibition, 1908*, E; “Franco-British Exhibition,” *Times*, 14 May 1908, p. 4.

Industries and that of British Industries. Exhibits leading away from the entrance also included the Congress Hall, the Palace of French Applied Arts, the Palace of British Applied Arts, the Palace of Women's Work, the Palace of Fine Arts, the Palace of Decorative Arts, and the Palace of Music.¹⁵¹ The opposing end of the Court of Honour entrance, in the "hinterland' of the Exhibition," showcased colonial buildings and their "native villages," sections devoted to agriculture, and an amusement area.¹⁵² Imre Kiralfy designed perhaps the most popular non-colonial amusement, the "Flip-Flap," in which visitors moved in a semi-circle on two oscillating 150-foot beams to get a bird's eye view of the Exhibition.¹⁵³ Spatially removed from buildings of British and French modern industries and arts, colonial sections advertised their pre-industrial economies and ethnographic difference, particularly through spectacle. Visitors viewed the "Avenue of the Colonies," which encompassed colonial buildings, through its entertainment. The Avenue had been nicknamed by workmen as "Flip-flap Avenue,' because of the proximity of that quaint engine of amusement."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ *Franco-British Exhibition: Official Guide*, 5; Carden, "The Franco-British Exhibition," 84.

¹⁵² *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and the Franco-British Exhibition, 1908*, F and L; F.G. Dumas, ed., *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review*, 6; Francis S. Swales, "Notes from Europe: The Architectural Exhibitions," *The American Architect and Building News* 94, no. 1705 (August 26, 1908): 67.

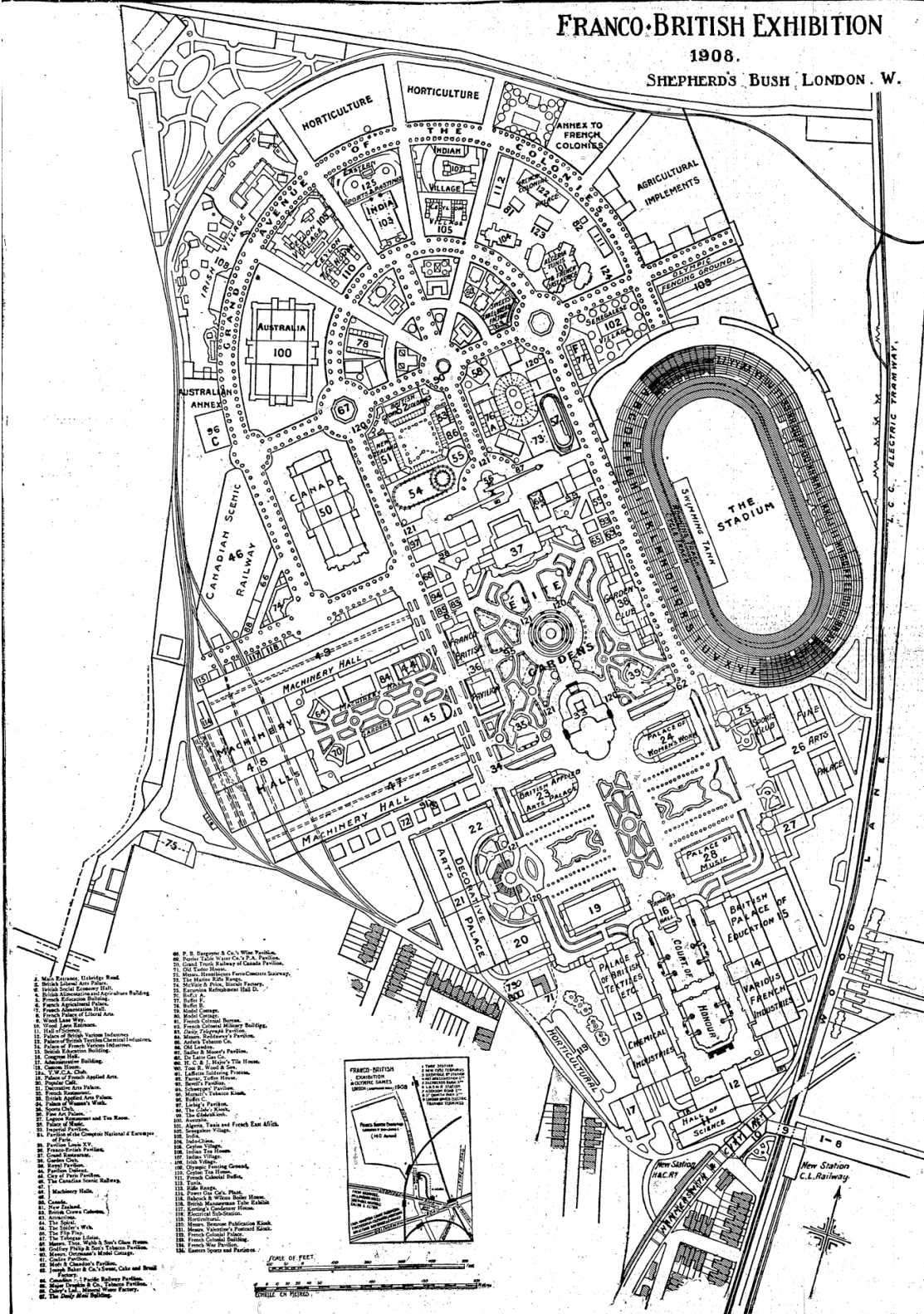
¹⁵³ Norman D. Anderson, *Ferris Wheels: An Illustrated History* (Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992), 121-123.

¹⁵⁴ "The Franco-British Exhibition," *Madras Times*, May 14 1908, p. 12.

FRANCO-BRITISH EXHIBITION

1908.

SHEPHERD'S BUSH, LONDON, W.



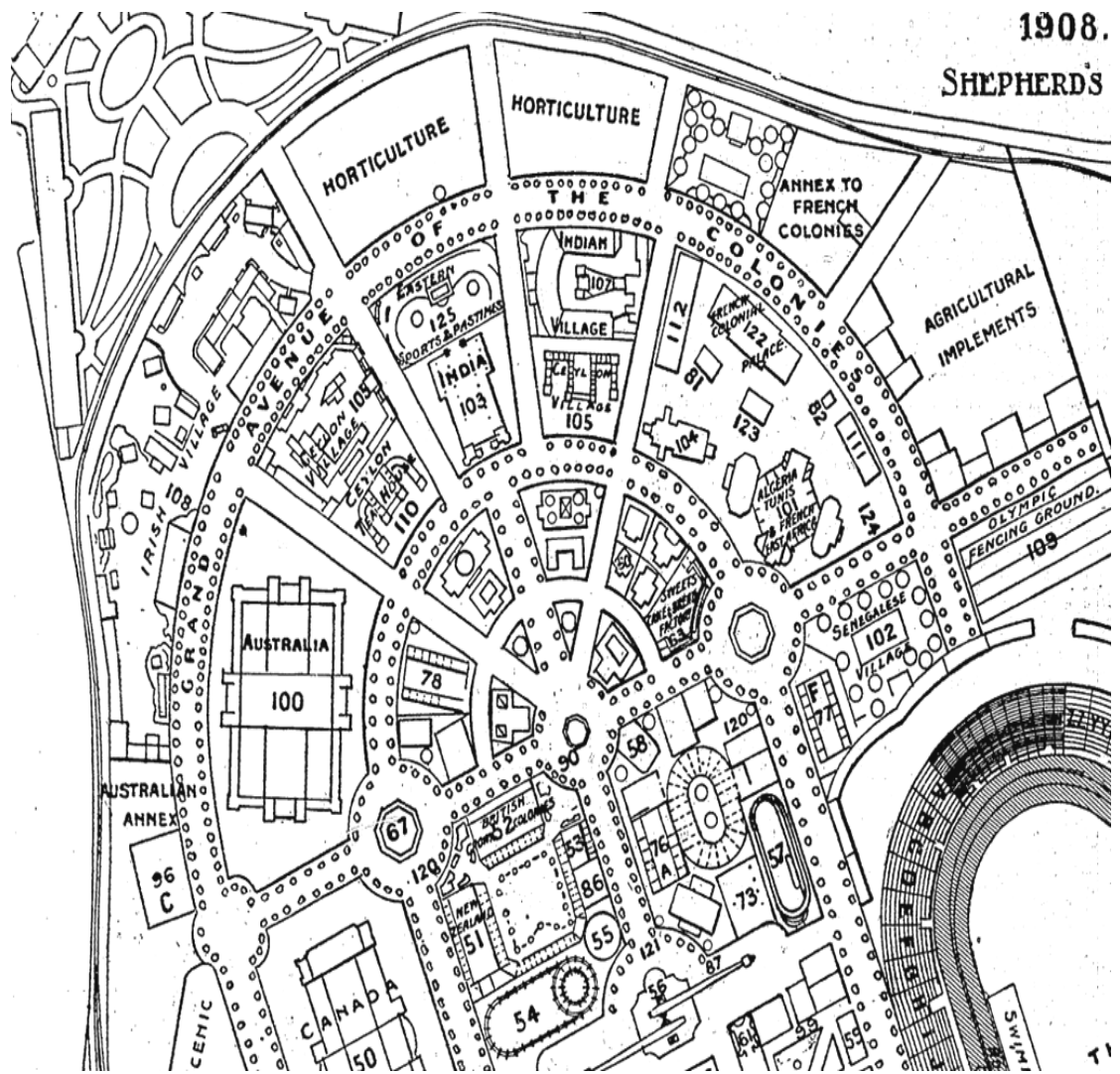


Figure 1.4. Map of the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition. "The Franco-British Exhibition," *Times*, 14 May 1908, p. 4.

The closeness of Indian sections to simulated villages, agricultural scenes, and colonial dependencies visibly mapped India's pre-modernity. At the center of the French and British colonial sections, India resided near renditions of villages and other colonial buildings.¹⁵⁵ This exhibitionary scheme positioned India near the Ceylon and Irish village sections, Old London, the French colonial section, the Senegalese village, and "horticulture" sections (see Figure 1.4).¹⁵⁶ The French colonial section had three main buildings: an Indo-Chinese Pavilion, an "Arabian" style palace housing exhibits on Algeria, Tunisia, and West Africa, and a simulated bazaar titled "Palace of the Colonies."¹⁵⁷ The Indian section included the Indian Pavilion, but also princely features such as Durbar enclosures and an Indian Arena that housed performances from the Mughal era. As ethnographic scenes, the Ceylon village, populated by "natives," led into the princely performances of the Indian Arena, housed separately from the Indian Pavilion. A prominent animal trader and zoo-organizer from Hamburg, Carl Hagenbeck, directed the Indian Arena and Ceylon village.

As the only non-colonial buildings in the North end of the Exhibition (aside from the City of Paris exhibit), the Irish Village and Old London contrasted with renditions of "native" colonial buildings. Old London replicated the city as it existed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Irish village section contained the handmade crafts of a "traditional" Ireland, while the Ceylon and Indian sections included this economic

¹⁵⁵ These Indian sections had "naturally been given a commanding position in the centre of the crescent devoted to the Colonial possessions of France and England." "Two Nations Show Products in London," *New York Times*, 24 May 1908, p. C3.

¹⁵⁶ The French Colonial section covered 100,000 square feet, with ten separate buildings. The Palace des Colonies included exhibits of the Colonial Ministry, Madagascar, and the Colonial press, a transportable colonial house, and a tasting depot for colonial produce. "Franco-British Exhibition. French Colonial Section," *Times*, 29 May 1908, p. 17.

¹⁵⁷ Paul Lafage, "The French Colonies," in *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review*, 277-280.

“tradition” alongside the ethnographic scenes of the Indian Arena and Ceylon Village. As Alexander Geppert accurately puts it, the two non-colonial buildings “stood for different national pasts . . . now overtaken by progress and hence improved,” while the colonial pavilions and villages either lacked a past or remained historically stagnant.¹⁵⁸

Though included in the northern half of the Exhibition, the British Dominion buildings did not resemble the “native” villages and colonial dependency sections. At the Exhibition, several visitors identified Canada, Australia, and India as Britain’s principal colonies.¹⁵⁹ Visitors allied India with Asian dependencies, and contrasted British Dominions with French African colonies. As one journalist put it: “French Indo-China has points in common with British India and Ceylon, but the contrast between Algiers and Tunis on the one hand and Australia and Canada on the other is very striking and suggestive.”¹⁶⁰ Another observer, as well, noted the contrast between the “young nations” of Canada and Australia, and Britain’s “Oriental Dominions” and France’s African colonies.¹⁶¹ The colonial sections arranged an experiential hierarchy, in which Dominions rested at the top, Asian colonies below, and African colonies at the bottom.¹⁶² As an especially visible testament to the perceived difference between colonial (African and Asian) sections and the Dominion buildings, the latter did not include reconstructed villages or “native” performances. An architectural authority on the Exhibition, Robert Carden, criticized the colonial sectors—with the exception of Canada, Australia, and

¹⁵⁸ Geppert, *Fleeting Cities*, 126-128.

¹⁵⁹ Swales, “Notes from Europe: The Architectural Exhibitions,” 67; *Report on the Indian Section: Franco-British Exhibition 1908*, vi.

¹⁶⁰ “Franco-British Exhibition. French Colonial Section,” *Times*, 29 May 1908, p. 17.

¹⁶¹ A. Shadwell, “Introduction,” in *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review*, 8.

¹⁶² Annie Coombes makes a similar argument in her account of the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition in *Reinventing Africa*, 192. She accounts for the differences between French and British portrayals of their respective African colonies.

New Zealand—because “few of them called for much notice, degenerating in most cases into side shows.”¹⁶³

The overall spatial layout and architecture of the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition aligned India with other “pre-modern” colonies and the princely past of the Mughal Empire, separate from French and British displays and the political status of the Dominions. Similarly, princely exhibits, renditions of local villages and bazaars, and ethnographic performances of “natives” represented colonial hierarchies within the Indian Pavilion and Arena. Indian sections of the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition included these familiar representations popularized at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition. The Franco-British Exhibition continued to filter India through pre-industrial economies and remnants of its pre-modern past.

Within the Indian Pavilion, compartments primarily displayed Indian “industries” and artwares, and included private, provincial, and state exhibits.¹⁶⁴ As a result of the delayed entry of India in the Exhibition, “it proved impossible to organize an elaborate, systematic and representative collection of products and manufactures.”¹⁶⁵ For example, the Committee re-used a carved wood trophy and other carvings from the previously-held Paris Exhibition.¹⁶⁶ Because of the diminished preparation time for the Indian Pavilion, the Government of India contributed minimally, including maps and photos from geological surveys, specimens of timber and forest products, and medals and coins.¹⁶⁷ The front half of the Pavilion exhibited artwares, such as carvings from Burma,

¹⁶³ Carden, “The Franco-British Exhibition,” 97.

¹⁶⁴ “The Franco-British Exhibition. Their Majesties' Visit,” *Times*, 28 May 1908, p. 5; “India and the Franco-British Exhibition,” *Times*, 4 Dec 1907, p. 16.

¹⁶⁵ *Report on the Indian Section: Franco-British Exhibition 1908*, 9.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

silver from Bombay, silk exhibits, carpets and rugs. A Mysore Durbar enclosed the artwares of India's "feudatory" states. The back half of the Pavilion primarily displayed agricultural products and manufactures.¹⁶⁸ The "industries" displayed were chiefly agricultural, such as tea planting, jute growing, and cotton cultivation.¹⁶⁹

Unlike the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, however, the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition included exhibits devoted to British intervention in developing industry in India. For example, two exhibits by Messrs. Geo. Hattersley and Company were titled "Looms for Indian Use" and "Weaving Exhibit."¹⁷⁰ The Exhibition had begun the process of showcasing industrialization in India, but framed India's industries within an experiential hierarchy that attributed economic change to British initiative. Overall, the Franco-British Exhibition continued to segregate colonial, pre-modern India from modern Britain and its influences in the subcontinent.

1924 British Empire Exhibition

Similar to the Franco-British Exhibition, the 1924 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley reconstructed a London suburb into a spectacle of empire. The Exhibition offered a more elaborate "tour" of the Empire than previous exhibitions. It concentrated colonial buildings at its centre, surrounded by the Palaces of Industry and Engineering at the north end, the Amusements section and Government building to the east, and the Empire Stadium at the south end. The British Government Pavilion housed exhibits on

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 14.

¹⁶⁹ Also, it had exhibits like "Burma ruby mines," "Bengal village," "Madras Leather," and "Bombay cotton field." "The Franco-British Exhibition. Their Majesties' Visit," *Times*, 28 May 1908, p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ *Report on the Indian Section: Franco-British Exhibition 1908*.

imperial defense, civil services, and naval and commercial operations.¹⁷¹ The Palaces of Industry and Engineering “represent[ed] the great commercial activities of the home land.”¹⁷² At the time, the Palace of Engineering served as the largest concrete building in the world, and exhibited over 300 British firms.¹⁷³

In addition to the “instructional” buildings of Industry, Engineering, and Government, the Empire Exhibition offered various “side shows.” Its 50-acre Amusement Park “Allur[ed] child and grown-up alike,” and some observers speculated that this would be the prominent feature for most visitors.¹⁷⁴ This “easy to find” section, “visible from whatever point one approache[d] the Exhibition Grounds,” offered rides, games, an aquarium, a children’s section, and a dance hall.¹⁷⁵ As another section devoted to the entertainment of its visitors, the Empire Stadium was constructed in 1923 as the largest sports arena. It housed various performances throughout the Exhibition’s duration.¹⁷⁶ One of these performances, “A Pageant of Empire,” reenacted significant historical feats of the Empire using performers from the metropole (rather than the colonies).

With a “look of permanence and settledness,”¹⁷⁷ the Empire Stadium continued to serve as a famous football arena in London, demolished and replaced in 2003 by Wembley Stadium. Today, the British Empire Exhibition is perhaps best known for its

¹⁷¹ Travers Clarke, “The British Empire Exhibition: Second Phase,” *The Nineteenth Century and After* 97 (Feb., 1925): 176; Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 111-115.

¹⁷² “Walking about the World at Wembley: On the Grand Tour,” *Illustrated London News*, 24 May 1924, p. 940.

¹⁷³ “Equal to Six Trafalgar Squares: The Palace of Engineering,” *Illustrated London News*, 24 May 1924, p. 931.

¹⁷⁴ Scarborough, “An Empire in Miniature,” 279.

¹⁷⁵ Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 97-103.

¹⁷⁶ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 38-39; Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 59-60; David Simonelli, “Laughing Nations of Happy Children who have never grown up: Race, the Concept of the Commonwealth and the 1924-25 British Empire Exhibition,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 10, no. 1 (Spring, 2009).

¹⁷⁷ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 38.

construction of the original Wembley Stadium, as well as the closing speech given by future King George VI in 1925 as re-enacted in the Oscar-winning film, *The King's Speech*. Like the Empire Stadium, the Exhibition's British buildings—the Palaces of Art, Industry and Engineering, and the British Government Pavilion—were intended to be permanent structures. After the Empire Exhibition, the other buildings were torn down or sold. Some spaces became factories and industries, while others served as retail shops or residences.¹⁷⁸ Most pavilions were dismantled, and some were sold at private auction and moved to other sites. Evincing nostalgia for the Exhibition, the *Times* explained in 1927 that “the graceful lines of the Indian Pavilion no longer charm the eye. Ugly steel girders are laid bare, and the beautiful mahogany panelling is being removed to be used for other decorative purposes. Walls which guarded the treasures of the East are disappearing, and the skeleton of the Palace is being divided into sections which will serve as factories.”¹⁷⁹ In addition, the New Zealand pavilion became a dance hall, the Ceylon pavilion a coach-building factory, and the Palestine pavilion a laundry in Glasgow. In the 1970s, the site was turned into an industrial park and both the British Government Pavilion and the Palace of Engineering were demolished.¹⁸⁰

Despite the transience of most of the Exhibition's buildings, they served long-term goals specific to the inter-war era. The instructional value of the Exhibition intended to quell postwar anxieties about trade relations in a volatile international arena. More so than the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition, administrators and British officials ascribed to the Empire Exhibition the purpose of educating the public about the Empire

¹⁷⁸ “Future Of Wembley Site. An Agreement With District Council,” *Times*, 4 March 1926, p. 14.

¹⁷⁹ “The Demolition of Wembley. Fate of Buildings,” *Times*, 14 January 1927, p. 10.

¹⁸⁰ Denis Smith, *Civil Engineering Heritage: London and the Thames Valley* (London: MPG Books, 2001), 252; Jonathan Glancey, *Lost Buildings: Demolished, Destroyed, Imagined, Reborn* (Carlton Publishing, 2008), 124.

and its self-sustaining economy. As one *Handbook* for the Exhibition began, “Within the British commonwealth of Nations there now exists all the potentialities of manufacture and trade. The empire is at last on the way towards becoming self supporting and independent. We need only inter empire cooperation to knit together the various powerful communities of consumers and producers within the realm into one great patriotic fabric.”¹⁸¹ King George V, as well, reiterated the economically-driven goals of the Exhibition: “I welcome the opportunity that will be afforded by the British Empire Exhibition to increase the knowledge of the varied resources of my Empire and to stimulate inter-Imperial trade.”¹⁸²

Although administrators intended for the Exhibition to serve the economic goals of the state, the government initially sanctioned, but declined to directly manage and finance, the Empire Exhibition. Established in 1919 out of a fusion of the British Dominions Exhibitions Ltd. and Great London Exhibition companies, a private corporation, The British Empire Exhibition Incorporated, ran the Exhibition overall.¹⁸³ Government officials, however, served on its executive council and finance and management committees. Over time, the government increased its financial contribution significantly and became more directly involved in the Exhibition.¹⁸⁴ The original Guarantee fund for 1924 amounted to about £1,200,000, including the £100,000 provided by the British Government and the remaining fund backed by private guarantors. An unprecedented official contribution to an exhibition in London, by mid-1924 the

¹⁸¹ *The British Empire Exhibition, 1924: Handbook of General Information* (London, April-October 1924), 3-4.

¹⁸² *The British Empire Exhibition, 1924: Handbook of General Information* (1924).

¹⁸³ “Participation of P.R.O. in the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, 1924 and 1925,” TNA, PRO 1/177; “British Empire Exhibition,” Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 7 June 1921, Hansard, vol. 142, cc. 1704W.

¹⁸⁴ Geppert, *Fleeting Cities*, 142.

Government increased its guarantee from £100,000 to £600,000 and thus the Guarantee fund to £1,700,000.¹⁸⁵ Not only had the government augmented its financial burden in terms of the Exhibition, but buildings at Wembley—notably the Palaces of Industry and Engineering and the British Government Pavilion—represented the British government and its modern industry.

With official objectives in mind, exhibitionary guides explicitly instructed visitors to observe educational as well as entertainment sectors of the Exhibition. One *Official Guide* provided several detailed itineraries for single-day to week-long trips to the Exhibition, explaining that “Always serious interest should be spiced with some entertainment feature.”¹⁸⁶ The *Guide* explained that the vast landscape of the Exhibition—with multitudes of colonial and British buildings of equal importance—necessitated that visitors should make several trips. The *Guide* included an itinerary for a single visit, “but that [was] intended merely to whet the appetite for a real investigation of the wonders of Wembley.”¹⁸⁷ The *Guide* continued, “There is no undue insistence at Wembley upon the educational side.” The various itineraries for visits, therefore, featured several, eclectic combinations of sites from British buildings, Dominion and colonial pavilions, and the Amusements section.¹⁸⁸

With intentions to provide an instructional experience that lured visitors with amusements, the constructed geography of the Empire Exhibition embodied the inter-war changes across the Empire. The visual rhetoric of the Exhibition affirmed India’s long-

¹⁸⁵ “Report by his Grace the Duke of Devonshire (Chairman) to the Meeting of the Executive Council,” p. 3; Lunn, “The Future of the British Empire Exhibition: Memorandum by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Dept of Overseas Trade.”

¹⁸⁶ Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 13.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 33-38.

term path towards Dominionhood through the spatial closeness of India's Pavilion to the Dominion Pavilions (Figure 1.5). It concentrated the buildings of India, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada around the central artificial lakes, combining India with the Dominion colonies as different but integral members of the Empire. Surrounding the artificial lakes, Canada and Australia resided on the north side, with India to the east and New Zealand to the west. The 1919 Government of India Act, as the first embodiment of India's path towards responsible government, granted elite Indians more legislative power in the provinces.¹⁸⁹ One *Handbook* for the Exhibition explained the vast changes across the Empire, including "a considerable measure of self-government . . . conceded to India."¹⁹⁰ Significant levels of self-government had also been given to the Dominions. The Dominions had supported Britain in the First World War, and they increasingly wanted a larger voice in the war effort. In 1917, the Dominions called for full autonomy within the Commonwealth, including influence over foreign policy. By the time of the Empire Exhibition, these states were no longer bound by treaties of the British government, and thereafter attained equal constitutional status with Britain.¹⁹¹

The successful petitions on the part of the Dominions for greater constitutional independence in the 1920s led anxious British officials to clarify what a "dominion status" would mean for India. In early 1924, British officials openly repudiated assumptions that the 1919 Government of India Act had promised India a political rank

¹⁸⁹ Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-1940*, 2-3; John Darwin, "A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics," in *Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 78; Judith Brown, "India," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 425-426; Sarkar, *Modern India*, 165 and 167; Judd, *Empire*, 265.

¹⁹⁰ British Empire Exhibition (1924) Incorporated, *Handbook of General Information (Under Revision)*, 7.

¹⁹¹ In 1926, the Balfour Report gave the Dominions equal constitutional status with Britain and, implicitly, gave them the right to secede from the Commonwealth. Dominion independence followed under the 1931 Westminster Statute. See Darwin, "A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics," in *Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 68-72.

comparable to dominionhood.¹⁹² It had been generally understood that Montagu's Declaration of 1917, and the 1919 Act, had guaranteed a future Dominion status through gradual devolution.¹⁹³ In February 1924, nationalist Legislative Assembly members in India moved a resolution for greater constitutional reform to secure India "full self-governing dominion status within the Empire." Home Member Malcolm Hailey opposed the resolution, and stated that "the objective of the Government of India Act is not full Dominion Status but Responsible Government."¹⁹⁴ Responsible Government, representing a step below self-governing Dominion status, would be the long-term goal for India's constitutional development. Despite the persistent demands by Indian nationalists of the Legislative Assembly in the early 1920s, British officials continued to reject resolutions to give India greater constitutional reform comparable to the Dominions.

¹⁹² R.J. Moore, "The Problem of Freedom with Unity: London's India Policy, 1917-1947," in *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917-1947*, eds. D.A. Low and Rajat Kanta Ray (Oxford University Press, 2006), 376-377; Jha, *Role of Central Legislature in the Freedom Struggle*, 69-70.

¹⁹³ Scholarship of colonial India also consistently refers to the 1917 Declaration and 1919 Act as promises of an eventual dominionhood.

¹⁹⁴ Quoted in Sarkar, *Modern India*, 238.

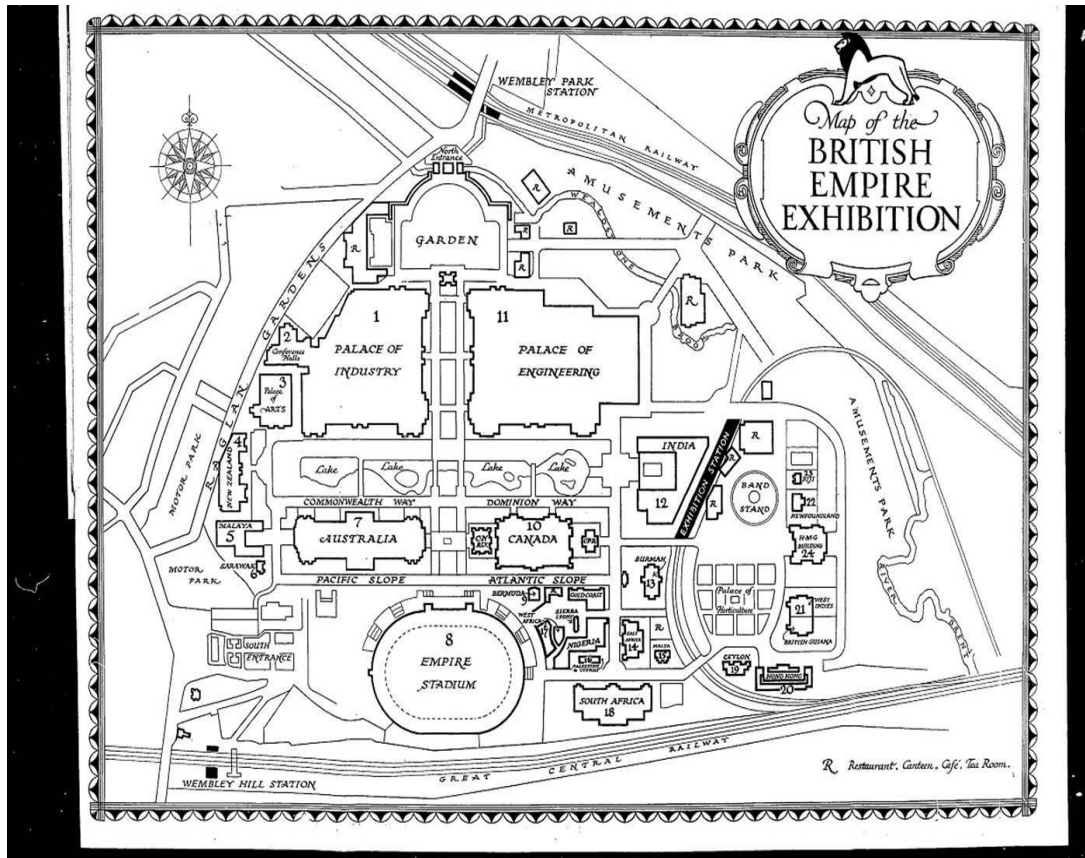


Figure 1.5. Map of the 1924 British Empire Exhibition. Lawrence, *British Empire Exhibition, 1924: Official Guide*.

While the spatial clustering of India and the Dominions around the artificial lakes reinforced India’s heightened political autonomy, the Exhibition—like the 1919 Act—retained markers of colonial hierarchy that qualified India’s more “modern” colonial rank and differentiated its status from the Dominions. Visitors to the Exhibition, accustomed to representations of a “timeless” India, largely viewed the Indian Pavilion through its Oriental architecture. The façade of the Indian Pavilion, on about five acres, provided the most palpable indication of India’s pre-modern political standing. Advertisements and commentary on the Empire Exhibition largely portrayed the Indian Pavilion as a popular

building because of its architecture, which purported to provide visitors with the “true spirit of the Orient.”¹⁹⁵ At night, the Indian Pavilion lit up. According to one commentator, this produced a romantic image of India, which would be remembered for its “charm and mystery when the contents of the various courts [had] been forgotten.”¹⁹⁶

The Indian Pavilion emphasized India’s temporal and spatial distance from England in its seventeenth-century Mughal architecture (Figure 1.6).¹⁹⁷ Rather than replicating a “modern Indian building,” the Indian Pavilion reconstructed the architecture of past Mughal princely buildings in order to represent “to those familiar with India ... the outlines of the wonderful Taj Mahal at Agra and of the Jama Masjid at Delhi.”¹⁹⁸ The Indian Pavilion, according to one guide, brought the visitor to a portal of the East, “prepared to leave behind him twentieth-century London.”¹⁹⁹ A *Times* observer at the Indian Pavilion remarked that “we forgot London and the Western world. Time rolled back to the splendours of Shah Jehan,” the Mughal ruler who constructed the Taj Mahal and the Delhi mosque, Jama Masjid.²⁰⁰ This princely architecture portrayed an upper-class antiquity, separate from the “native” India of villages and bazaars, but also historically unchanging.

¹⁹⁵ “India and Burma,” *Daily Mail*, 23 April 1924, p.11.

¹⁹⁶ “India and Burma at Wembley. An Opportunity Missed. By an Anglo-Indian,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 6 June 1924, p. 448.

¹⁹⁷ Both the Indian and Burmese pavilions were designed by architects Sr. Charles Allom & Sons. The Burmese building—in teak wood construction—also represented Burma in a past history. One visitor observed that “the architecture of the Burmese Pavilion has been designed to reproduce faithfully the Burmese architecture of about two hundred years ago.” Donald Maxwell, *Wembley in Colour: Being both an Impression and a Memento of the British Empire Exhibition of 1924* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1924), 67. Also see Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 55.

¹⁹⁸ “India at Wembley,” *Daily Mirror*, 13 February 1924, p. 7; Austin Kendall, “India’s Part in the British Empire Exhibition,” *Asiatic Review* 20, no. 62 (April, 1924): 218. The Indian Commissioner, D.B.T. Vijayaragavacharia explained that the Pavilion “embrace[d] all buildings erected by the India master builders under the Moghul dynasty from its foundation by Baber in 1526 down to the 18th century.” See Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition, 1924: Report by the Commissioner for India for the British Empire Exhibition*, 33.

¹⁹⁹ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 52.

²⁰⁰ “India at Wembley. Splendour of the East. A Bazaar in Being,” *Times*, 24 May 1924, p. xii.

Visitors to the Empire Exhibition often viewed the Indian Pavilion through this unchanging image, distant from the present and political sovereignties of Britain and the Dominion states. In his review of the Exhibition, British novelist and essayist G.K. Chesterton commented on the “patchwork” of Wembley in its “juxtaposition of disjointed and diverse civilizations and arts and architectures.” Chesterton reflected upon his interest in the diverse spectrum of colonies represented at the Exhibition: “If I am to survey the world from China to Peru, I like Peru to be very Peruvian and China to be unmistakably Chinese.” At Wembley, Chesterton continued, “proximity accentuates distance, because it accentuates difference. Men step over seas and horizons from one room to another.”²⁰¹ The proximity of India to the Dominion buildings accentuated its difference, outwardly presenting India as an “authentic” gateway to a past history.

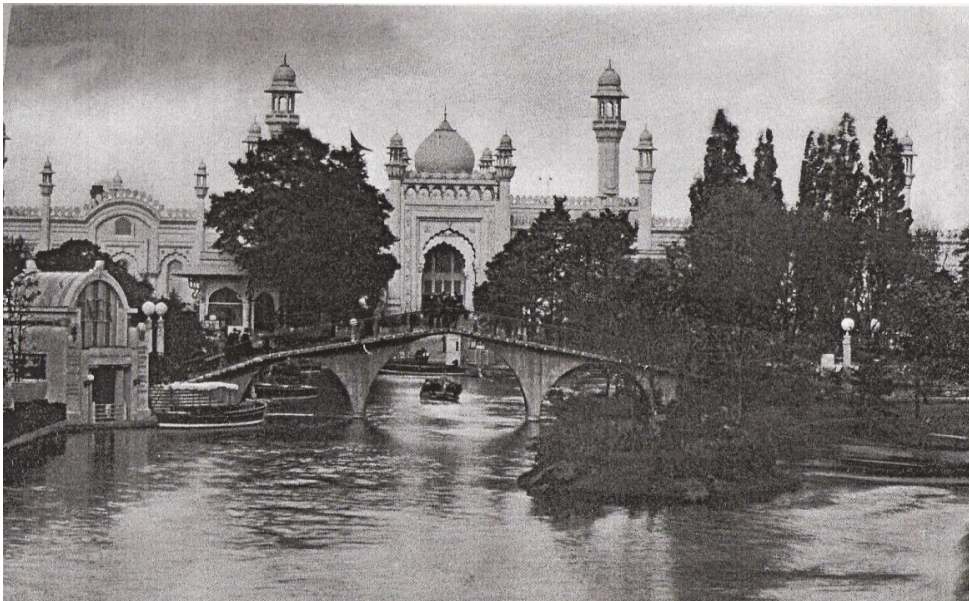


Figure 1.6. Photograph of the Indian Building at the 1924 Empire Exhibition. Lawrence, *The British Empire Exhibition, 1924: Official Guide*, 3.

²⁰¹ G.K. Chesterton, *Illustrated London News* (24 May 1924), p. 930.

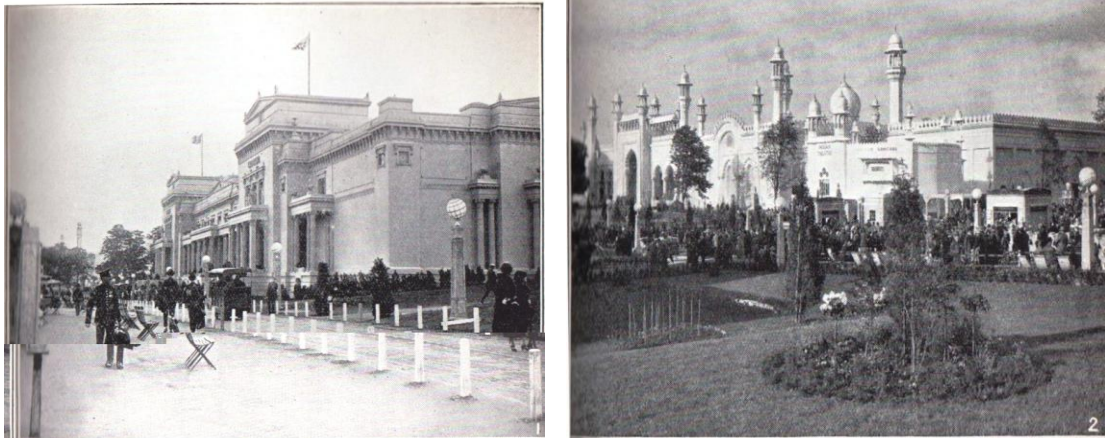


Figure 1.7. Photograph of the Canada (1) and India (2) Buildings at the 1924 Empire Exhibition. Lawrence, *The British Empire Exhibition, 1924: Official Guide*, 25.

India's closeness to the Dominion buildings, though indicating India's importance in the Empire and its increasing political autonomy, paradoxically highlighted the contrast between the imperial status of India and of the Dominions. The historical architecture of the princely Indian building distinguished India from the "modern" political stature of the Dominions and the British Government, represented by buildings of European-style architecture (see Figure 1.7 above). The "austere structure" of the neoclassical Canadian building, located on "Dominion Way," and the neoclassical Australian pavilion, located on "Commonwealth Way," as well as the "old Dutch style" of the Union of South Africa, contrasted with the seventeenth-century Mughal architecture of the Indian building.²⁰² One *Official Guide* suggested that visitors give one day at the Exhibition to "two contrasting Dominion and Colonial pavilions—for example,

²⁰² Scarborough, "An Empire in Miniature. Special Correspondence from Harold E. Scarborough," 279; "L'Exposition de L'Empire Britannique a Wembley," *Le Temps* (Paris), 24 April 1924, p. 2; Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 42 and 71. Cook and Fox described the building of Canada as "formal and semi-classical in character."

Canada and the West Indies; or Australia and Hong-Kong; or India and New Zealand.”²⁰³

The imagery of Dominion architectural schemes reinforced their serious themes and association with the Western world. The Canadian Pavilion, according to one guide, “presents a graphic picture of the habits, conditions, and industrial life of this most modern of modern states. The pavilion itself is built on classical lines. It is a stately edifice, magnificently proportioned.”²⁰⁴

Several visitors to the Empire Exhibition assessed the variety of architectural styles represented by different colonies, preferring colonial architecture to that of the Dominions. Ludovic Naudeau, the correspondent for *L'Illustration* in London, reviewed the Exhibition and gauged its authenticity. As a featured commentator on France's 1922 Colonial Exposition at Marseilles, Naudeau naturally compared the latter with British colonial buildings in 1924. Favoring authenticity as well as adornment, he noted that India's building presented an admirable copy of a colony “under the sky of Asia,” rivaling that of Indochina at Marseilles.²⁰⁵ To Naudeau, the architectural schemes of “the strictly English palaces, like those of Canada and Australia,” left a “wanting” impression on the Frenchman as they had abandoned “expositional ornamentation.” Naudeau's comparisons of colonial and English architecture, with the latter represented through the white settlement Dominions, resembled other descriptions of the Exhibition. Hector Bolitho, like other visitors whose first impression of each colony derived from its outward appearance, believed that “each pavilion reflect[ed] the mentality and

²⁰³ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 13.

²⁰⁴ H. Moore, ed., *The Marlborough Pocket Guide to the Empire Exhibition at Wembley, 1924* (London: Bowman and Mason, 1924), 12.

²⁰⁵ Ludovic Naudeau, “Devant L'Angleterre de 1924,” *L'Illustration* (April 26, 1924): 371; Naudeau, “The British Empire at Wembley. From *L'Illustration*, May 17 (Paris Illustrated Weekly),” *The Living Age* 322: 32. Also see Ludovic Naudeau, “A'L'Exposition Imperiale Britannique,” *L'Illustration* (May 17, 1924): 477.

temperament of the country of which it [was] the expression.” Bolitho praised the architecture of Asian buildings, such as India and Burma, because they “ha[d] not come to England with anything but their own art.” To Bolitho’s disappointment, the white-settlement Dominions continued to imitate Western modes, with New Zealand employing English Renaissance architecture and Australia combining Greek and Roman styles. The colonies of Africa and Asia spoke “their own tongue in art,” while Dominions like Australia conjured serious and “unromantic” images.²⁰⁶

The spatial closeness of India’s exhibitionary space to that of the Dominions highlighted India’s long-term path toward responsible government within the Empire. India’s visibly different architecture from the Dominion buildings, however, continued to emphasize India’s colonial difference. Like the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the spatial closeness of Indian sections to depictions of “Old London,” rather than contemporary Britain, also signaled India’s immobility within a pre-modern past. After viewing the India and Burma pavilions respectively at the 1924 Exhibition, visitors crossed “the Old London Bridge and visit[ed] the British Government’s Pavilion.” As such, visitors experienced pre-modern historical eras within London’s exhibitionary space before re-entering the modern civilization of Britain as represented by the British Government Pavilion.²⁰⁷ The naval, military, and aerial displays of the British Government Pavilion, as well as its exhibits of the Department of Overseas Trade and other government offices, signaled the industrial, commercial, and political modernity of the imperial metropole.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Hector Bolitho, “An Impression of Wembley,” *Near East* (4 September 1924): 253.

²⁰⁷ Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 33.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

Upon entering the romanticized façade of the Indian Pavilion, however, visitors viewed an India that differed from pre-war exhibitions. Marking a radical change from previous exhibitions, the Empire Exhibition devolved administration over the Indian Pavilion, giving provincial and state courts autonomy over their exhibits. The management of the Indian building reflected the broader changes in the Raj government that included a more participatory politics for elite Indians. Western-educated Indians, as the beneficiaries of the 1919 reforms, administered exhibits in 1924. These supposedly acquiescent Indian officials had constituted a “comprador class” of English-educated Indians who would mediate between the majority of the Indian population and British officials. They ran exhibits, cultivating a visible presence as administrators in the Raj. Through a reformed exhibitionary administration, the segregation of colony and metropole, and modernity and pre-modernity, became less clear.

The Government of India, the Provincial and State Governments within India, and an Advisory Committee in London organized the Indian section at the 1924 Empire Exhibition.²⁰⁹ The Indian Legislative Assembly had to approve India’s official participation in the Exhibition, and provinces and states also chose the extent of their participation. The Advisory Committee in London, furthermore, included Britons as well as Indians: Sir Dadiba Merwanji Dalal (High Commissioner for India), Sir Louis Kershaw (Secretary of the India Office), and T. Chadwick (Indian Trade Commissioner).²¹⁰ For the opening of the Exhibition, the central staff included F.A.M. Vincent who became the High Commissioner Organising Secretary of the Indian section,

²⁰⁹ Diwan Bahadur T. Vijayaraghavacharya, “India and the British Empire Exhibition,” *Asiatic Review* 19, no. 57 (Jan., 1923): 141 and 144.

²¹⁰ “British Empire Exhibition 1924 Inc.: Meeting of Indian Exhibitions,” 28 June 1922, BL, IOR L/E/7/1186; L.F. Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1922-1923* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1923), 142.

D.B.T. Vijayaraghavacharya as the Commissioner, and a Secretary to the Advisory Committee, Austin Kendall.²¹¹

A comprador Indian, Diwan Bahadur T. Vijayaraghavacharya, served as the first Indian Commissioner of an exhibition in London. Vijayaraghavacharya ran the Exhibition mostly from India, but traveled to London several times to work with the Advisory Committee, which “watch[ed] expenditure on the English side” and helped with the overall plans and layout of the Pavilion.²¹² An elite comprador Indian, Vijayaraghavacharya was “an agriculturalist and landowner by birth and tradition” who openly supported the British Empire.²¹³ After the British Empire Exhibition, Vijayaraghavacharya opened the Canadian National Exhibition at Toronto, and gave a speech in September of 1926 to the Empire Club of Canada. In his speech, Vijayaraghavacharya claimed that India was “contented to be in the Empire” and hoped that “India will forever remain within the Empire” even if granted parliamentary self-government.²¹⁴

The delegation of the administration over provincial courts in the Indian Pavilion to comprador Indians, who could also advise and debate the Exhibition overall, affirmed the political transformations of British India in the immediate inter-war period, including the elevation of Indian autonomy.²¹⁵ As Secretary to the Advisory Committee, Austin

²¹¹ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition, 1924: Report by the Commissioner for India for the British Empire Exhibition*, 38-39.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 10-11.

²¹³ Vijayaraghavacharya (b. 1875) entered the Madras Civil Service in 1898 and took his first administrative post with the Madras City Corporation from 1912-1917. After serving as the Commissioner for the Exhibition, he became Director of Industries in Madras, and then became the first Vice-Chairman of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research in 1929. “Diwan Bahadur Sir T. Vijayaraghavacharya,” *Current Science* 4 (November, 1935): 307-308

²¹⁴ *The Empire Club of Canada Addresses* (Toronto, Canada: The Empire Club of Canada, 1927), 207-213.

²¹⁵ *India: British Empire Exhibition 1924, Catalogue* (London: Baynard, 1924), 5.

Kendall reported to the Royal Society in London on the Exhibition and emphasized the changes associated with Indian involvement in exhibitions: “this shall be India’s Exhibition, organized and prepared in India, and not from a head-quarters in England.”²¹⁶ States and Provinces, as well, had the power to fund, decorate, and fill their respective courts and could also sub-let sections to private exhibitors.²¹⁷ T. Vijayaraghavacharya explained what was, in his opinion, the vast difference between India’s involvement in previous exhibitions and in the 1924 British Empire Exhibition. He emphasized that, as a result of the 1919 Government of India Act, “The provinces now enjoyed a considerable measure of provincial autonomy, and were free to join in the exhibition or not just as they chose.” In addition:

The vote of the legislative assembly could only apply to the central government and to its funds, and left the provincial councils absolutely unfettered in their decision as to whether they would participate in the exhibition or not. It was no longer a case of the central government issuing an order and the provincial governments rendering compliance. It was a matter of persuasion and not of direction.²¹⁸

Although Indians gained a substantial amount of influence over their display at the Exhibition, the division of provincial and state sections from official sections mapped colonial hierarchies within the Indian Pavilion. The Indian building separated the central courts devoted to “exhibits of all-India interest” from the 27 courts devoted to provincial governments and Indian states.²¹⁹ This administrative partition reaffirmed the restrictions

²¹⁶ Kendall, “India’s Part in the British Empire Exhibition,” 213.

²¹⁷ “From: The Deputy Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department. To: The Political officers under their direct control,” 2 May 1922, BL, R/2/674E(115); Kendall, “India’s Part in the British Empire Exhibition,” 213.

²¹⁸ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 17-18.

²¹⁹ Williams, *India in 1922-1923*, 142.

to Indian authority in the Government of India Act. Although Indians managed a majority of provincial and state exhibits, British officials predominated over the separate, central exhibits.²²⁰ Through a diarchy system, the Government of India Act similarly “reserved” the most important functions for the central government, including matters of finance and foreign policy. The Legislative Assembly could discuss the budget, but certain items were excluded from a vote. The Viceroy also retained the power to veto legislation, and could secure the passage of a Bill rejected by the Assembly.²²¹ A twelve-volume work, intended to “supplement intellectually the material aspect of the Exhibition,” recognized that the 1919 Government of India Act “carried British India far on the road towards self-government” but hastened to add that “in the Central and in the Provincial Legislatures, limitations [were] set up to self-government, and large emergency powers [were] vested in the Viceroy.” The new Raj government excluded “reserved subjects” from “popular control.”²²² In the provincial councils, “reserved” and “transferred” subjects were divided amongst elected and non-elected officials. The Provincial Governor and his Executive Council administered the “reserved” subjects, and were responsible to the Government of India in London. The Governor and his Ministers, selected from the elected members of the provinces, administered the “transferred” subjects and were responsible to the Provincial Legislature.²²³

Not only did the Government of India divide, hierarchically, governance between British and Indian officials, it further differentiated princely states from British-Indian

²²⁰ *India: British Empire Exhibition 1924, Catalogue*, 1924, 5- 6.

²²¹ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 165-167; Jha, *Role of Central Legislature in the Freedom Struggle*, 40-41.

²²² Hugh Gunn, “Introduction to the Series” and Sir Charles Lucas, “The Story of the Empire,” in *The British Empire: A Survey*.

²²³ John Coatman, *India, the Road to Self-Government* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1942), 47-48.

territories. Prior to the First World War, British officials had preferred collaboration with hereditary princes as the rulers of the quasi-independent states of India, rather than western-educated Indians. Indian princes more easily conveyed compliance with British authority and could mobilize imperial support within the larger native populace.²²⁴ The 1919 reforms emphasized the differences between the “traditional” rule of princely states and the “responsible government” of British-Indian areas. Indian princes, though represented in the Government of India through a newly-developed Chamber of Princes, were excluded from constitutional development. Even as Indian princes endured as the collaborative bulwark for British rule in India, the 1919 constitutional reforms excluded princely states and thus contrasted them even more from British-administered provinces.²²⁵ As the British Empire *Survey* supplement to the 1924 Empire Exhibition explained, “The [1919] Constitutional changes affect British India only, and the creation of a Chamber of Princes recognises but in no way impairs the status of the ruling princes of India.”²²⁶

As the governance of the Raj evolved in the early twentieth century, the antiquated rule of the hereditary, “feudal” prince became less compatible with political reform. The constitutional model adopted in 1919 de-emphasized the old “darbar” model of governance based on “natural leaders.”²²⁷ The administration of the 1924 Empire Exhibition mirrored these changes in the elite leadership of the Raj government. Indian princes had sections devoted to their respective states and each state “personally

²²⁴ Peter Burroughs, “Imperial Institutions and the Government of Empire,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, 181-2; Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘manly Englishman’ and the ‘effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester University Press, 1995).

²²⁵ Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-1940*, 25-28.

²²⁶ Sir Charles Lucas, “The Story of the Empire,” in *The British Empire: A Survey*, 265.

²²⁷ Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of India*, 133 and 165.

under[took] the arrangements of its court.”²²⁸ Princely states had contributed substantial displays for pre-war exhibitions, and by 1924 they had complete autonomy over their displays. The Empire Exhibition, however, abandoned the reconstructed palace bazaars and Mughal performances of previous exhibitions, as seen at the Indian Palace and Durbar at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition and the Indian Arena at the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition. Rather, the semi-independent states largely displayed handmade objects. The representation of princely states through objects and the architecture of the Indian Pavilion portrayed the enduring tradition of India, but de-emphasized their ongoing political alliances with the British government. The Empire Exhibition evinced the modernizing politics of inter-war India by reducing overt displays of “feudal” Indian princes and their juxtaposition with the “enlightened” government of British India.

The provincial and state sections of the Indian Pavilion, divided from the “official” exhibits of the Raj and its industries, largely denoted India’s “difference” from modern Britain and the Dominions. Exhibits of provinces and states, though run by comprador Indians, often resorted to familiar ethnographic and economic depictions of a pre-modern India that affirmed colonial hierarchies. They offered model villages and bazaars that encompassed agricultural and handmade products, signaling India’s pre-industrial economy and also incorporating performances of Indian “natives.” Each locale exhibited its principal arts and crafts and “cottage industries,” as well as reconstructed bazaars, miniature models of village communities, and “living” performances.²²⁹ This mapping of the Indian Pavilion equated an “authentic” India, ostensibly preserved from

²²⁸ “India’s Pavilion at Wembley,” *Near East*, 27 September 1923, BL, IOR L/E/7/1186.

²²⁹ Vijayaraghavacharya, “India and the British Empire Exhibition,” 144.

British intervention, with a pre-modern India.

The Exhibition also separated Indian art into different spaces. It placed India's "modern" art developed during British colonial rule alongside the art of Canada and Australia in the Palace of Arts Pavilion, next to the Palace of Industry. The Indian Pavilion, however, contained India's "retrospective" art from pre-colonial and colonial India. This retrospective Indian art exhibit, administered by five Englishmen, resided in the central hall and contained paintings, stone, bronze and brass sculptures, and figures of animals and objects.²³⁰ The Bombay Court, for example, displayed murals of "early Buddhist art."²³¹

Demonstrations of India's advancements towards modernity, notably in trade and increased political autonomy, co-existed at the 1924 Empire Exhibition with familiar depictions of India as a pre-modern colony. In the simulated bazaars, Indians demonstrated their crafts and visitors bought local Indian products. Indians also showed their expertise on commercial products and participation in a modernizing Indian economy. Individual stallholders (states, provinces, and private exhibitors) displayed manufactured goods, such as textiles. They also fashioned models of international harbors, described as "what visitors may not be expecting to find."²³² Madras, Bombay, and Bengal comprised the larger sections of the Pavilion. They showcased the indigenous diversification and expansion of industries by including manufactured products alongside models of textile mills, ports, and urbanization schemes.

²³⁰ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 42-3.

²³¹ Kendall, "India's Part in the British Empire Exhibition," 216; Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 62-63; Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 54; *India: British Empire Exhibition 1924, Catalogue*, 6.

²³² Kendall, "India's Part in the British Empire Exhibition," 217.

The segregated spaces of the Indian Pavilion differed from the displays of the Dominions, notably those of Canada, which had exhibits “staged on a national rather than a provincial basis.”²³³ While Canada during and after the First World War sought greater independence from the metropole, Australia and New Zealand, with populations dominated by peoples from the British Isles, evoked a less potent nationalism than Canada. At the British Empire Exhibition, Canada attempted to showcase its “own sense of national identity.”²³⁴ For this reason, exhibition administrators of the Canadian section departed “from the previous pattern of allowing provincial and regional displays at international exhibitions.”²³⁵ Accompanying two separate buildings devoted to the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian National Railways, the central Canada Pavilion modeled scenery, harbors, and industries and agriculture. Its main features included motor-driven models, such as a “view of Vancouver Harbour as it will appear in 1930.” As one review advertised, “the spectator looks across the calm expanse of the harbor, represented in real water, upon which beautiful little models of steamers ply continually backwards and forwards by a hidden magnetic device.” In stages of Canadian scenery, “day succeed[ed] night” as time passed.²³⁶

Unlike the outward nationalism of responsibly-governed Dominions such as Canada, India continued to display localized depictions of its divided, pre-modern economy and polity. Despite the provincial decentralization under the 1919 Government of India Act, central governance in India continued to rest with British officials. The

²³³ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 43.

²³⁴ Anne Clendinning, “Exhibiting a Nation: Canada at the British Empire Exhibition, 1924–1925,” *Social History* 39, no. 77 (May 2006): 79-107.

²³⁵ Clendinning, “Exhibiting a Nation: Canada at the British Empire Exhibition, 1924–1925,” 88-89.

²³⁶ “A Wanderer at Wembley,” *Illustrated London News*, 24 May 1924, pp. 932 and 936.

central courts of the Indian building were directly associated with this British governance, as representative of the “modern” achievements made in India through British intervention. These courts, largely directed by British administrators and private companies, exhibited expansive industries and “products of all world commercial importance and the more important activities of the state.”²³⁷ The Central Hall, devoted to the Government of India, contained exhibits of political, social, and commercial development.²³⁸ It also included displays of forestry and timber, railways, geological surveys, the army, co-operation and education, commercial intelligence, cotton, and tea. The Education department, the Empire Cotton Growers Association, the Forest Department, and the Indian Tea Association headed their respective sections of the central courts.²³⁹ As Commissioner Vijayaraghavacharya explained, “the Indian Pavilion was just a microcosm of India. The exhibits of all-Indian importance were shown in central sections grouped by subjects, while the exhibits of lesser importance were shown in provincial and State sections arranged by territory.”²⁴⁰

The ultimate authority of British officials over the scheme of the Indian building, furthermore, led to protests by provincial Indian leaders. Vijayaraghavacharya noted that “there was a tendency on the part of the provinces with their newly acquired freedom and considerably enlarged powers to regard with jealousy any steps on the part of the central government which appeared to them to smack of interference with their sphere of work.” The placement of timber and forestry in the central spaces of the Pavilion, for example, “was resented by a province which threatened to secede from the Exhibition, and it was

²³⁷ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 7.

²³⁸ *India: British Empire Exhibition 1924, Catalogue*, 5-6.

²³⁹ Kendall, “India’s Part in the British Empire Exhibition,” 214-6.

²⁴⁰ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 52.

only pacified by being told it might have its own timber exhibit in addition to what it contributed to the central section.” Individual provinces reasserted their newly acquired authority under the 1919 Act, even challenging Britain’s exclusive claims to modern progress. One unnamed province, for example, “objected to ports and harbours being exhibited in central courts.”²⁴¹ Vocal Indian officials contested British authority over the Exhibition overall in ways that paralleled their protests to a continued British dominance in the central government of India.

The decentralization of provincial and state control in the exhibitionary space, moreover, created anxieties and complexities associated with the layout of the Pavilion. Vijayaraghavacharya thought that a “general scheme” would have simplified the process. Provinces and states had individual contracts with different firms to build and decorate the courts.²⁴² They could further diversify their sections by subletting spaces to private stall holders without “the interference of the central agency inside the courts except in matters expressly reserved to it.”²⁴³ Visitors saw the locally-distinct courts:

how Dravidian and intensively Hindu the Madras Court looked, while the Punjab court reproduced such a wonderful blend of Hindu and Mahomedan influences, how much the Travancore Court recalled the cocoa-nut palm ... while the Bikaner court suggested the desert and the camel and the stately houses built by human labour in the walled cities.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Ibid., 30 and 53.

²⁴² Ibid., 31.

²⁴³ Ibid., 39.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 53.

Many visitors noted the differences from court to court; some with a critical eye. According to an Anglo-Indian reviewer writing in the *Manchester Guardian*, “in spite of the fine trophies of India’s skill and taste here assembled, it is no wonder that visitors leave feeling confused and slightly disappointed.” Even though the “serious student” would find “abundant material” to study India, “the mere citizen w[ould] leave . . . in a state of acute mental indigestion.”²⁴⁵ The devolved administration in provincial and state sections complicated Vijayaraghavacharya’s attempt to utilize the 1924 Exhibition to present India afresh, as an industrial and politically evolving colony. The Pavilion’s decentralized administration cultivated a more complex layout, retaining, in the words of Vijayaraghavacharya, India’s “local colour and atmosphere.”²⁴⁶ According to Vijayaraghavacharya, the Exhibition reflected a contemporary India—diversified amongst provinces and states—rather than what India desired to become.²⁴⁷

* * *

The revised administration of the 1924 Empire Exhibition created opportunities for showcasing a changing India, but paradoxically reinforced familiar representations, prevalent at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, of a pre-modern India with localized economies. Similar to pre-war exhibitions, the 1924 Empire Exhibition separated the central, provincial, and state courts in the Indian Pavilion. This spatial and administrative division mirrored the curtailments on Indian authority in the 1919 Government of India Act. The experiential hierarchy of British exhibitions also

²⁴⁵ “India and Burma at Wembley. An Opportunity Missed. By an Anglo-Indian,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 6 June 1924, p. 448.

²⁴⁶ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 53.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

differentiated India's political status from Britain and the Dominions. The princely architecture of the Indian building at the 1924 British Empire Exhibition and the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition linked India to a pre-modern past and distanced colonial India from the more modern buildings of Britain and the Dominion states. The spatial landscapes of the exhibitions associated India with a village and bazaar pre-industry but also with the Dominions by the 1924 Empire Exhibition.

The Empire Exhibition demonstrated that familiar portrayals of India had to be reconfigured in the inter-war period. Exhibitionary authorities devolved the administration of the Indian Pavilion in ways that mirrored India's constitutional reform after the First World War. The administrators of the Empire Exhibition advertised the ability of Indians to have more influence over exhibits, but retained central control in the hands of British officials. Exhibitionary authorities also portrayed the Exhibition as a celebration of racial unity across the Empire. Many Indian officials and nationalists, however, contested an Indian exhibit in 1924, arguing that the racial inequalities of the Empire would be reinforced at the Exhibition. Their dissent against the Exhibition, as part of a larger protest against India's substandard political position, did not prevent India from partaking in the 1924 Exhibition. The motives of Indian entrepreneurs and officials in provinces and states to showcase their locales, sell and market products, and elicit Western admiration for handmade goods conflicted with the goals of Indian officials who allied with the nationalist movement in India. With the help of comprador Indian officials and private Indian exhibitors, the India Pavilion featured economic and cultural renditions, populated by "native" Indians who served as "living" displays.

CHAPTER THREE: POPULATING THE EXHIBITIONS: INDIAN ADMINISTRATORS AND “NATIVE” DISPLAYS

In a brief comment on the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition, future President of the Indian National Congress and the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, wrote “There is, by the by, going to be a ‘Typical Indian Village’ in it. I shudder to think what that will be like. A congregation of half-naked people, I should imagine.”²⁴⁸ Nehru, like Indian nationalists who would protest the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, deplored this stereotypical representation of India, which would portray the subcontinent as populated by “primitive” and “backwards” peoples. The Franco-British Exhibition offered several model villages, inhabited by workers and performers from colonized territories. The contemporary press had mistakenly advertised an Indian Village, which, in fact, had been a Ceylon Village. Reconstructed villages from colonies in Africa and Asia at the Franco-British Exhibition co-existed alongside an Indian Arena, which housed performances of Mughal-era scenes. The references to an Indian Village rather than an Arena, however, demonstrate the durability of views of Indian racial difference in Edwardian Britain.

The display of “living” colonized peoples formed a popular and prominent feature of imperial and international exhibitions up to the Second World War. These “human showcases” grew in extent and popularity in the late nineteenth century.²⁴⁹ The 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition did not construct “native” tableaux, but rather displayed

²⁴⁸ Quoted in Shompa Lahiri, *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity, 1880-1930* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 90.

²⁴⁹ Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, Gilles Boetsch, Eric Deroo, Sandrine Lemaire, and Charles Forsdick, *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires* (Liverpool University Press, 2008).

products and objects. The 1867 and 1889 Paris Universelle Expositions are often credited with first bringing extensive groups of colonized peoples to European exhibitions for display.²⁵⁰ The 1889 Exposition created a “colonial city” with “native” villages populated by workers from the South Pacific, Indochina, and Africa. The 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, as the first exclusively imperial exhibition in London, also featured Indian and colonized peoples as workers, attendants, and performers.

Renditions of bazaars and villages populated by “native” workers and performers contrasted the “modern” British public with the perceived racial differences of colonized subjects. The exhibitionary depiction of “different” Indian cultures indicated their presumed racial inability to progress towards British modernity, rather than their ability to assimilate to British cultures and attain self-rule. The model and “living” ethnography at the exhibitions resembled the somewhat typical framework for depicting non-European societies in imperial metropolises.²⁵¹ They drew upon the representational modes of late nineteenth-century exhibitions that depicted colonial inferiority through an anthropological and historical lens. They also conveyed racial views central to British imperialism, and the specific strategies for the consolidation of British rule in India over time. The racial categorization of “natives” in the exhibitions relied upon Britain’s appropriation and re-organization of knowledge about Indian cultures so that they implied India’s enduring difference and legitimized British long-term political dominance.

²⁵⁰ Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), 274; Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, 75; Joy Hendry, *The Orient Strikes Back: A Global view of Cultural Display* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 51; Hale, *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples, 1886-1940*, 14-20.

²⁵¹ See, for example, Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930.”

The racial degeneracy associated with Indian societies at the exhibitions was symptomatic of hardening racial attitudes in Britain towards colonized peoples in the mid and late nineteenth century.²⁵² A more entrenched and widespread racism emerged in this era, more broadly, in relation to the growth of scientific racism in Europe and revolts in the colonies. With regard to the latter, the 1857-8 Indian Rebellion and the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica were particularly influential in shaping British views towards race. In general during this period, the racialization of colonized peoples, including Indians, became more stringent and in many ways curtailed various “civilizing mission” projects in the colonies.

During the Victorian and Edwardian eras, ideas of difference and attempts to preserve indigenous systems replaced hitherto prominent notions regarding colonial assimilation. British reformers in early nineteenth-century India, under the authority of the East India Company, had sought to train, and ally with, a Western-educated, indigenous elite. These comprador Indians would, presumably, assimilate to British culture and replace India’s traditional leaders. A more pronounced insistence on difference developed following the Indian Rebellion of 1857-8. After 1858, British officials in the newly-formed Raj government allied instead with “natural leaders,” such as princes and local landlords, in order to preserve loyalty and authority.²⁵³ Alongside

²⁵² Several scholars examine racial views in the Victorian era, both in the colonies and in the metropole. For an assessment of racial conceptions of India, see Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*. Catherine Hall’s *Civilising Subjects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) analyzes changing concepts of race in the nineteenth century, and argues for the hardening of racial views following colonial revolts of the mid-century. In *Colour, Class, and the Victorians: English Attitude to the Negro in the Mid-nineteenth Century* (Leicester University Press, 1978), Douglas Lorimer argues that scientific racism, combined with the hardening of social distinctions within England, led to a rise in racial prejudice in England. Also see Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge, 2006).

²⁵³ For accounts of British notions regarding Indian similarity and difference, see Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* and Peter Burroughs, “Imperial Institutions and the Government of Empire,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, 174-182.

racial perceptions that emerged to dominance in the mid and late Victorian era, and strategic aims to exclude westernized Indians from political participation, liberal ideas persisted in viewing races through their possible similarity with European peoples rather than their immutable differences.²⁵⁴ As Thomas Metcalf explains in *Ideologies of the Raj*, British conceptions of Indians had two competing claims that informed governance, one of similarity and one of difference.²⁵⁵

English-educated Indians (*bhadralok*) who demanded greater political power within the Raj challenged ideas of racial difference in the late nineteenth century. Although these Indians increasingly participated in the government, they were simultaneously denigrated by Anglo-Indians as effeminate “Bengali Babus.” As Mrinalini Sinha details in *Colonial Masculinity*, Anglo-Indians argued that the supposed effeminacy of these non-traditional Indian elites disenfranchised them from political participation. Instead of relying on notions of racial exclusivity, the British turned to notions of gender in order to prevent “westernized” Indians from gaining political power. During the Ilbert Bill controversy of 1883, for example, British officials asserted that the unnatural effeminacy of male Bengali elites made them unable to have any degree of political power over “manly Englishmen.”²⁵⁶ British officials therefore favored the presumed security of incorporating India’s “traditional,” rather than non-traditional, elites into Raj governance, until this structure was challenged after the First World War.

²⁵⁴ In *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), Paul Rich argues that British racial views continued to stress geographical and cultural (as well as biological) components of group differences, influenced by cultural relativism and liberal ideology. Although stringent racial views were prominent in the late nineteenth century, by the early twentieth century the “simplicities of Victorian racial theory” became more nuanced after the Boer War and re-emergence of liberalism in British politics.

²⁵⁵ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, x.

²⁵⁶ Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, 5 and 33-63.

In the late nineteenth century, the Raj government had established strategies to curtail the political power of the emerging *bhadralok* class, especially Indians who participated in the newly-formed Indian National Congress (1885). British officials established hierarchical alliances with princely and local, hereditary leaders. They also attempted to appease moderate nationalists through nominal constitutional reforms. Rather than advancing Indian self-rule, these reforms aimed to solidify British rule and divide members of the Congress. These methods of rule that afforded *bhadralok* Indians and “traditional” princes differing levels of authority over time demonstrates the importance of both racial and social categories to the colonial regime.²⁵⁷

In the inter-war era, ideas of Indian similarity reemerged with exceptional strength, and challenged stringent racial views. While the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition depicted the rise of more rigid and widespread conceptions of Indian difference after the 1857-8 Rebellion, the 1924-25 British Empire Exhibition demonstrated the resurfacing of views of Indian similarity. The Colonial and Indian Exhibition emphasized a feudal India, containing local villages and bazaars and populated by different races. Although inter-war exhibits continued to reproduce “native” scenes, they did not include an extensive, taxonomic representation of Indian races comparable to the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition or to exhibits of African cultures. Instead, palpable demonstrations of Indian similarity competed at the Empire Exhibition with continued displays of Indian difference.

²⁵⁷ For an analysis of social hierarchies in the Raj, see Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*. Although several scholars have criticized Cannadine’s study for his focus on class rather than race, he illustrates the analytical importance of social identities for Britain’s consolidation of rule.

Notably, the 1924 British Empire Exhibition incorporated the authority of Indian officials and private exhibitors who managed provincial and state courts. After the First World War, Indian nationalism reached unprecedented levels of potency and breadth. Both comprador and nationalist Indians participated more in the Raj government as a result of the 1919 Government of India Act. At the Empire Exhibition, Indian officials broadcasted a diverse spectrum of political views, and included vocal opponents of the Raj's continuance of autocratic rule. Indian nationalists, joined by a growing number of officials and economic elites, used the 1924 Exhibition as a forum to protest the racial inequalities of the colonial regime.

When the Empire Exhibition opened, collaborative Indian officials and elites ran exhibits, and appropriated Indian "natives" for display. Their administrative authority over "natives" denoted the latter's lack of political power under the imperial regime. The cultural display of Indians alongside agricultural and handcrafted products emphasized not only India's technological inferiority to Britain, but also the economic and political difference of the general Indian populace from *bhadralok* leaders. In populating the Indian Pavilion with Indian administrators, businessmen, and "living" displays, the Empire Exhibition illustrated the ambiguities of imperial discourse and governance after the First World War. While Indian workers and performers signaled their "differences" to imperial visitors, Indian administrators who oversaw exhibits demonstrated their leadership in India's provinces.

1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition

The Indian section of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, constructed under the Raj's autocratic governance, embodied the cultural technologies of British rule in India. British officials focused on race as a defining category, distinguishing colonized from colonizing peoples. The Exhibition reproduced the perceived differentiation between colonial and British cultures that emerged in more racial terms after the 1857-8 Indian Rebellion, de-emphasizing Indian assimilation and buttressing "traditional" Indian authority. The imperial version of India's history, shaped by European notions of scientific racism, promoted an evolutionary trope in which the Indian race, though Aryan in origin, had inter-mixed with "degenerate" races and declined thereafter.²⁵⁸ In this vein, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition extensively ascribed racialized notions to model and "living" Indians on display. Its ethnographic exhibits entrenched unchanging colonial categories specific to India and represented them as signs of India's racial inability for nationhood and political progress. Rather than demonstrating the reform of Indian societies under British governance, the Exhibition reinforced, through racial explanations, the difference of India's diverse populations.

British officials preserved Indian difference by relying on, and reinforcing, certain cultural, economic, and political structures within India. With the establishment of the Raj government in 1858, British officials institutionalized racial classifications in India in order to bolster the political fabric of British rule. The politicization of Indian "custom" by the colonial state, for example, rigidified and entrenched the caste system. The newly racialized caste groups were assigned positions in the colonial hierarchy according to

²⁵⁸ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 67 and 89-90.

their ostensibly fixed characteristics.²⁵⁹ British officials, moreover, collaborated with Indian princes and, at local levels, with zamindar landlords to preserve their putative loyal authority. Although the simplification and cementing of India's "traditional" systems resulted from British imperialism, exhibitions depicted them as examples of India's inherent difference.

The British government reorganized the Indian Army according to the perceived attributes of Indian races, a clear example of constructed racial categories under British rule. Based on notions of scientific racism, and executed as a strategic maneuver to secure imperial authority after the Indian Rebellion, British officials selectively recruited Scottish Highlanders, Punjabi Sikhs, and Nepalese Gurkhas into the Indian Army. The entrance of the Indian section to the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition displayed life-sized models of these native soldiers and officers of the Indian Army made by the Military Department of the Government of India. The 1886 Official *Catalogue* explained that the models included "The stalwart Lance-Naick of the Governor-General's Body Guard, contrasting with the sturdy little Gurkha, an example of the brave men who fought side by side with our own gallant Highlanders." The imperial regime characterized Punjabi Sikhs and Nepalese Gurkhas, designated as "martial races," as the most capable and manly soldiers based on their supposed racial fitness. These groups, however, also fought largely for the British during the Rebellion and thus would secure loyalty within the army. As the Exhibition *Catalogue* noted, the army display portrayed "the Sikh soldiery once our deadly foes, but who, from the mutiny down to the Soudan campaign, have stood side by side with the English soldiers."²⁶⁰ Prior to the Rebellion, the army

²⁵⁹ Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of India*, 90; Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 13 and 181.

²⁶⁰ *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, 13.

largely recruited from Bengal and lower India, but high-caste Hindus of the Bengal Army were seen as the main perpetrators of the Rebellion and thus less preferable as army recruits. Although justified by Victorian notions of race, “martial races” represented the ways that British officials manipulated racial concepts in order to secure political ends.²⁶¹

The 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition included model and “living” societies that, though signaling to visitors India’s enduring difference, represented Britain’s deliberate reorganization and racialization of cultural, religious, and political categories in India. The Exhibition located reproductions of Indian cultures in the Economic Courts, wherein model “races” and village settings instructed visitors on the differences of colonial India. The “objects of ethnological interest,” as one contemporary put it, included “dressed figures of natives, models, and agricultural scenes.”²⁶² The Exhibition classified life-sized figures of “natives” alongside agricultural products. The former served as “ethnological specimens” of the various races in India.²⁶³ The Exhibition carefully characterized its representative models as archetypical of their particular race, and its position on the evolutionary scale. These British-fashioned models, unlike the Exhibition’s “living” artisans in the Indian Palace, could not disrupt the constructed hierarchies of the exhibitionary space.

Alongside the exhaustive classification schemes of India’s agricultural and raw products, the twelve ethnology sub-courts of the Economic section displayed model “natives” according to their respective races and regions.²⁶⁴ *The Empire of India*

²⁶¹ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004).

²⁶² “The Indian Exhibition in London,” *The Art Amateur* 14, no. 2 (January 1886): 43.

²⁶³ “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *Times*, 24 April 1886, p. 7.

²⁶⁴ The 12 sub-courts were: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Burma, Upper Assam, different sectors of Bengal, Lower Assam, Bombay, Madras, Central India/Rajputana/Central Provinces, Mysore/Coorg/Hyderabad, Northwest Provinces and Nepal, Punjab. *Empire of India: Special Catalogue of*

Catalogue included a full description of the ethnography of each region and classified each province by its races, religions, tribes, and castes, amongst other categories. These exhibitionary classifications embodied the Victorian obsession with acquiring and ordering anthropological knowledge about colonial peoples. An article in the *Times*, for example, proposed that the models remain in Britain as an addition to “scientific collections as the nucleus of an ethnological museum” and to forward “practical education in the geography and ethnology of our possessions.”²⁶⁵

The models in the ethnological sub-courts ranged “from the tiny, but perfectly formed, Andaman Islander, as black as a Negro, up to the pure Hindoo” (Figure 2.1 below).²⁶⁶ Each figure exhibited its “appropriate clothing, ornaments and weapons,” alongside the products and objects of the Economic Courts.²⁶⁷ As the *Daily News* advertised, “Men and women of tribes both wild and tame appear[ed]” in the Economic court, “some of them the descendents of races who inhabited the country before the Aryan immigrant.”²⁶⁸ The “stalwart Sikh,” for example, contrasted with the “comparatively puny Andaman Islander.”²⁶⁹ The models of Andaman Islanders, in particular, represented the “primitive savages” of tribal India who spoke “unintelligible languages,” were physically “short in stature,” and had “intensely black” skin.²⁷⁰ The Exhibition situated the Andaman Islanders in the lower echelons of the racial hierarchy in India, narrating anthropological assumptions about these peoples in the public arena. The

Exhibits by the Government of India and Private Exhibitors, 160. The *Catalogue* description of the the sub-courts can be found in pages 160-189.

²⁶⁵ “Colonial and Indian Exhibition. India,” *Times*, 13 October 1886, p. 3.

²⁶⁶ “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *Times*, 24 April 1886, p. 7.

²⁶⁷ Royle, *Report on the Indian Section of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886*, 13.

²⁶⁸ “Indian Products at the Exhibition,” *Daily News*, 5 June 1886, p. 3; *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, 84.

²⁶⁹ “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *The Graphic*, 8 May 1886, p. 495.

²⁷⁰ *Empire of India: Special Catalogue of Exhibits by the Government of India and Private Exhibitors*, 160-161.

Andamanese came to embody “the lowest, most ‘savage’ people” of the many varieties of races existing in colonial India.²⁷¹ Overall, the models of “natives” ranged from India’s “superior races” to the “wild tribes who represent[ed] the ancient peoples whose land the Aryan invaders conquered and possessed, but who still inhabit the hills and forests.”²⁷²



Figure 2.1. 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition: Native of Oudh, Andaman Islander, Native of Bombay. *The Illustrated London News* (17 July 1886).

The Economic Courts also included models of village scenes that presented to visitors racial visions of Indian peoples through their hereditary and immutable sources of “tradition.” One scene displayed the landed and Hindu elites of a village in north India. It had a zamindar landlord in his house “representing the class structure found in Oudh,” who was “unable himself probably to read or write in any but the roughest fashion.” The illiterate zamindar therefore had the village accountant read rent collections to him as he

²⁷¹ Claire Wintle, “Model Subjects: Representations of the Andaman Islands at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886,” *History Workshop Journal* 67 (Spring 2009): 194-207.

²⁷² “Colonial and Indian Exhibition: Indian Section,” *Journal of Indian Art* 1, no. 1 (1886): 78.

dispensed “his rude justice” to poor villagers who could not make timely payments. Close by the “village landlord” of the Economic Court, the “Brahman or village priest” of the Hindu caste decorated the village idol.²⁷³ These village scenes exemplified British conceptions of India’s political and economic structures as dominated by unchanging cultural systems. The British narrative of Indian history explained that the rigidity of the caste system contributed to India’s racial degeneracy during the Mughal Empire, an Islamic invasion which caused Hinduism to lose its “normal processes of evolution” and the “natural progress of a great society.”²⁷⁴ At the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the commanding position of the zamindar landlord and the Hindu priesthood, in which “tradition asserts by divine ordinance, into castes and sub-castes,” manifested these cultural conceptions of India’s perpetual hierarchies.²⁷⁵

The British colonial regime relied on cultural signs of Indian difference, rather than acculturation, in order to justify long-term rule in India. While the courts of the Exhibition showcased imperial knowledge about India through model Indian “races” and village cultures, the Compound included “living specimens of the aborigines” from Africa and Asia.²⁷⁶ The Compound was located on the “outlying block of the exposition” on the “way out” near Queen’s Gate Road. It constituted a “temporary habitation of such natives from India and the Colonies” who had been on display within the Exhibition. Although not formally part of the Exhibition, and located on the opposite end of Indian sections, colonized peoples in the Compound served as “living” ethnographic displays.

²⁷³ *Empire of India Catalogue*, 20-21; *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, 83.

²⁷⁴ Rt. Hon. Lord Meston, *The Dominions and Dependencies of the Empire*, vol. 5, in *The British Empire: A Survey*, 175.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 173.

²⁷⁶ “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *The Graphic*, 8 May 1886, p. 495.

In contrast to this display of “natives” from British colonies and self-governing provinces in Australia, Canadian representatives at the Exhibition were “averse to exhibiting the aboriginal native curiosities of the country which they have colonized.”²⁷⁷ Though excluding “living” displays, Canadian courts did include “native work” and objects from indigenous tribes.²⁷⁸ Canada consistently omitted representations of “native” cultures in subsequent exhibitions, striving to present nationalistic depictions of Canada’s economic development and to attract emigrants. The spatial separation of “natives” from non-colonial observers and Dominion representatives reiterated their racial difference. The Exhibition strictly demarcated between the spaces of colony and metropole—between those of the colonized subjects on display and those of the citizens observing them—and avoided displaying colonial acculturation.²⁷⁹

The Compound exhibited colonial “natives” who came to the Exhibition from India, Ceylon, Malaya, China, South Africa, and Australia. The physical features of colonial “natives” distinguished their particular race. The *Daily News* noted that “The Malays and Cingalese can be recognized easily by their long hair twisted into a knot; and the Zulus, with their fine coffee-coloured skin, stalwart proportions, and heavy type of face, are always conspicuous.” During the opening procession of the Exhibition, the Indian artisans and workers on display were “drawn up in order” outside of the Indian Palace. The “guard of burly British Beefeaters” at the opening procession presented “a striking contrast” to these Indian “natives” (Figure 2.2 below).²⁸⁰ Despite the racially different features of colonial peoples in the Compound, some had showed signs that they

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 495.

²⁷⁸ John Rae, “Remarks on the Natives of British North America,” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 16 (1887): 199-201.

²⁷⁹ Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930,” 344-345.

²⁸⁰ “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *Daily News*, 22 April 1886, p. 3.

assimilated to Western civilization. As the *Daily News* explained, “the Kaffir damsel, who is civilized and dresses neatly in European style . . . speaks good English, is well-favored even from our point of view, and is consequently a general favorite up and down the building.”²⁸¹ Unlike the carefully categorized Indian models of the Economic Courts, “living” colonial peoples in the Compound could transgress the constructed contrasts of British and colonial cultures.

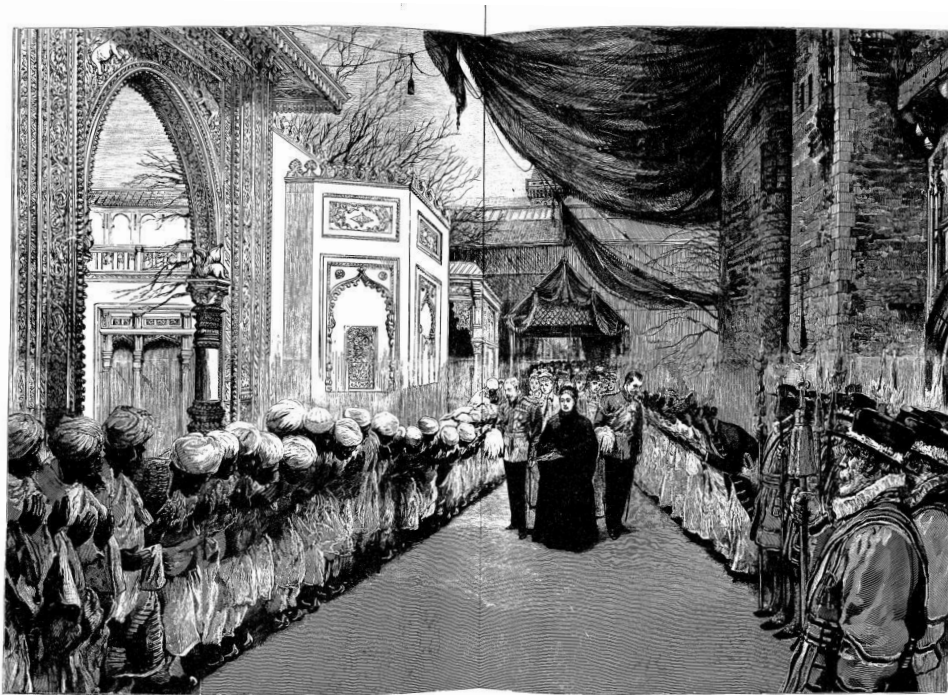


Figure 2.2. “The Opening of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition by the Queen—‘Twix East and West,” *The Graphic*, 8 May 1886, p. 495.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2. The racialization of Africans was also very prevalent in R.J. Mann, “Remarks on some of the Races of South Africa represented at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 16 (1887): 177-178.

Most of the forty-six Indians in the Compound served in the Exhibition as “living” artisans, while others worked as “servants,” and two drove the Durbar Carriage.²⁸² The Indian artisans, on display in the Palace Forecourt, arrived in London on April 20th and “were at once installed in the quarters provided for them within the precincts of the Exhibition.”²⁸³ Newspapers narrated that colonial peoples in the Compound remained largely untouched by modern civilization, and represented authentically their respective cultural differences. Indians, for example, “maintain[ed] their own customs.” Muslims remained “separate” from Hindus, in different rooms “to avoid offending any caste prejudice.”²⁸⁴ According to the *Daily News*, “The Hindoos kill their own goats and dress them in an extemporized slaughter house, the Mohammedans taking particular care not to defile their meat by contact with anything touched by the rest.”²⁸⁵

The 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition contained “natives” in exhibitionary spaces, distilled for audiences into racially-different categories. The classification of Indians on display—like the scientific arrangements of economic products—purported to signal the “realism” of India’s artisanal societies and their ties to traditional categories. In his text on the Exhibition, Frank Cundall described eight Indian artisans from the Indian Palace, including a “Mulsalman [sic] of the Sunni sect, a native of Agra, . . . a dyer by profession.” These descriptions of Indian artisans were, however, fabricated. Most of the artisans on display came from the Central Jail of Agra and had learned their trades there, rather than through hereditary and local guilds. The Jail attempted to reform

²⁸² *Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, 1886*, 311-312.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 285.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 285.

²⁸⁵ “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *Daily News*, 29 April 1886, p. 2.

criminals through training in craft-making, and also generated profit by exporting the goods made by the inmates.²⁸⁶ The “living” artisans at the Exhibition were brought to London by the shipping firm Messrs. Henry S. King & Company, contracted by the Royal Commission. In exchange for the profits made at its private exhibits through sales of Indian teas, coffees, cocoas, and tobaccos, the Company undertook the costs of bringing over and caring for the Indian artisans. Dr. J.W. Tyler, the superintendent of the Agra Jail, chose the artisans who would perform at the Exhibition, and undertook their recruitment and care.²⁸⁷

The Exhibition portrayed a fictionalized narrative of Indians on display, one that reveals the ambiguities and instabilities of representing “live” colonized peoples in the metropole. Despite official narratives that “not one serious case of illness or misbehavior occurred” in the Compound, one serious problem surfaced in a newspaper article in the *Liverpool Mercury*.²⁸⁸ According to the article, an Indian Hindu wounded another Indian during their employment in the Exhibition, and was “remanded for a week” after his trial. The prosecution opposed sending the accused Indian home, however, because “many others of the Indians might be seized with a desire to have a return ticket to India and get back comfortable at other folks’ expense.”²⁸⁹ The Indian artisans employed at the Exhibition had been under contract to reside in London for six months, but the Royal Commission requested an extension for one more month. The extension was “arranged with the men, *though with considerable difficulty*, as they were extremely anxious to

²⁸⁶ Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 134.

²⁸⁷ *Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, xliii and 284.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, xlv.

²⁸⁹ “The Quarrel in the Indian Village,” *Liverpool Mercury*, 9 August 1886, p. 6.

return to their families.”²⁹⁰ The confinement of Indian artisans within the Exhibition negated their “autonomy” under an autocratic British rule. Reports, nonetheless, indicated that these colonized peoples, at the very least, did not particularly like their detainment in the Exhibition and tried to negotiate the terms, such as the duration, of their “living” display.²⁹¹

The colonial status of Indian artisans and workers, confined to living in the Compound and working as “living” exhibits, contrasted with that of elite Indians who travelled to London to administer and observe the Exhibition. Indian visitors toured England during the Exhibition, evincing their higher status in the imperial system than Indians on display. The “colonial and Indian” visitors who toured England were mostly colonists, but included some “indigenous” visitors. Newspapers characterized the high status of the visitors, referring to them at various times as “distinguished,” “illustrious,” and “gentlemen.” The Royal Commission for the Exhibition formed a Reception Committee to organize visits for these prestigious residents of the colonies. The Committee restricted the “class of visitors to be invited,” mostly to Commissioners of the Exhibition, Governors, Ministers and ex-Ministers, members of Legislatures, and heads of government departments.²⁹² Indian visitors included the administrators of the Exhibition, princely and noble leaders, and prominent politicians and nationalists (such as administrator and economic critic, R.C. Dutt).²⁹³

²⁹⁰ Emphasis mine. *Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 285.

²⁹¹ Saloni Mathur, “Living Ethnological Exhibits: The Case of 1886,” *Cultural Anthropology* 15 (2000): 492-524. Mathur demonstrates the ability of the historian to apply a postcolonial perspective to exhibitions without claiming to uncover the voices of subaltern Indians.

²⁹² *Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 18, 354-355, and 364-365. Approximately 5,000-6,000 colonial and Indian visitors partook in the formal arrangements.

²⁹³ Indian visitors at a luncheon in Bristol, given by the Bristol Incorporated Chamber of Commerce and Shipping, included T.N. Mukharji, B.L. Gupta, M. Bhownaggee, D.C. Gadiali, R.C. Dutt, and Nawabzada Nusrulla of Sachin. See “The Indian and Colonial Visitors,” *Bristol Mercury and Daily*

The press coverage of these tours, however, also reiterated the divide between modern, industrial Britain and colonial India. On these tours, Indians visited Britain's industrial centers, and newspaper articles depicted British industry as central to economic progress. On one tour, Indians visited Newcastle to view railway stations and river improvements; the Mayor of Durham invited them to see a carpet manufacturing factory.²⁹⁴ They also visited a railway company at Crewe and viewed steel-making.²⁹⁵ On another tour, Indians travelled to Bradford, as the "center of worsted trade," and "the greatest interest was shown by the visitors in the wonderfully minute and complex process, and the remarkable mechanical skill which the operations involve, nothing of the kind being, of course, in existence in the colonies, from whence the raw material is obtained."²⁹⁶ The tours separated Indian elites from "natives" confined to the Exhibition, but also reaffirmed the imperialist contrast of modern Britain and pre-industrial India.

Elite Indians who assisted in the administration of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition also observed and critiqued exhibits. Upper-caste Indians, such as T.N. Mukharji, had enjoyed a higher status in the British Raj as collaborators with British officials. The British had long worked with Hindu Brahmins in order to consolidate their rule through the collection of "knowledge" about Indian cultures.²⁹⁷ Mukharji, as a Brahmin, helped to construct and oversee the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, and differentiated his status from the Indians on display. Although elites such as Mukharji supported empire, their status as western-educated and reforming Indians challenged

Post, 9 September 1886, p. 5. Also see "The Indian and Colonial Visitors. Arrival in Glasgow," *Glasgow Herald*, 27 August 1886, p. 5.

²⁹⁴ "The Indian and Colonial Visitors to Leeds: Inspection of Industrial Establishments," *Leeds Mercury*, 6 August 1886, p. 8.

²⁹⁵ "The Indian and Colonial Visitors at Crewe Works," *Liverpool Mercury*, 14 August 1886, p. 5.

²⁹⁶ "The Colonial and Indian Visitors at Bradford," *Leeds Mercury*, 9 August 1886, p. 8.

²⁹⁷ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 113.

assertions of Indian difference.²⁹⁸ Their colonial acculturation contrasted with racialized conceptions of lower-class Indian “natives.” Mukharji, who collected economic products for display, problematized racialized “Othering,” for example, by distinguishing himself from Indian “natives” and black Africans in the Exhibition. He referred to the models of the Economic Courts as part of an “aboriginal race” because they represented a lesser racial status.²⁹⁹ Reiterating British classification schemes of the Indian courts, Mukharji described the racial characteristics of the model ethnography at the Exhibition. He explained, for example, the warlike engagements of the “savage” Naga peoples.³⁰⁰ Mukharji also contrasted India’s Dravidian races with “the pure Aryan” represented in “the Pathan, the Jat and the Rajput.”³⁰¹ Although Mukharji reasserted imperialist views of Indian racial difference, he also complicated monolithic racial conceptions of Indians.

In many ways, Mukharji viewed the Exhibition through imperial discourses on Indian races. In doing so, he recognized that Europeans viewed him as part of the colonial spectacle and, as such, just another one of the “natives.” Identifying with Indians on display, Mukharji wrote: “We were very interesting beings no doubt.” When he discussed the Indian bazaar scenes, Mukharji felt that he had become part of the Exhibition: “we were pierced through and through by stares from eyes of all colours.”³⁰² Realizing his own status as “living” spectacle, Mukharji even questioned the arbitrary labeling of “coloured” colonial peoples as “natives,” believing that “We were never ‘natives before’” but “We are all ‘natives’ now—We poor Indians.”³⁰³ Mukharji went so

²⁹⁸ See Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*.

²⁹⁹ Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, 76.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 132.

far as to compare Europeans to Indian tribal peoples. Although, unlike the Naga peoples, “civilized men in Europe [were] restrained from cutting the throats of their neighbors,” there were affinities in the two civilizations. He explained that “The power to relish destruction of life is developed in the Naga in as high degree as it is in the European.”³⁰⁴ Mukharji, observing exhibits of Indian “natives” as a member of the comprador elite, presented a variety of seemingly conflicting views about European and colonized peoples. The experiences and responses of Mukharji, though, were not atypical for an educated Indian residing in London in the late nineteenth century. Educated Indians in London, as Shompa Lahiri details in *Indians in Britain*, often evinced an ambivalence in which they simultaneously adopted aspects of British culture, contested British rule, and expressed feelings of estrangement from Britons.³⁰⁵

T.N. Mukharji’s often ambivalent attempts to distinguish his status from the “natives” on display demonstrate the broader tensions of British representations of colonial India. Indians not only shaped the Exhibition, they observed and offered alternative meanings to the official narrative of colonial displays.³⁰⁶ The 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition depicted Indian “difference” through model races and “primitive” village communities, and through the “living” scenes of Indian workers in the Compound. It also included signs of the similarity of elite Indians who helped construct the exhibits. Twentieth-century exhibitions expanded village and bazaar scenes that substituted model ethnography with living displays. This living ethnography reiterated India’s racial difference, but it was no longer accompanied by extensive categorization

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 73-4.

³⁰⁵ Lahiri, *Indians in Britain*, 194-195 and 210-212.

³⁰⁶ Burton, “Making a Spectacle of Empire: Indian Travelers in Fin-de- Siècle London,” 127-146. Burton argues that the travel of high-status Indians in late nineteenth-century Europe challenged the supposed exclusivity of European travel and exhibitionary observation.

schemes that espoused a confidence in the ability to “know” the races of India. Exhibitions in the early twentieth century, moreover, continued to divide the growing number of Indian acculturated elites present from the unchanging cultures of Indian “natives” on display. The former, by the inter-war era, had much more influence on exhibits and voiced a variety of views on British rule, including a staunch anti-imperialism.

1908 Franco-British Exhibition

The ethnological scenes of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition exclusively tied model and “living” colonized peoples to the constructed settings of “traditional” villages and bazaars. These cultural images, though diminishing in their appeals to overt racism over time when compared to displays of African ethnography, represented India’s difference into the twentieth century. In the early twentieth century, “living” spectacles and “native” tableaux increasingly replaced the modeled, taxonomic schemes of the 1886 Exhibition that were representative of European exhibitions in the mid and late nineteenth century.³⁰⁷ As part of this broader trend, the ethnography of the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition included “natives” within elaborate model villages and bazaars. Overall, the Franco-British Exhibition expanded upon the scenes of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, constructing entire sections of “live” colonial villages, including those of Senegal, Ceylon, and Ireland. It also fashioned an Indian Arena, which housed Indians who performed Mughal-era cultures. Though intended to lend legitimacy to the

³⁰⁷ Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, and Sandrine Lemaire, “From Scientific Racism to Popular and Colonial Racism in France and the West,” in *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, 104.

Exhibition while educating visitors on the “natural” settings of racially-different cultures, these popular “living” renditions were, for the most part, envisioned as forms of amusement. Construed by some visitors as “side shows,” they also served as contested terrain, evoking questions about colonial authenticity.

At the Franco-British Exhibition, transnational impresarios commercialized colonized peoples on display, capitalizing upon the popularity of “human shows” in exhibitions across the West.³⁰⁸ German-born Carl Hagenbeck, famous for his animal trading and establishment of zoos, ran the Indian Arena and Ceylon Village. The Commissioner-General of the Franco-British Exhibition, Imre Kiralfy, featured entertainment in British colonial exhibitions. Notably, he constructed native villages, bringing African and Asian peoples into Britain for display.³⁰⁹ As the architect of London’s “White City,” Kiralfy stressed the aspects of entertainment and spectacle at exhibitions, including those associated with colonial ethnography. According to Kiralfy, the 1908 Exhibition was not “entirely a commercial exhibition” because visitors could “indulge in various forms of recreation provided by such ingenious and picturesque attractions as the Indian open-air theatre, the Canadian scenic railway, the realistic panorama of Old London, the spiral toboggan, the giant ‘flip-flap,’ and, above all, the various villages depicting life in rural Ireland, or in Ceylon, or Senegal.”³¹⁰

The colonial village scenes of the Franco-British Exhibition portrayed “native” cultures as fundamentally different from French and British cultures. The ethnographic scenes of the Exhibition, however, racially denigrated African peoples more than Indian

³⁰⁸ Hendry, *The Orient Strikes Back*, 52.

³⁰⁹ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 91.

³¹⁰ Imre Kiralfy, “The Great Exhibition. A Preliminary Sketch,” *Daily News*, May 7 1908, p. 4.

peoples, locating the former at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.³¹¹ Non-colonial observers made distinctions between African and Asian “races” when comparing the Senegal and Ceylon villages at the Franco-British Exhibition. An article in the *Times* explained that, “it is at once apparent to the visitor that the mental and artistic capacities of the Africans are far less highly developed than those of the Asiatics.” The African scenery of village huts exemplified how, when compared to Asian sections, Africa was on a “more primitive scale.”³¹² The Senegalese village, in particular, displayed the “primitive life of the occupants of the Sahara” (Figure 2.5). This village, according to the *Official Guide*, presented a “cruel-looking stockade” in which visitors could “hear and see with interest the weird chants and rhythmic dancing of the younger members of the tribe.”³¹³

At the Ceylon and Senegal villages, visitors made racial comparisons of Asian and African colonies. In contrast to the colonial ethnography of African and Asian villages, the Irish village (“Ballymaclinton”) displayed its economic and cultural “tradition” rather than Ireland’s racial “difference.” Like Indian scenes, the Irish village included “ancient features” that took its visitors into the “past,” such as model cottages and the peasant industries of hand-loom weaving, lace making, and embroidery.³¹⁴ “Genuine colleens at work at lace, embroidery carpets, and various industries that ha[d] been introduced into the homes of the peasantry” were also included in Irish village representations (Figure 2.4). These scenes were, however, described as part of “the

³¹¹ Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 192; Geppert, “True Copies: Time and Space Travels at British Imperial Exhibitions, 1880-1930,” in *The Making of Modern Tourism*, 230-231.

³¹² “The Franco-British Exhibition. The Senegal Village,” *Times*, 12 June 1908, p. 8.

³¹³ *Franco-British Exhibition, London, 1908: Official Guide* (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1908), 57.

³¹⁴ “The Franco-British Exhibition. Progress of the Preparations (From our Special Correspondent),” *Times*, 9 May 1908, p. 10; “Franco-British Exhibition,” *Times*, 14 May 1908, p. 4.

modern side of the village” and clearly marked the similarities of Ireland’s continued tradition to a British past.³¹⁵ The Irish village articulated an Irishness that was not equivalent to Englishness, but nonetheless denoted an originary cultural heritage and national identity excluded from displays of Africa.³¹⁶ Ireland’s ties to pre-industrial “tradition” rather than racialized ethnography identified its status as subordinate to that of Britain’s but not as a dependency similar to colonies in Africa and Asia.

The 1908 Franco-British Exhibition included renditions of colonial cultures that, unlike the scenes of Ireland, linked India to the cultural conditions of its *different* pre-modern past. The Indian Arena, an open-air theatre, had two to four performances daily of “Our Indian Empire” (Figure 2.3). The proprietor of the Indian Arena, as well as the Ceylon village, was the entertainment expert from Hamburg, Carl G. Hagenbeck.³¹⁷ Hagenbeck, like Kiralfy, perpetuated images of different colonial cultures for commercial reasons, appealing to the Western penchant for exotic and “primitive” displays from distant lands. The performance of the Indian Arena presented a “gorgeous spectacle depicting a Fair in the East.” Over one hundred Indian performers depicted “a feast-day at the Court of a mighty Rajah.” According to the *Official Guide*, the performance included “Acrobats, tight-rope walkers, sorcerers, wrestlers, snake-charmers, and fakirs ... a herd of working elephants.” Approximately fifty animals performed alongside the “natives” on display. One segment reenacted a Tiger Hunt.³¹⁸

Various contemporary accounts, including maps of the Exhibition, referenced an “Indian village.” This village, however, was the Ceylon village, housed in connection

³¹⁵ *Franco-British Exhibition: Official Guide*, 53.

³¹⁶ Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 212-213.

³¹⁷ “The Franco-British Exhibition. The Indian Arena,” *Times*, 5 June 1908, p. 12; “The Franco-British Exhibition,” *Times*, 19 May 1908, p. 16; Geppert, *Fleeting Cities*, 48.

³¹⁸ *Franco-British Exhibition: Official Guide*, 48-49.

with the Indian Arena. The absence of an Indian village, then, omitted visible ethnographic scenes of India's "primitive" cultures. The Ceylon village, and India's Mughal-era performances, situated these colonies in different, pre-modern pasts: one as "primitive" and the other as "feudal." The public references to an Indian village, and the elision of Ceylon and Indian "natives" in the village, however, demonstrate the durability of racial visions of Indians by visitors and in the press. Similar to the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, moreover, the colonial peoples on display from Ceylon and India resided within the "compound" of the Indian Arena and Ceylon village, separate from observers of the Exhibition.³¹⁹

³¹⁹ "Natives at the Franco-British Exhibition," Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 2 June 1908, Hansard, vol. 189, c1708.



Figure 2.3. “The Indian Arena—The Jugglers.” Dumas, *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review*, 291.



Figure 2.4. “Scene in the Irish Village.” *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review*, 287.

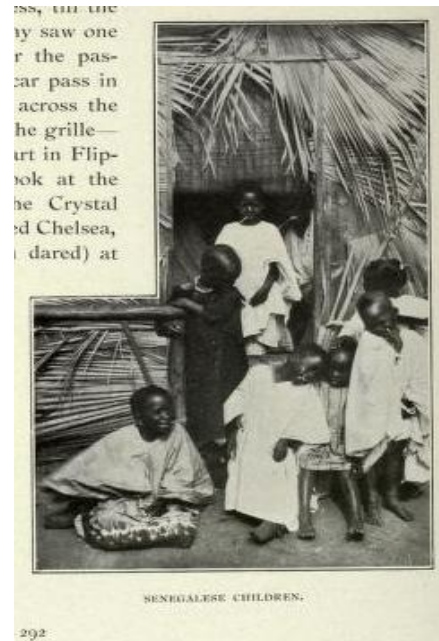


Figure 2.5. “Senegalese Village” and “Senegalese Children.” *Franco-British Exhibition: Official Guide*, 292.

Metropolitan observers put forth conflicting views regarding the entertainment of the colonial sections. Some reviews indicated at least some aversion to their overtly exoticized performances. They obfuscated “realistic” colonial conditions by appealing to spectacle rather than authenticity. An American observer of the 1908 Exhibition criticized this aspect of the colonial sections: “The colonies of England and France each have their pavilions, but few of them call for much notice, degenerating in most cases into side shows.”³²⁰ One commentator described a typical visitor’s experience in the “sideshow” of the Ceylon Village: “you walked into a busy Ceylon street, where the juggler and the snake charmer . . . played their parts, and native craftsmen went busily at their work . . . [and] Ceylonese children showed sheer talent in begging for coppers.”³²¹

³²⁰ Robert Carden, “The Franco-British Exhibition,” 97.

³²¹ D.H.Q., “Countless Other Attractions: The Sideshows,” in *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review*, 295.

In particular, a female nautch dance in the Indian Arena prompted conflicting views about the alleged authenticity of “live” Indian exhibits. This dance had been popular in the courts of Mughal Muslim rulers. Imperial narrations of the nautch dance characterized it as a representation of India’s enduring barbarity and the sexualized degradation of Indian women.³²² The *Times* emphasized the authenticity of the reproduced nautch dance in the Arena. The dance, for example, only included gyrations that Indian girls were “accustomed [to] in real life,” instead of resorting to a dance that would “merely please onlookers who may not have seen an actual Indian nautch.”³²³ As the *Times* explained, however, “the Rajah before whom the acrobats perform has seated by his side in regal state a Mexican wife,” transgressing notions of “authenticity.” The *Times* also described the mixing of British and Indian performers at the Arena because the bandsmen, “though white men . . . [were] in the attire of turbaned Orientals.” A commentator in the 1908 *Illustrated Review* complained about the performance’s mediocre representation of a “real” India: “the Indian Arena gave a somewhat dreary show under the high sounding titles of the programme. Nautch girls chanted monotonously in front of a third-rate Rajah; natives balanced on bamboo poles.”³²⁴

The 1908 Franco-British Exhibition provided an array of “living” performances of colonial peoples that were designed to appeal to the metropolitan preference for exotic, racially-different cultures. Through the Indian sections, non-colonial observers could view Indian “native” performers and preserved cultures from the Mughal Empire. These displays expanded upon the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition by replacing classified

³²² Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, 125. Cohn refers to the nautch dance in this way when discussing the visit of the Prince of Wales to India in 1876.

³²³ “The Franco-British Exhibition. The Indian Arena,” *Times*, 5 June 1908, p. 12.

³²⁴ D.H.Q., “Countless Other Attractions: The Sideshow,” in *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review*, 295.

village and bazaar scenes with “living” renditions. By the early twentieth century, more colonial peoples had been brought to imperial metropolises for exoticized performances, and to portray the daily life of their local villages. The overt racialization of these scenes, however, conflicted with changing colonial policy and anti-colonial movements. After the First World War, the Empire Exhibition continued to depict the racial difference of colonized peoples, but these portrayals no longer resonated with the challenges to, and tensions of, imperial rule.

1924 British Empire Exhibition

The representation of colonized peoples at pre-war exhibitions in London purported to signal the racial superiority of Britain and to justify a long-term imperial rule. While the 1924 British Empire Exhibition continued to portray colonial races through their difference, however, it also propagated a fictitious image of racial unity. Official publications of the Exhibition espoused rhetoric of a racial harmony fostered during the First World War that depicted the Empire as a “Family Party.” One *Official Guide* of 1924, for example, explained the “fundamental purpose” of the Exhibition in terms of a commonwealth idea, in which the economic and political bonds of the empire would solidify, bringing all colonies into a “common ground” and “into closer touch.”³²⁵ The Exhibition, according to another *Official Guide*, sought to “foster that friendship and good feeling which make the sure bond holding together the broad Dominions of the King-Emperor.”³²⁶

³²⁵ Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 13.

³²⁶ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 10.

Continued visions of racial difference in the colonies, however, undermined revamped portrayals of the Empire-Commonwealth at the Exhibition. As David Simonelli argues, although exhibition administrators attempted to promote the post-war conception of extending “the idea of commonwealth to all of the Empire’s ‘races,’” these races were nonetheless treated unequally both on the ground and at the Exhibition.³²⁷ An *Official Guide* advertised, for example, that the Exhibition would demonstrate the “latest marvels of Western Science, and also—because the British Empire represents many civilisations and many stages of civilisation—it shows the splendours of the markets of the East and the simple fairs of primitive peoples.”³²⁸ Other official documents describing the Exhibition expressed racialized visions of colonies: “The methods of both Western and Eastern civilisations, and of those nations which still sit in the darkness, find a place therein.”³²⁹ The British Empire Exhibition *General Handbook* explained that visitors could study the “natural life of strange races, and not[e] how they are responding to contact with Western civilisation.” The “Family Party of the British Empire,” furthermore, exhibited “every phase of the Empire’s life from the primitive village of the savage tribe making its first faltering steps towards the light of civilisation up to . . . man’s latest scientific victories.”³³⁰ According to Daniel Stephen, the contradictory visions of race at the Empire Exhibition illustrate “connections between the imperial languages of the nineteenth century and those of the twentieth, a bridge between the Victorian era of unquestioned dominance and emerging discourses of colonial

³²⁷ Simonelli, “Laughing nations of happy children who have never grown up: Race, the Concept of the Commonwealth and the 1924-25 British Empire Exhibition.”

³²⁸ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 9.

³²⁹ *The British Empire Exhibition* (London: The Arden Press).

³³⁰ *British Empire Exhibition General Handbook*, 13 and 16.

development and race relations that would gain ascendancy after the Second World War.”³³¹

The Exhibition’s conflicting depictions of colonial similarity and difference, and the durability of the Empire’s racial hierarchies, unveiled the myth of a commonwealth idea. The inter-war uncertainties of India’s path to self-rule, in particular, emphasized the instabilities of the commonwealth idea and re-visionings of race at the Exhibition. The 1924 *Official Catalogue*, for example, refrained from classifying India like the other members of the Empire, incorporating India without categorizing it as either a colony or Dominion.³³² India occupied an ambiguous position within the Empire as a colony, according to British officials, that had modernized but not yet reached modernity. With a higher political status than dependencies of Africa (conceived as occupied by “savage” races), India still did not possess a standing comparable to the Dominions. The length of India’s timetable for Dominion status made clear that the supposed difference of the larger Indian populace prevented a readiness for independence. It also recognized that the (restricted) political devolution of the Raj had begun to prepare English-educated Indians for a future self-governance.

Indian representation in the inter-war metropole problematized the 1924 Empire Exhibition’s depiction of a “family party.” India’s participation in the Empire Exhibition exemplified the ambiguities of inter-war racial views, which, “formerly a marker of British self-confidence, was increasingly a subject of contest and negotiation between

³³¹ Daniel Stephen, “‘The White Man’s Grave’: British West Africa and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924–1925” *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 2009): 125-127.

³³² Lawrence, *Official Guide*.

Britain and colonized subjects.”³³³ Unlike pre-war exhibitions, renditions of India at the Empire Exhibition accompanied a reduction of racial views and palpable inclusions of Indian similarity. The changes in the Raj’s political structure as a result of the 1919 Government of India Act began to challenge notions of Indian racial inferiority, which became less evident within ethnographic display.³³⁴ As an embodiment of the Act, Indian officials influenced whether India participated in the Exhibition and the extent of provincial displays. Amidst a more potent Indian nationalism and devolution of political rule, discussions of the Exhibition also provided a forum for Indian officials to contest the inequalities of imperial governance. Although most Indian officials initially approved India’s sponsorship of the 1924 Exhibition, a growing number of Indian officials, nationalists, and businessmen opposed the Exhibition as a protest against an unjust imperial rule. In particular, they rallied dissent against colonial policy in Kenya, official acts of repression and violence in India, and the restrictions to indigenous representation in the 1919 Government of India Act.

As the political climate of India heated up, Indian nationalists, along with officials and businessmen, advocated for India’s withdrawal from the Empire Exhibition. Nationalists in the government objected to Indian involvement in the Exhibition as a result of the perceived injustices of imperial governance. Inter-war India witnessed the emergence of a more widespread nationalism, which posed a clearer threat to British dominance and engaged various locales across India. The restrictions of the 1919 Act disappointed members of the Indian National Congress, who became more vocal in their

³³³ Stephen, “‘Brothers of the Empire?’: India and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924–25,” 2-3. These post-war conceptions of race are examined in more detail in Chapter Four of this manuscript.

³³⁴ Darwin, “A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 78; Judith Brown, “India,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 425-426; Sarkar, *Modern India*, 165 and 167; Judd, *Empire*, 265.

calls for self-rule. The burdens of the First World War, the post-war continuation of the Rowlatt Acts, and the Amritsar Massacre (1919) helped catapult Gandhi into the national arena and secured his cooperation with the Congress.³³⁵ Gandhi also united his all-India agitation with the Khilafat Movement, led by Muslims in India in support of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the First World War.³³⁶ A widespread non-cooperation movement, endorsed by the Congress in 1920, persisted until 1922 when mob violence in Chauri Chaura led Gandhi to call off his campaign.³³⁷

Although the Legislative Assembly had already approved funding for the Exhibition in March 1922, dissent against Indian involvement escalated as a result of the enlarged presence of nationalists in the government. The first Indian members of the Legislative Assembly with nationalist affiliations represented a very liberal (moderate) strand of Indian nationalism. The dominance of a liberal Indian presence in the Assembly and in provincial governments resulted from the alliance of Congress members with Gandhi's "no changer" boycott of the 1919 Government of India Act. As a protest against the inadequacies of the Act, such as its preservation of central British governance, these members refused to run for the central and provincial legislatures. The Congress boycott led to a low voter turnout in the first elections of 1920, with only 20% of enfranchised Indians (which was only 2.5% of the population) casting votes for the Legislative Assembly.

³³⁵ Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics, 1915-1922*, 123, 159-160, and 307.

³³⁶ Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 109-119; Sarkar, *Modern India*, 195-198.

³³⁷ The government arrested Gandhi and he was released from prison in February 1924. Jha, *Role of Central Legislature in the Freedom Struggle*, 43-44 and 62-63; Andrew Muldoon, *Empire, Politics and the Creation of the 1935 India Act: Last Act of the Raj* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 40-41.

When Gandhi's nationwide non-cooperation movement ended in 1922, some nationalists decided to break from the Congress's boycott. They ran for office in the central and provincial governments with objectives to form a parliamentary-based opposition to the inequities of British rule. These nationalists of the Swaraj Party, known as the "pro-changers," hoped to accomplish more extensive constitutional reform and to contest imperialist abuses through legislative action.³³⁸ They were quite successful in the 1923 elections, securing 45 of 104 seats in the Legislative Assembly. The Swarajists' attempts to dismantle British autocracy from within the government significantly altered the central and provincial governments, overriding the collaborative methods of the first Indian members of the new government. As the *Daily Mail* lamented, "Many Liberals and Moderates of good service were thrust aside" in the 1923 elections and formed "anti-Government majorities."³³⁹

The British government issued the Devonshire white paper in 1923 that added fuel to the fire of nationalist agitation, and politicized Indian participation in the Empire Exhibition. The paper proposed to severely curtail the immigration and political participation of non-whites in Kenya, and would lead to the exclusion of local Indian merchants from Kenyan politics. While the Indian response to this policy of racial inequality did not lead to India's non-participation in the Empire Exhibition, it did lead to a boycott of the Exhibition by many Indian businessmen and the withdrawal of two

³³⁸ Take, for example, Motilal Nehru, elected into the Central Legislative Assembly in the second elections of 1923. Nehru, alongside C.R. Das, led the Swaraj Party, which promoted Indian nationalist participation in the Raj government. S.R. Bakshi, *Swaraj Party and Gandhi* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1989); Stanley Wolpert, "The Indian National Congress in Nationalist Perspective," in *Congress and Indian Nationalism: The Pre-independence Phase*, eds. Stanley Wolpert and Richard Sisson (University of California Press, 1988), 28-29; Coatman, *India, the Road to Self-Government*, 49-50; Jha, *Role of Central Legislature in the Freedom Struggle*, 44-47 and 63-70.

³³⁹ *Daily Mail Yearbook, 1925* (Associated Newspapers), 37.

Indian statesmen from the organizing committee of the Indian section.³⁴⁰ As a *Times* article explained, even “some prominent politicians not identified with the non-cooperationists recommended boycott on entirely political grounds.”³⁴¹

The growing presence of Indian nationalists in the government, angered over imperial policy in Kenya, incited debates over a proposal to increase the salary of Vijayaraghavacharya as Commissioner for India at the Exhibition. The Secretary of State for India had approved Vijayaraghavacharya’s request for more pay, but the Legislative Assembly and Finance Committee of India wanted to vote on the final decision. As a response to the vote, D.T. Chadwick, the Secretary to the Government of India, wrote to Louis Kershaw, the Secretary of the Industries and Overseas Department of the India Office. In September 1923, Chadwick explained that the “political atmosphere” in India, coupled with ongoing opposition to the British Empire Exhibition and financial retrenchment in Indian governments, had led Indian officials to reduce Vijayaraghavacharya’s pay increase. According to Chadwick, this decision would likely stick because the majority of candidates for the 1923 election had “publicly declared that they consider[ed] that India should withdraw from the Exhibition as a protest against the Kenya decision.”³⁴² Chadwick’s concerns reflected the rising Indian opposition to imperial governance and, concurrently, to the Exhibition. They also indicated a growing agitation within British official circles regarding the entry of Congress members—with goals to forward Indian self-rule—into the 1923 governments.

³⁴⁰ Deborah Hughes, “Kenya, India and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924,” *Race & Class* 47, no. 4 (April, 2006): 66-85.

³⁴¹ “India at Wembley,” *Times*, 27 Sept 1924. BL, IOR L/E/7/1186

³⁴² “Letter to Kershaw,” 15 September 1923, BL, IOR L/E/7/1280; “Letter from A.H. Ley, Secretary to the Government of India,” 14 March 1923, BL, IOR L/E/7/1280; “Letter from Vijayaraghavacharya,” 21 September 1922, BL, IOR L/E/7/1280.

The enlarged authority of anti-imperial Indian nationalists in the central and provincial legislative assemblies, coupled with unpopular imperial policies, problematized the depiction of racial unity at the Empire Exhibition. Mounting opposition ensued during the Exhibition planning as Indian officials protested the inequalities of British rule. Although official participation had been approved by the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council of Bombay, a province which had already put forth much opposition to the Exhibition, voted against a remaining balance to further fund exhibits.³⁴³ In Bombay's 1923 elections, the Swarajists won 23 of the 40 non-Muslim seats. With a majority of Swaraj nationalist in the provincial government, the Central Provinces did not participate in the Exhibition; neither did Assam. In other Legislative Assembly debates, Indian officials voiced their politically-based opposition to the Empire Exhibition. Following the "Kenya Decision," the Bengal Legislative Council, where nationalists had the largest party,³⁴⁴ debated a resolution to provide more funding for the Calcutta Exhibition (1923) "as a preliminary to the British Empire Exhibition." With a vote of 22 for increasing money, and 55 against, the Legislative Council of Bengal opposed enlarged expenditures for the exhibitions.³⁴⁵

Indian officials of the Legislative Council of Bengal explained their opposition to the Empire Exhibition in terms of racial discrimination in imperialist policies. As Daniel Stephen accurately puts it in his article on the British Empire Exhibition, "the Indian Pavilion suggested not a reformed imperialism but the authoritarian nature of liberalism in an imperial setting, the slow and contradictory nature of modernization under imperial

³⁴³ "India at Wembley," *Times*, 27 Sept 1924. BL, IOR L/E/7/1186; Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 21.

³⁴⁴ Bakshi, *Swaraj Party and Gandhi*, 21. In Bengal, they occupied 45 of the 114 open seats.

³⁴⁵ "Demands for Grants," Bengal Legislative Council Debate, 16 August 1923, p. 313, BL, IOR L/E/7/1186.

auspices, and the durability of British ideas of ‘racial’ hierarchy.”³⁴⁶ Rai Harendranath Chaudhuri of the Bengal Council, for example, rejected the resolution to increase exhibitionary funding as part of a larger protest against the Kenya decision and imperial policies that ignored indigenous interests. He explained that “the Government which is anxious to advertise itself as a reformed Government” continued to press for more Indian expenditure on exhibitions, “in utter disregard of the present feelings of the people of this country against participation in the British Empire Exhibition.”³⁴⁷ Kumar Shib Shekhareswar Ray, as well, voiced his anger that Indians had not yet been given equal citizenship across the Empire. At the British Empire Exhibition, he argued, “we will not be treated on equal terms with other citizens but as helots and coolies there.” The Exhibition would, according to prominent Indians, reiterate the still-present racial inequalities in the Empire and demonstrate the hollowness of Britain’s claims to a benevolent rule. Indian representatives, Ray argued, could not “participate in an exhibition which is going to be nothing but an exposition of our inferior status and utter degradation and helplessness.”³⁴⁸ Indian nationalists and officials highlighted that racist colonial policies directly conflicted with the Exhibition’s rhetoric of racial unity.

Although India participated in the 1924 Exhibition in an official capacity, indignation persisted in India over the Kenya decision. The Kenya conflict did not result in the official withdrawal of India from the Exhibition. Rather, it strengthened Indian dissent against the Exhibition and led to an overall decline in Indian support for the

³⁴⁶ Stephen, “‘Brothers of the Empire?’: India and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924–25.”

³⁴⁷ “Demands for Grants,” Bengal Legislative Council Debate, 16 August 1923, p. 297, BL, IOR L/E/7/1186.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 298-299.

Exhibition.³⁴⁹ In an article on the Madras section of the Exhibition, the “Officer-in-Charge,” S. K. Sundaracharlu, discussed the “hands off” opposition to the Exhibition led by Indian nationalists. As a result, the “Exhibition work became an uphill task throughout India.” Although Madras witnessed the struggle between “the forces of co-operation and the forces of non-co-operation,” Madras produced, according to Sundaracharlu, a “comprehensive and well-planned show.” In the second elections of 1923, the Swarajists did not fare well in Madras.³⁵⁰ Sundaracharlu boasted the wholehearted contribution of the presidency to the Exhibition. He contrasted the extensive participation of Madras with other provincial displays, which exhibited in an “apologetic spirit,” displaying “whatever could be laid hands on.” In contrast to many other prominent Indians, Sundaracharlu viewed the Exhibition as a “powerful unifying agenc[y]” that aided “irksome political problems” and diffused “peace and good-will throughout the world.” In direct conflict with Indian nationalists, he saw the Madras Court as exemplifying the “Family Party” of empire through a “triumph of co-operation.”³⁵¹

The views of Indian officials such as Officer Sundaracharlu and Commissioner T. Vijayaraghavacharya serve as glaring contrasts to those of Indian representatives in Legislative and Provincial Assemblies who protested against the Exhibition. Despite the contributions of some Indian administrators, popular enthusiasm in India for the Exhibition had deteriorated.³⁵² After his travels across India to induce provincial participation, Vijayaraghavacharya concluded that the Indian public, previously “aloof in

³⁴⁹ Hughes, “Kenya, India and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924,” 66-85.

³⁵⁰ Bakshi, *Swaraj Party and Gandhi*, 21.

³⁵¹ S.K. Sundaracharlu, “Madras at Wembley: A Triumph of Cooperation,” *Asiatic Review* 20, no. 64: 601-608.

³⁵² Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 24-26.

indifference” to the Exhibition, became hostile towards Indian participation. The provinces had difficulties sub-letting their vacant spaces to private exhibitors. As Deborah Hughes details in her article, the unsuccessful boycott of India’s participation at the 1924 Exhibition demonstrated that Indian exhibits continued to embody the worldviews of imperial Britons. Indian representation in the Pavilion “was more of a stand-in for the Indian nation than a reflection of its enthusiasm for its place in the empire.”³⁵³

As a result of political antagonisms in inter-war India, for the re-opening of the British Empire Exhibition in 1925, the British government did not offer financial assistance to India based on the assumption that Indians did not favor another year of participation. The Exhibition Board had granted financial assistance of approximately £200,000 to most of the Dominions and colonies so that they would participate in 1925.³⁵⁴ This offer excluded India, official reports indicated, based on the “general understanding that India would not participate in any case.”³⁵⁵ In July 1924, the Viceroy informed the British government that, “it could be taken as certain that the legislative assemblies and local councils would not vote sums required for prolongation of Exhibition for another year.”³⁵⁶ Subsequent reports reiterated that provincial governments, as well as the Government of India, would most likely not fund Indian participation at the 1925 re-opening. In December 1924, the Viceroy restated to the Secretary of State for India that: “we do not think there is any chance that Assembly and

³⁵³ Hughes, “Kenya, India and the British Empire Exhibition,” 81-82. After the Kenya decision, Srinivasa Sastri and Jannadas Dwarkadas resigned from the Advisory Committee and called for the boycott of the Exhibition.

³⁵⁴ The British Empire Exhibition (1924) Inc., “Minutes of the 32nd Meeting of the Executive Council Held at the Board of Trade,” 3 March 1925, BL, IOR L/E/7/1186.

³⁵⁵ “British Empire Exhibition. Participation of India in 1925,” BL, IOR L/E/7/1186.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

Local Councils would vote the necessary grants.” The Viceroy would, however, consider proposing Indian participation to the Legislative Assembly if the Board offered a financial subsidy.³⁵⁷ The Board offered no such subsidy. By the re-opening of the 1925 Exhibition, tensions in British India had become so palpable that neither the British nor the Indian government endorsed the financing of Indian exhibits.

The changes associated with India’s involvement in the First World War, including the 1919 Government of India Act and the rise of a more vehement anti-colonial nationalism, had led the growing class of Indian officials to criticize British policies in the context of the Empire Exhibition. Exhibitionary administrators, British and Indian alike, claimed that India’s political evolution had altered India’s status as a dependency to “a partner in the Empire.”³⁵⁸ Comprador Indians like Vijayaraghavacharya supported Indian compliance in what they saw as a benevolent empire. Inter-war exhibits, they argued, demonstrated Indians’ capacity and willingness to help govern India under the overall authority of British rule. Indian nationalists, in contrast, criticized their subordinate position in empire and the virtual lack of indigenous influence over governance. Nationalist criticisms of racially-unequal policies, which relegated Indian authority, became more evident in the inter-war period and had a direct impact on the extent and content of Indian displays at the Empire Exhibition.

³⁵⁷ “From Viceroy, Commerce Department, to Secretary of State for India,” 18 December 1924, BL, IOR L/E/7/1186; “From Viceroy, Commerce Department to Secretary of State for India. Delhi,” 2 February 1925, BL, IOR L/E/7/1186. It should be noted that, in early 1925, the Viceroy wrote a scathing three-part letter to the Secretary of State regarding the Board’s discriminatory treatment of India. He explained that the Dominions had been offered financial assistance, but India had not. He argued that, “there was opposition from a certain section of Indian political thought to our participation last year, but nevertheless, as you are aware, the necessary funds were voted by the Legislatures. Our absence this year will no doubt be attributed to the same opposition, but all transactions relating to the Exhibition have been with the Government of India, not with our political opponents, and we take the strongest exception to the action of the Board.”

³⁵⁸ Kendall, “The Participation of India and Burma in the British Empire Exhibition, 1924,” 648.

Despite mounting Indian protests, when the 1924 Exhibition opened, it incorporated a comprador Indian authority, and exhibits deprived visitors of subversive movements within India. The popular press referenced strains in British-Indian relations, but largely portrayed the Indian Pavilion as a portal for visitors to enter a timeless India and to explore the benefits of British rule. Even as Indian officials demonstrated their ability to partake in, and criticize, the political administration of the Raj, exhibits continued to represent lower-class Indian “natives” through familiar cultural renditions. Political transformations in India led to a paradoxical set of images at the Empire Exhibition. Visitors to the Indian Pavilion viewed the conspicuous presence of Indian administrators and businessmen who ran exhibits. They also viewed the familiar presence of Indian “natives” who performed their talents and crafts in provincial exhibits, maintained by British and Indian administrators alike.

These ethnographic renditions divided the majority of Indian society from elite Indians who operated the Exhibition in an official capacity. The spatial segregation of Indian “natives” within simulated bazaars, villages, and cultural performances in the exhibitions therefore reinforced their separation from Indian administrators. Like the 1919 Act, inter-war exhibits continued to exclude the voices of the majority of the Indian population. Ironically enough, Indian officials and businessmen who ran exhibits cultivated these “living” spectacles in provincial and state sectors. They manipulated iconic images of India in order to draw in Western visitors, advertise their respective provinces, and sell Indian goods.

The “living” renditions of the 1924 Empire Exhibition portrayed the persistence of “traditional” Indian cultures as archetypal depictions of India’s racial difference. The

press coverage and official guides of the 1924 Empire Exhibition highlighted that the “living” displays of Indians continued to denote their enduring ties to local and rural environments. The ethnographic scenes at the 1924 Empire Exhibition included “villages faithfully reproducing to the minutest detail (except, presumably, for dirt and smells) originals in Burma, the Deccan, Gambia, Nyasaland, Ungava, the South Sea Islands, etc.—inhabited, too, by the proper natives engaged in accustomed occupations (i.e., the innocent ones).”³⁵⁹ The immobility of “natives” within local villages and their traditional cultures signaled their immobility within an evolutionary past. Inter-war exhibits depicted lower-class Indian “representatives of their *local* inhabitants at work in *local* conditions.”³⁶⁰ British visitors, for example, became “familiar with Hassain, the snake charmer,” who had not imagined “that 1924 would find him settle, turban, mongoose and all, in a London suburb.”³⁶¹ The 1924 *Official Guide* advertised that “Southern India provides a Pageant in the Madras Court, and there is a theatre with dancers from the *far hills*, who never saw Europe until the spring of this year.”³⁶² The Empire Exhibition attributed the movement of lower-class Indians from colony to metropole to their appropriation for public display. Incorporating “living” ethnography, provincial exhibits located “natives” within the environments of local villages and exoticized performances rather than the modernity of the imperial metropole, and distanced their colonial status from Indian administrators.

The Madras Court, one of the largest sectors of the Indian Pavilion, re-enacted Indian cultures of South India. The “living” displays of Madras, for example, included

³⁵⁹ Bunn, “Two Weeks on Our Planet,” 179.

³⁶⁰ Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 126.

³⁶¹ “India at Wembley. Splendour of the East. A Bazaar in Being,” *Times*, 24 May 1924, p. xii.

³⁶² Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 62.

snake juggling and sword play.³⁶³ A correspondent in London reported to the *New India* newspaper that the Madras Court, with its integrated bazaar reproductions and “living” displays, was one of the most popular features of the Indian section.³⁶⁴ Visitors, according to the officer of the Madras Court, came to the exhibition to see “the life lived by the people of the Empire in their distinctive surroundings,” and this attraction was central to the Madras Court, which aimed to provide “South India on a miniature scale.”³⁶⁵ In his article, officer Sundaracharlu discussed the peoples of Southern India at length, including their “less Aryan” and “more Dravidian” civilization. The “Dravidian character” of the Madras court could be seen in its theatre. One performance enacted scenes from the Ramayana text, such as the conflicts arising from the Aryan invasion of Southern India. According to Sundaracharlu, the zamindars and rajas of Southern India also contributed extensively to the Madras court and participated in the reproduction of “living” ethnography. As Vijayaraghavacharya explained, a “snake charmer furnished by the generous public spirit of the Raja of Parlakimidi, and the snake charmer’s wife and their feats of jugglery drew such large crowds to the Madras Court.”³⁶⁶

The *Illustrated London News*, moreover, provided a comprehensive account of the Exhibition that included pictures, with descriptions, of “living” Indians on display. Titled “Subjects of the King from Many Climes at Wembley: Picturesque Types at the British Empire Exhibition,” one section featured photographs of colonized peoples who populated the Exhibition from West Africa, Palestine, Malaya, Hong King, Ceylon, Burma, and India. These peoples would, according to the article, provide “a unique

³⁶³ *India: British Empire Exhibition 1924, Catalogue.*

³⁶⁴ “British Empire Exhibition,” *New India* (Madras), 25 April 1924, p. 7.

³⁶⁵ Sundaracharlu, “Madras at Wembley: A Triumph of Cooperation,” 601-608.

³⁶⁶ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 43.

object lesson in comparative anthropology.”³⁶⁷ Categorized in generic terms, one photographed Indian was “a turbaned greybeard of warlike aspect.” In contrast to the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the Empire Exhibition did not provide an extensive cataloguing of Indians on display, but it did include “living” Indians who performed their different cultures and local crafts within the metropole.

The “living” displays of the Indian Pavilion did not resemble the classified models of the instructive scenes at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition that claimed to represent India’s “races” comprehensively. Instead, British and Indian administrators appealed more to the “live” spectacle of different native cultures in order to draw in visitors through entertainment. At the Empire Exhibition, Malays, Burmese, Hong Kong Chinese, West Africans, and Palestinians both lived and worked within the Exhibition. Indians, Singhalese, West Indians, and the “natives” of British Guiana, however, lived outside the Exhibition and could transgress the boundaries of the exhibitionary space.³⁶⁸ Administered largely under the authority of Indian elites who exhibited in the Empire Exhibition, Indians on display crossed into the modern, industrial, and urban arena of the metropole.

Though perpetuated by Indians themselves, the extent of India’s “living” displays differentiated its political status from the Dominions. As a reiteration of their “modern” political status, the Dominion pavilions at the British Empire Exhibition, unlike Indian and colonial buildings, virtually excluded indications of their “native” cultures. One reviewer of the Exhibition noted that, through European expansion in the white-settlement Dominions, “the legends of the aboriginals in Australia and the Maoris in New

³⁶⁷ “Subjects of the King from Many Climes at Wembley: Picturesque Types at the British Empire Exhibition,” *Illustrated London News*, 24 May 1924, pp. 934-935.

³⁶⁸ Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 126.

Zealand and the charm of their uncivilised existence ended.” As a result of the “cruder, more practical life” introduced in the Dominions, “practical resignation to the commercial slogans of 1924 has dominated the pavilions of these countries at Wembley.”³⁶⁹

As one example, the New Zealand building downplayed, but did not omit, displays of indigenous cultures. New Zealand authorities wanted to demonstrate the modernity and economic progress of the country rather than its historical and anthropological features.³⁷⁰ To the British visitor, New Zealand “does not seem unhomelike, for its people are so close akin to ourselves.”³⁷¹ The omission of any “special representation of” the Maori presence, moreover, resulted from the view of the Maori as participating “in the political and social life of New Zealand” and representing “a very high type of culture.”³⁷² According to Donald Maxwell’s account of the New Zealand Pavilion:

it is more with modern New Zealand that the main part of the interior deals, for the Maoris have, perhaps, ‘blended’ better and more easily with conditions of life as lived by white folk than any other aboriginal people in our Colonial possessions. In most countries the natives live a life apart, but in New Zealand they share it with the whites—in a political sense.³⁷³

The “native” cultures of New Zealand represented at the Exhibition demonstrated a colonial acculturation only attributed to the elites of Indian society. Despite these reports, the New Zealand Pavilion included a carved Maori House (the “Mata-Atua”), to

³⁶⁹ Bolitho, “An Impression of Wembley,” 253. As seen in Chapter One, Bolitho praised the Indian Pavilion as an exemplar of the East, and made particular note of India’s architecture.

³⁷⁰ Conal McCarthy, “Objects of Empire? Displaying Maori at International Exhibitions, 1873-1924,” *Journal of New Zealand Literature* 23 (2005): 62.

³⁷¹ Maxwell, *Wembley in Colour: Being both an Impression and a Memento of the British Empire Exhibition of 1924*.

³⁷² Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 30-31.

³⁷³ Maxwell, *Wembley in Colour: Being both an Impression and a Memento of the British Empire Exhibition of 1924*, 87.

the dissatisfaction of Maori politicians. Maori leader T. W. Ratana protested against the display of this “Maori hut” because it denigrated rather than elevated the racial status of the Maoris by depicting them as “low down in the scale of native races.”³⁷⁴ Even amidst this criticism, the New Zealand Pavilion continued to display the “carved Maori Hut” in the re-opened 1925 Exhibition.³⁷⁵

The Canadian Pavilion almost entirely omitted representations of “native” environments and the Australian Pavilion downplayed its indigenous cultures. As white-settler Dominions, Canada and Australia could easily omit indigenous peoples from their exhibits. In Australia, for example, white settlers increasingly outnumbered indigenous peoples. By 1911, 4.5 million colonists outnumbered about 100,000 Aboriginal Australians. By the 1930s, indigenous Australians had dwindled to a population of 70,000.³⁷⁶ Instead of ethnographic displays, the Australian building at the Exhibition included instructive scenes of natural beauty and growing commerce and industry. Maxwell explained that “The very great commercial changes in Australia are so well typified here that it is a little hard to think of it as a ‘wild’ land . . . and we see little evidence of its aboriginal peoples—rather too little, I think—but we do see Australia as a great land of the future—which is, after all, as it should be.”³⁷⁷

Exhibition administrators of the Canada Pavilion excluded “native” cultures in order to bolster Canada’s identity as “a civilized place to do business or settle.”³⁷⁸ In its re-opened exhibition of 1925, Canada constructed another version of its butter sculpture

³⁷⁴ Quoted in McCarthy, “Objects of Empire? Displaying Maori at International Exhibitions, 1873-1924,” 52-53.

³⁷⁵ *A Pictorial and Descriptive guide to London and the British Empire Exhibition, 1925*, H.

³⁷⁶ Donald Denoon and Marivic Wyndham, “Australia and the Western Pacific,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 546 and 549.

³⁷⁷ Maxwell, *Wembley in Colour*, 84.

³⁷⁸ Clendinning, “Exhibiting a Nation: Canada at the British Empire Exhibition, 1924–1925,” 83 and 103.

of the Prince of Wales from 1924, dressing Edward as a Native American chief. Even this slight display of Canada's native presence led to criticism from the Canadian press because, according to one article, it gave the "false impression that our country is still largely peopled by savages."³⁷⁹ Such a depiction overshadowed the main objective of showcasing Canada's modern nationhood and economy.³⁸⁰

Despite the government's putative promises of eventual dominionhood in India, the Exhibition presented an India that remained far removed from the political status of Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. It did, however, make distinctions in the status of India and that of African dependencies through colonial ethnography. The Exhibition most evidently portrayed the racial inferiority of African cultures. The *Times* advertised that "the primitive life of the African villages, will be seen side by side with the latest scientific wonders that British skill and genius have devised."³⁸¹ The "Walled City" of West Africa had buildings representing Nigeria, the Gold Coast, and Sierra Leone, and included an "African Village" occupied in the outdoors by "West African races." These various races and tribes would, according to an *Official Guide*, reproduce "the exact conditions under which the West African people live."³⁸² Exhibits of West Africa, then, emphasized racial difference by sending "its coal-black natives to live as they do in Kano, Nigeria, of which city the Wembley exhibit [was] a model."³⁸³ African model villages represented to visitors the "accurate reproductions of native communal life."³⁸⁴

³⁷⁹ "Report from *Le Canada*," *Montreal Gazette*, 28 May 1925, p. 10. Cited in Clendinning, "Exhibiting a Nation: Canada at the British Empire Exhibition, 1924–1925," 101–102.

³⁸⁰ Clendinning, "Exhibiting a Nation: Canada at the British Empire Exhibition, 1924–1925," 103.

³⁸¹ "The British Empire Exhibition," *Times*, 2 April 1924, p. 13.

³⁸² Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 67–68. See also, Lawrence, *Official Guide* (1924), 75–76.

³⁸³ Scarborough, "An Empire in Miniature. Special Correspondence from Harold E. Scarborough," 280.

³⁸⁴ "British Empire Exhibition Wembley," *Daily Mail*, 7 May 1925, p. 11.

The racial denigration of African peoples was so conspicuous at the Exhibition that it led to protests by English-educated West Africans living in London, spearheaded by the Union of Students of African Descent (an “apolitical” group).³⁸⁵ Prior to the opening of the Exhibition, they contested a misleading passage in a newspaper article on Nigerians who would be on display, which referenced acts of cannibalism in the colony. Once the Exhibition opened, more offensive commentary in the press surfaced. A reporter disclosed his interview with a craftswoman in the West African Village on sexual practices and marriage rituals. The opposition to this press coverage led by West African students against the Colonial Office and Exhibition authorities highlighted the inherent contradiction between racialized perceptions of “natives” and the Exhibition’s claims to racial accord. Their protests were also coupled with dissent by the “natives” themselves, who refused to allow photographers into the “walled city.”³⁸⁶

The debates over the West African Village, and those over Indian participation in the Exhibition, both had direct consequences on their display in London. The West African Village closed precipitously, prior to the official closing of the 1924 Exhibition. The Indian Pavilion witnessed an overall decline in exhibitors, and a non-official reopening in 1925. Although the West African section reopened in 1925, a testament to the continued authoritarian governance in African colonies, the *Official Guide* of 1925 omitted references to the “natives” of the African “village.”³⁸⁷ The 1925 “walled city,” moreover, had restaged scenes for “natives” to perform their crafts indoors and barred the entry of the press. Across the breadth of imperial territories—in Canada, in India, and in

³⁸⁵ Britton, “‘Come and See the Empire by the All Red Route!’: Anti-Imperialism and Exhibitions in Interwar Britain,” 68-78.

³⁸⁶ Stephen, “‘The White Man’s Grave’: British West Africa and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924–1925,” 125-127.

³⁸⁷ Lawrence, *Official Guide, 1925*, 78-81.

the dependencies of Africa—peoples from the colonies and Dominions negotiated the terms of their display, and in turn, of their different positions in the Empire.

In the Indian Pavilion, notions of similarity and difference persisted, embodying the inter-war ambiguities of racial concepts, race relations in colonial territories, and India's place in the Empire. Populated by Indian administrators as well as “natives” on display, the Pavilion manifested the contradictions of changing British policies in, and views of, inter-war India. The growing authority of Indian administrative elites in 1924 countered notions of difference because it reinforced their participation in the government. Despite the gradual incorporation of “westernized” Indian officials into the Raj, the Exhibition continued to portray ethnographic evidence of India's racial and cultural difference.

Renditions of Indian cultures at the Empire Exhibition denoted India's racial difference, even as Indian officials and elites helped construct and administer exhibits. The motives of comprador Indians to co-operate with the colonial regime, demonstrate their leadership in provinces, and sell Indian products led to their cultivation of popular images of India's “native” cultures. Their administration conflicted with the goals of Indian nationalism and its dissent against the Exhibition. Maintained by the Exhibition Board, the Indian Pavilion re-opened in 1925, but without official sanctioning from the Indian Government. Instead, private exhibitors, who were largely Indian, ran exhibits and maintained images of Indian “tradition” and “native” cultures in the metropole.

* * *

British imperial exhibitions rendered India as fundamentally pre-modern through the model and “living” ethnography of simulated villages, bazaars, and cultural performances. Even as they displayed the supposed racial inferiority of Indian “natives,” however, the exhibitions reified the incorporation of elite Indians into the “modern” government and economy. This mirrored British policy which consistently excluded the majority of the Indian population from a voice in government. By the inter-war period, however, the taxonomic, racial schemes of the late nineteenth century became less acceptable ways to portray colonized peoples. While the administrators of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition organized and categorized model “races” for the instruction and entertainment of its visitors, the administrators of the 1924 Empire Exhibition used the spectacle of “living” colonized peoples to draw in visitors and sell products. The racial denigration of “native” cultures at the 1924 Exhibition could best be seen in displays of Africa. The continued “living” display of colonized peoples in the inter-war period, coupled with rhetoric of racial difference in exhibitionary publications conflicted with the Exhibition’s claim to show racial unity after the First World War. The racialization of peoples on display and the inequalities of colonial governance on the ground were contested during the planning and the duration of the Empire Exhibition.

At the same time that nationalist and official Indians protested the 1924 Exhibition, comprador Indians partook in the construction of exhibits, populating the exhibitionary spaces as administrators of empire and as international businessmen. While the latter’s presence clashed with the boycott of the Exhibition in India, it also testified to

the ability of Indians to have at least some influence over the imperial government and economy. The economic motives of Indian administrators and business elites led them to sponsor inter-war exhibits, bringing “natives” for display as a way to attract imperial visitors and sell products.

CHAPTER FOUR: ARTISANAL BAZAARS AND PEASANT VILLAGES

In an article on India at the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, Indian Commissioner T. Vijayaraghavacharya charged that “At the 1908 Exhibition as well as its predecessors, the Paris Exhibition of 1900, and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, the large bulk of Indian exhibits belonged to the Art and Handicrafts Section.” This “undue preponderance” of artwares in previous exhibitions, Vijayaraghavacharya continued, “is apt to produce an erroneous impression that India has little to show in the way of large industries or industries of world-wide importance.” To rectify this simplification of the Indian economy, the 1924 Indian Pavilion would include depictions of “the great progress” made in India, including “The cotton mills of Bombay, the woolen mills of Cawnpore, the jute factories of Bengal, the iron and steel industry . . . [and] the railway and steamship services.”³⁸⁸ Familiar representations of a “pre-industrial” India—in its artisanal bazaars and peasant villages—co-existed in the inter-war era with signs of Indian industrialization and participation in commercialized markets.

The 1886 and 1908 Exhibitions largely portrayed the Indian economy through its agriculture and “traditional” handmade goods within bazaar and village tableaux. Notions of difference predominated in these exhibits of India, contrasting British economic and political modernity with Indian changelessness and decline. They portrayed local societies, artisanal handicrafts, and agricultural rurality as demonstrative of India’s overall identity and its incapacity for political sovereignty. Guidebooks and

³⁸⁸ Vijayaraghavacharya, “India and the British Empire Exhibition,” 142-143.

reviews of these pre-war exhibitions, as well, “narrated” for visitors how displays typified a pre-industrial India, and rendered the subcontinent incapable of self-rule.³⁸⁹ Such imperial notions of India as a land of endless villages and bazaars disregarded Indian conceptions of economic progress and selectively infused India’s socio-economic scenes with political meanings.³⁹⁰ They characterized colonial India as rural rather than urban, agricultural rather than industrial, and local rather than national. Instead of presenting India’s industrial similarity with Britain, these simplified dichotomies constructed under British rule affirmed Indian “difference.”

By the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the British public had already been familiarized with Indian economic products, “institutionalized and internationalized” under British rule through exhibitions, museums, publications, and commercial trade.³⁹¹ India’s handmade products became part of the British government’s concern, after 1858, with acquiring and classifying “knowledge” about the subcontinent. Indian artisanal wares also contributed to the growing presence and popularity of foreign, exotic goods from distant lands in Britain. The 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition in many ways generated interest in Indian “traditional” goods in Britain, which would be ever-more represented in exhibitions in the late-nineteenth century. India had 30,000 square feet of the Crystal Palace Exhibition to provide the hitherto most comprehensive display of Indian agricultural and artisanal products. Thereafter, displays of India in London and at

³⁸⁹ Kriegel, “Narrating the Subcontinent in 1851: India at the Crystal Palace,” in *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, 146-149.

³⁹⁰ Auerbach, “Introduction,” in *Britain, The Empire, and The World at the Great Exhibition of 1851*, ix-xviii.

³⁹¹ Carol A. Breckenridge, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31 (April 1989): 207.

international exhibitions sought to catalogue Indian products, and couched them in terms of Indian “difference.”

The “tradition” of Indian crafts and agricultural products at the exhibitions represented India’s “difference” from modern Britain. This “difference,” however, encompassed a variety of views. Visitors and administrators at the exhibitions consumed, categorized, and observed Indian objects as embodiments of Indian exoticism, and relegated India to a “pre-modern” era. They also marveled at their aesthetic beauty and craftsmanship, which could not be found in an industrialized Europe, flooded with machine-made goods. Indian crafts spoke to the growing Arts and Crafts movement in Britain, which favored handmade goods over industrial products. Artisanal works in India served as a model for craftsmanship in Victorian Britain, especially because the latter had witnessed the decline of handmade crafts as a result of industrialization.³⁹²

Fears that this decline would occur in India surfaced at the exhibitions, as visitors and administrators discussed the influences of British imperialism on the subcontinent. Views of Indian artwares at the 1851 Great Exhibition had anticipated the pressing concerns about the imperial economy surrounding the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Observers in 1851 forecasted a wane in Indian handmade goods as a result of competition with industrial products in the international market; they also compared the products of Britain and India, favoring the skillful craftsmanship of the latter.³⁹³ Similarly, reviews of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition favored Indian artwares (that had not been “Westernized”) because they “surpass[ed] anything of English

³⁹² Mathur, *India by Design*, 58.

³⁹³ Kriegel, “Narrating the Subcontinent in 1851: India at the Crystal Palace,” 161.

exhibitions.”³⁹⁴ Signs that Indian crafts had adopted Western designs or methods were met with criticism in the press. These criticisms of Indian economic “Westernization” went hand in hand with preferences for India’s “authentic” craftsmanship over that of modern, Western commodities. Visitors consumed Indian “difference,” and when Indian goods seemed the least bit “Western,” they expressed their irritation with the mixing of colonial and British cultures.

Visitors to the exhibitions thus saw India’s “pre-industrial” economy as the truly authentic representation of India, lamenting signs of Indian acculturation to Western industry. They aligned Indian tradition with its “difference,” venerating Indian cultures whilst relegating them to a pre-modern past. Although notions of Indian difference dominated exhibitions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, visitors also interpreted representations of agricultural and artisanal economies at the exhibitions through Indian similarity. As one example, Indian villages could be seen simultaneously through their timelessness and their location within a British past which could progress into modernity.³⁹⁵ The tension between visions of Indian difference and similarity was, therefore, most manifest in exhibits of India’s villages and bazaars.

As the Indian Commissioner of the 1924 Empire Exhibition, T. Vijayaraghavacharya coupled his approval of the Empire with his desire to adjust familiar conceptions of the Indian economy to include Indian industrial and commercial growth.³⁹⁶ Vijayaraghavacharya’s concerns reflected changes associated with the Indian economy during the First World War and the inter-war years. By the British Empire Exhibition, even with its inclusion of Indian economic “tradition,” India could be seen as

³⁹⁴ “Indo-Colonial Exhibitions,” *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 2 May 1886, p. 7.

³⁹⁵ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 71-74.

³⁹⁶ Vijayaraghavacharya, “India and the British Empire Exhibition,” 143.

progressing from its pre-industrial economy towards an economy of the modern era. It included exhibits of urbanization schemes, commercial ports, and industrial products. Indian administrators and businessmen ran these exhibits of Indian modernization as knowledgeable experts who partook in the international economy. Vijayaraghavacharya promised that Indian exhibits in 1924 would illustrate economic diversification under a benevolent imperial rule. His administration of the Empire Exhibition and desire to showcase Indian industry largely portrayed India's modernization through the benefits of empire. Other Indian officials and elites expressed differing views regarding the construction of Indian exhibits in inter-war London. Their responses to the initial planning of the Empire Exhibition ranged from open endorsement, to caution, to staunch opposition. Official debates regarding India's part in the Exhibition demonstrated both the economic and political instabilities in the years following the First World War. Indians who approved the Exhibition, like Vijayaraghavacharya, hoped to stimulate India's commercial trade. The hesitancy of other Indian officials to endorse participation in the Exhibition rested on inter-war financial concerns and nationalist-based criticisms of the economic abuses of the Raj. They denounced the imperialist suffocation of indigenous economic growth within the context of the Exhibition.

When the Empire Exhibition opened, Indian official and commercial elites demonstrated their ability to guide India's economic modernization by running provincial exhibits. They showed their expertise on Indian goods, and reported their commercial successes in advertising and selling products at the Exhibition. They largely relied, however, on the marketability of Indian "tradition" in Europe. Indian officials and businessmen perpetuated "traditional" economic conditions, filling provincial and state

courts with artwares, “living” Indian artisans, and agricultural products. They deliberately catered to the Western preference and admiration for Indian “tradition” in order to sell goods in the international “markets” represented at the Exhibition. The economic motives of Indian businessmen conflicted with the nationalist movement within India and their opposition to the Exhibition. By the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, elite Indians had made substantial gains in their ability to shape and critique portrayals of India in London. In doing so, these Indians put forth a variety of views on the imperial economy and contributed to a diverse array of Indian exhibits at the Exhibition.

1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition

At the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, administrators advertised the economic products and commercial opportunities of India. Indian spaces at the Exhibition included private exhibits intended to sell goods and instructional displays of Indian economic conditions that extensively catalogued handmade goods and agricultural products. The imperialist economic system of India figured prominently in these renditions of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Under the colonialist system of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the majority of the Indian population worked in agriculture while industrial development in India remained relatively limited.³⁹⁷ In the pre-colonial and early colonial periods, India supplied manufactured textiles. By the late nineteenth century India had been converted into a market for British manufactures, particularly textiles, and an international supplier of raw materials. Under an increasingly

³⁹⁷ B.R. Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1860-1970* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2-3, 5, 12-13, and 95.

centralized British rule, India became a major exporter of agricultural products and raw materials, including cotton, indigo, jute, rice, and tea. In turn, India imported British industry, such as textiles, iron and steel goods, and machinery. This pre-war Indian economy helped sustain Britain's world-wide dominance, which relied on access to Indian markets for British manufactured imports and a surplus of profits from Indian exports. Between 1870 and 1913 India was Britain's primary export market; by the latter year, 60% of India's imports came from Britain. Tariff policies favored British textiles, particularly from Lancashire, which accounted for a third of India's total imports. India had not industrialized fully until after the First World War, while Britons, rather than Indians, controlled the export-import firms, banks, shipping companies, and infrastructure associated with the trade of the subcontinent.³⁹⁸

The "realism" of the exhibitions' colonial bazaars and villages elided these imperial interventions in India's economy.³⁹⁹ British cultural and ideological assumptions influenced the selective composition of economic exhibits that would represent India's pre-industry as an authentic demonstration of Indian "difference." Exhibits cast the dominance of pre-industrial goods in India through the lens of India's inherent difference from modern Britain. While the Colonial and Indian Exhibition classified India's commercialized trade as a more modern feature of the imperial economy, it emphasized India's lack of historical progress through the supposedly intrinsic features of its pre-industrial economy. These features included the patronage of

³⁹⁸ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 24-39; Moore, "Imperial India, 1858-1914," 441-444; Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of India*, 75-76; K.N. Chaudhuri, "Foreign Trade and Balance of Payments (1757-1947)," in *The Cambridge Economic History of India, vol. 2, c. 1757-1970*, eds. Dharma Kumar and Meghnad Desai (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 805-807; B.R. Tomlinson, "The British Economy and the Empire, 1900-1939," in *A Companion to Early Twentieth-Century Britain*, ed. Chris Wrigley (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 200-202; Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India*.

³⁹⁹ For a discussion of the "realism" of cultural display, see Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 166.

handmade goods under India's "feudal" systems of princely states and "traditional" village communities encompassing agricultural and artisanal markets.

The Colonial and Indian Exhibition visibly contrasted India's handmade crafts and agricultural products with the industrialization and urbanization of the imperial metropole. Alongside the agricultural and artisanal products exhibited in the Economic and Artware Courts, the Exhibition added models of village marketplaces in the Economic Court. The 1886 Exhibition also featured a "live" artisanal bazaar in the Indian Palace. These renditions of artisanal and agricultural societies, depicted within village and princely settings, reaffirmed Indian difference by linking India's landed and local economies to a feudal and pre-industrial past. The "tradition" of India's pre-industrial economy, as depicted in the exhibitions, made visible the British narrative of Indian history. According to this often contradictory narrative, India experienced racial decline, but also embodied a timelessness in its unchanging village communities and feudal polities. Commentary generated on the Colonial and Indian Exhibition characterized agricultural and artisanal displays as part of India's perpetual tradition.

The Artware and Economic Courts of the Exhibition featured handmade and agricultural objects respectively as archetypical depictions of India's traditional economy. The Economic Courts emphasized the classic model of colonial economies, in which "the colonies still trust[ed], in great measure, to the mother country to make finished articles of their raw produce"⁴⁰⁰ These Courts included samples of agricultural foods and raw materials, such as dyes and tans, drugs, fibers, cotton, jute, oils and seeds, and indigo. The Economic Courts also interweaved ethnological displays with agricultural products that emphasized Indian difference and appealed to the general public's preference for

⁴⁰⁰ Cundall, *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 4.

anthropologically-focused exhibits. The bamboo “native shops” of the Economic section, divided into booths and depicting an agricultural bazaar, were “similar to those found in the average Indian village.”⁴⁰¹ Life-sized models depicted local sellers of agricultural products within these scenes, including a grain merchant, fruit seller, dealer in dried fruits and nuts, and spice seller and druggist (Figure 3.1 below).⁴⁰²



Figure 3.1. Model of Native Fruit Shop, 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition. *The Illustrated London News* (17 July 1886).

Exhibitionary authorities imagined India’s pre-industry through the continuation of an agricultural India that would facilitate the growing imperial economy. The Economic Courts advertised the commercial value of Indian agriculture to world trade. The Revenue and Agricultural Department of the Government of India directed the

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 26; “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *Times*, 24 April 1886, p. 7.

⁴⁰² Royle, *Report on the Indian Section of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886*, 13; Cundall, *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 26.

economic exhibits overall, and “laid great stress on the importance of bringing before commercial men the immense value of the natural products of India.” J.R. Royle, the Assistant Secretary to the Royal Commission and official agent for the Government of India, explained that “merchants and others could handle and obtain specimens of the products.”⁴⁰³ George Watt, commissioner of the economic exhibits of India at the Exhibition, stressed the importance of developing India’s commercialized agriculture. Watt had served as Scientific Officer of the Department of Revenue and Agriculture in India. He also administered the India section of the Calcutta International Exhibition (1883-1884).⁴⁰⁴ As an imperialist expert on India’s economic conditions, Watt examined “The Economic Resources of India” in the context of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, and emphasized Indian agriculture as a crucial component to the imperial economy and to the well-being of India’s domestic economy. Watt organized the agricultural and raw products of the Economic Courts with “scientific exactitude,” and categorized the exhibits through a “scientifically arranged ledger” so that visitors could obtain further information. After the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, Watt became a reporter to the Government of India on economic products and published several works on the Indian economy, including his eight-volume *Dictionary of the Economic Products of India*.⁴⁰⁵

The scientifically-arranged economic exhibits emphasized India’s lack of industrial knowledge and development. George Watt explained that the “wealth of India” depended on “her agricultural produce, just as the weakness of India may be said to be

⁴⁰³ Royle, *Report on the Indian Section of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 13.

⁴⁰⁴ Rao, ed., *The Indian Biographical Dictionary*, 460-461.

⁴⁰⁵ *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, 11-12 and 72.

her indebtedness to other countries to work up and utilize her raw products.”⁴⁰⁶ The agricultural displays of the Economic Court were designed to “invite the attention of manufacturers to the class of implements required by Indian agriculturists.” These “implements” would be necessarily limited, however, according to the *Official Guide*, as a result of the subcontinent’s innate tradition: “what the Indian agriculturalist wants are simple and easily-handled implements, and that in this direction only is there any hope that the manufacturers of England can find any extensive outlet for agricultural machinery.”⁴⁰⁷ With labor as “the cheapest commodity,” one review of the Exhibition claimed, Indians lacked the incentive to make their economies more efficient through mechanized labor.⁴⁰⁸ Displays reiterated the growing importance of Indian agriculture to the imperial economy, whilst emphasizing India’s pre-industrial impediments to facilitating modernized industry.

The Colonial and Indian Exhibition emphasized India’s handmade artwares alongside its agricultural products as equally important features of India’s economic tradition. In the Artware Courts, Indian provinces and states featured specialized woodcarvings, jewelry, glass, fabrics, carpets, artwork, pottery, and embroideries.⁴⁰⁹ The 1886 Indian Palace forecourt, where “natives pl[ied] their trades,” moreover, demonstrated “live” the making of handmade goods that persisted in India from a “feudal” era. These “living” displays gave the “British public an idea of the manner in which the native artisans performed their daily work in India in former times as

⁴⁰⁶ George Watt, “The Economic Resources of India,” *Society of Arts* 35 (February 18, 1887): 277.

⁴⁰⁷ *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, 12.

⁴⁰⁸ “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition: First Article,” *Leeds Mercury*, 16 June 1886, p. 3

⁴⁰⁹ *Empire of India: Special Catalogue of Exhibits by the Government of India and Private Exhibitors*, 12 and 3; *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, 14.

dependents of the various princes and minor chieftains.”⁴¹⁰ C. Purdon Clarke, an architect for the Indian section, designed the Indian Palace and had devised the inclusion of native artisans and a Durbar Hall.⁴¹¹ The artisanal bazaar of the Indian Palace contained booths of about twenty shops and thirty-four “native workmen,” including weavers of carpets and tapestries, a goldsmith, stone carvers, a potter, and wood carvers. These artisans produced for and sold visitors their handiwork (Figure 3.2 below).⁴¹²

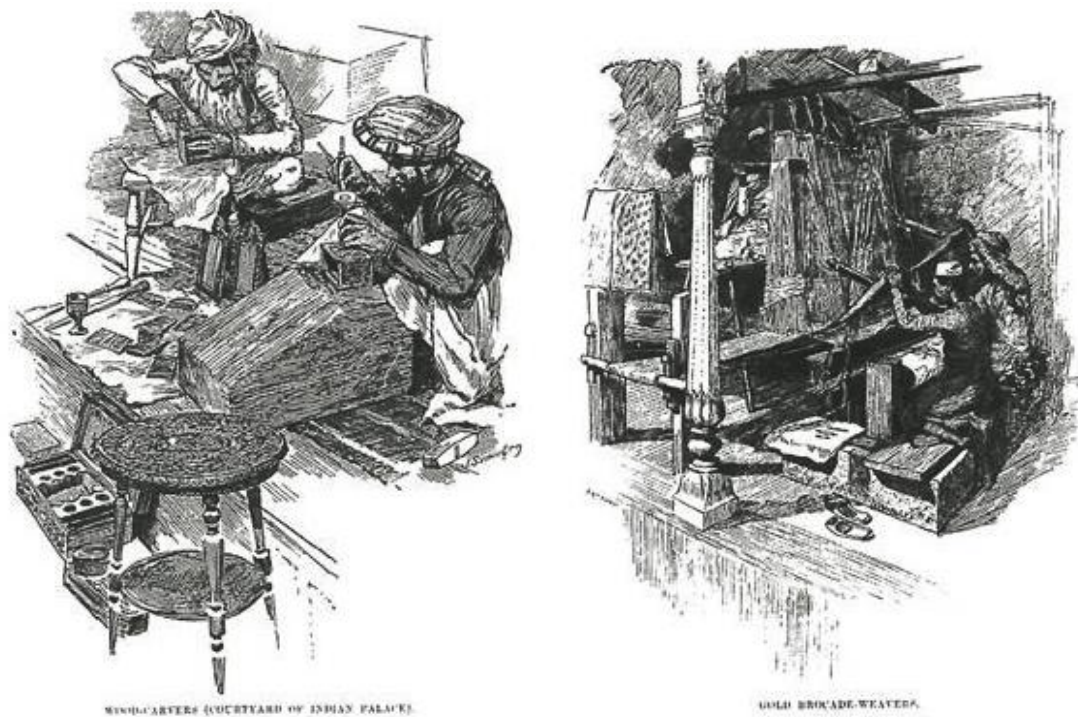


Figure 3.2. Woodcarvers and Gold Brocade Weavers (Courtyard of Indian Palace) at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition. *The Illustrated London News* (17 July 1886): 81.

⁴¹⁰ Royle, *Report on the Indian Section of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886*, 14.

⁴¹¹ *Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, 1886*, xxxiii.

⁴¹² “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” *Times*, 24 April 1886, p. 7; Cundall, *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 27-29; *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, 87-88.

The Artware Courts and Palace shops couched the handmade objects of provinces and states in terms of Indian “tradition” and its inherent difference from British modernity. The “authenticity” of simulated bazaars and peasant villages depended upon the alignment of contemporary India with purportedly untouched landed and pre-industrial conditions, including the guild and caste systems of local markets. The locally-partitioned exhibits of the Artware Courts had a “distinctive screen” carved in wood or stone by “native workmen” in India.⁴¹³ Frank Cundall’s account of the Exhibition explained that “native workmen” of a guild-type system carved the Jeypore Gateway, which preserved “old traditional designs” without “unnecessary European interference.”⁴¹⁴ The artwares had been organized by locale because, according to the *Official Catalogue*, “a particular kind of Art-ware is often manufactured by one or two families only in a single locality.”⁴¹⁵ Durbar Hall, constructed in pine wood, was “carved in the Punjab style by two natives of Bhera in the Punjab.”⁴¹⁶

According to exhibitionary discourse, the intrinsic features of a pre-industrial India had been realistically reproduced in the imperial metropole. Exhibition guides and official reports of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition highlighted the “authenticity” of Indian displays. Exhibits of the Indian economy, therefore, had to carefully mediate signs of Indian modernization so that they demonstrated Britain’s ability to promote India’s success in the world market but also preserved markers of pre-industrial difference. Reviews and reports of the Exhibition reflected upon signs of Indian acculturation, especially changes associated with India’s incorporation into the imperial

⁴¹³ Ibid., 21.

⁴¹⁴ Cundall, *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 21-22.

⁴¹⁵ *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, 10.

⁴¹⁶ Cundall, *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 27.

economy. Visitors saw simulated villages through Indian similarity, as they resembled an (even idealized) British past. The Colonial and Indian Exhibition thus manifested the tensions between views of India's inherent difference and India's possible similarity with the West as a result of British intervention. Imperial observers and administrators also voiced their disapproval of the "degeneracy" of Indian artwares and artisanal products that resulted from contact with European influences. In doing so, they unraveled exhibitionary rhetoric on Indian exhibits, which promised to provide an authentic depiction of Indian tradition.

The Indian Palace fashioned a particularly problematic rendition in its fictionalized version of India's "feudal" economy. The Indian artisans at the Palace were presumed to be "genuine artisans, such as may be seen at work within the precincts of the palaces of the Indian Princes."⁴¹⁷ The products made by these artisans, who had been trained in the Agra Jail and brought to work at the Exhibition, did not portray colonial authenticity, but rather the inadequate attempts of Britain to re-produce Indian tradition. British officials admitted that the Exhibition supplied imitations of "native" artwares, including "copies of the Jeypore Durbar carpets made at Agra and Delhi jails, and the copies of the carpets in the Asa Mahal Palace at Bijapur made at Poena and Tanna jails." The carpet-weaving of the Artware Courts demonstrated to these officials the "grave deterioration in the productions of the present day ... attributed to the introduction by the Government of India, about twenty-years ago, of carpet-weaving as an occupation for the prisoners of the Indian Jails." Almost all carpets exhibited came from the jail looms, which produced inadequate replicas because of the use of "unsuitable aniline dyes, and

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 28-29.

the ill-advised introduction of European patterns or fancied improvements on the native designs.”⁴¹⁸

The “living” artisans and their handmade objects in the imperial metropole were designed to represent the inexorable artisanal culture of a pre-industrial India, but visitors and administrators recognized them as imperfect reproductions. More so than later exhibitions, observers of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition judged the success of the Indian displays by their “authenticity.” Their commentary demonstrated the anxieties of showcasing a colonialist system that had, in fact, altered Indian economic conditions and disrupted “pre-industrial” markets. According to visitors, an authentic India should remain untouched by European intervention, and retain its local, communal, and regional distinctions. One visitor complained that in the Indian Palace and Durbar Hall, “an architectural error ha[d] been committed” because a Hindu structure was the entrance to a Muslim serai, the interior of an ancient Muslim palace incorporated modern Sikh woodwork, “and, still more incongruous, old English stained windows ha[d] been added to this aggregation of ideas.”⁴¹⁹

Although official narrations of the exhibits stringently separated Indian objects from European modern influences, observers criticized indications of European intervention in traditional Indian economies. One observer judged the “realism” of native work displayed at the Exhibition. The carved screen of Bombay, for example, was “admirably representative of that province, from which the finest wood carvings [came] ... though an English-man superintended the natives who did it.” Some of the handicrafts on display, however, were “crude, unpleasing without local character”

⁴¹⁸ *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886: Official Catalogue*, 18.

⁴¹⁹ “The Colonial Exhibition,” *The Graphic*, 15 May 1886, p. 535.

because of their incorporation of European tastes and “methods.”⁴²⁰ The mixing of European and Indian craftsmanship, in the minds of visitors, betrayed the “authenticity” of exhibits and their contrasts of Western with colonial economies.

Some sectors of India’s “traditional” economy, therefore, presented to visitors “signs of degeneracy, owing to unwise attempts to copy forms and methods of the west.” The “old art of India” had declined due to “European influence.”⁴²¹ India’s artisanal crafts faced increasing challenges within the imperial economy amidst deliberate efforts of the British to create an Indian market for manufactured goods. To varying degrees, the artisanal cultures and village handicrafts of India could not compete with imported British manufactures, especially textiles, and thus were stifled by India’s connection to the world market.⁴²² This contributed to the decline of India’s artisanal production in particular locales. Competition from machine-made imports did not “necessarily represent a movement into economic backwardness,” as Tomlinson argues in his assessment of *The Economy of Modern India*, but did result in the waning of various artisanal industries.⁴²³ As one review of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition explained, “there are carpets and rugs, amongst other things here, which might just as well have been made in Yorkshire, so far as their designers departed from Oriental types.”⁴²⁴ Indian art had begun adapting to better compete in the markets of Europe, and with European machine-made products. Another article lamented that “a rapid and deplorable degeneration” of Indian artwares

⁴²⁰ “The English Colonial and Indian Exhibition,” 217-218.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 217-218.

⁴²² Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of India*, 75-76; Sarkar, *Modern India*, 28.

⁴²³ Tomlinson examines the effect of British imperialism on Indian handicrafts, explaining that, although cotton weaving and spinning jobs declined from 1850-1880, by 1913 weaving jobs had almost revived. Tomlinson concludes that, overall, the effects of British imperialism on the decline of Indian artisanal goods “remain difficult to test.” *The Economy of Modern India*, 102-106; Morris D. Morris, “The Growth of Large-Scale Industry to 1947,” in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, 668.

⁴²⁴ “Indo-Colonial Exhibitions,” *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 2 May 1886, p. 7.

occurred due to Western influences. Localized artwares had been homogenized, resulting from the decline of wealthy patronage in India and the introduction of cheaper, machine-made goods from the West.⁴²⁵

Europeanized versions of Indian “tradition” in the metropole contradicted official accounts that asserted the authenticity of Indian displays. Not only had exhibits reproduced Indian “tradition,” but British policies in India had actively sought to restore traditional craftsmanship in order to offset the effects of the influx of Western goods and methods of production into the subcontinent. British officials hoped that “through the education of the new generation of native artists in the right direction, and by spreading through the country a better knowledge of Oriental patterns, Eastern art may still struggle against the flood of Western ideas.”⁴²⁶ George Watt in particular promoted the preservation of Indian handmade goods based on India’s “time-honoured systems.” Watt complained that the generic exports from Europe, such as the “catch-penny productions of Germany, and the barbarously-coloured handkerchiefs of England” had been “rapidly driving the hand-loom and the weaver out of existence.” He admitted, though, that because of India’s “commercial advances” in world trade, India would eventually “bear little resemblance to the classical India of the past.” Therefore, India had to compete with the growth of European imported manufactures through the use of factory machinery. As much as possible, “native ideas and native patterns and designs may be worked on the power loom.”⁴²⁷ Watt’s report on the Indian section, as well as other reviews of the Exhibition, reflected the growing anxieties about Indian economic

⁴²⁵ “The Colonial Exhibition,” *The Graphic*, 15 May 1886, p. 534.

⁴²⁶ Quote from Buck, “Colonial and Indian Exhibition: Indian Section,” *Journal of Indian Art* 1, no. 1 (1886): 77.

⁴²⁷ Watt, “The Economic Resources of India,” 276-277.

modernization. Although India's competitiveness in world markets depended on its adoption of industrial machinery, British officials also stressed the need to preserve India's traditional economic systems. The Colonial and Indian Exhibition carefully regulated displays so that they would portray India's timeless economy, but visitors and officials recognized changes in India associated with the colonialist presence.

The ever-present tension between Indian difference and Indian acculturation in the Economic and Artware Courts made clear to visitors the negative effects of British rule on India's crafts and artwares. As they deplored the imperial disruption of India's handmade goods, reviews also manifested positive conceptions of Indian tradition. Imperial recreations of Indian markets—depicted through simulated villages, bazaars, and palaces—signaled to visitors a venerable Indian “tradition.” Visitors to British exhibitions perceived the displays of Indian crafts and architecture, untouched by British intervention, as picturesque features of India's admirable sights and scenes. These formed what Nicholas Thomas calls “the elision” of the complexity of Indian society and its economy, rather than its denigration.⁴²⁸ The simplification of Indian conditions into a series of artisanal markets and village societies in the exhibitions conveyed positive connotations of Indian “difference.” The village bazaars of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, though relegated to a pre-modern temporality, separated Indian artisans and peasants from the anxieties and disillusionments associated with British industrialization.⁴²⁹ The exhibitionary “cult of the craftsman” idealized village and

⁴²⁸ Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*, 54-55.

⁴²⁹ Scholars have argued, for example, that the increased and concentrated population within industrial areas, as well as the intensification of economic exploitation across various industries, deteriorated the living and working circumstances of laborers in England. Industrial capitalism also led to the “casual” employment or unemployment of skilled artisans and field laborers. See, for example, E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 257, 261 and

bazaar environments as representations of a pre-industrial past that Britain had long since left behind.⁴³⁰

At the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the metropolitan separation of India from industrial “modernity” simultaneously relegated Indians to a pre-modern past and respected their artistic capabilities. In her analysis of images of nineteenth-century peasants in France, Shanny Peer notes that “one set of negative images portrayed peasants as the uncivilized counter-model for the bourgeoisie, another positive set of images praised the peasant and the countryside in order to vilify the worker and the city.”⁴³¹ Similarly, remarks on the Colonial and Indian Exhibition acknowledged the skillful craftsmanship of Indian artisans. Frank Cundall, for instance, commented upon one of the “feudal” Indian dyers from Agra in the Indian Palace, remarking that the “shades produced by Vilayat with his crude dye-stuffs and primitive implements are surprisingly good.”⁴³² T.N. Mukharji, a comprador Indian administrator of the 1886 Exhibition, discussed the popularity of the traditional Indian bazaar.⁴³³ Newspapers, as well, advertised that “the skillful workmanship of the Indian work-men will be generally admired.”⁴³⁴ Displays of a pre-industrial India, furthermore, denoted the potential similarity of India and Britain because, just as the landed economy of Britain’s past had progressed into “modern” industrialization, the Indian economy could also advance to this next stage of modernization. Newspapers went so far as to compare Indian and

206; Theodore Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban-Industrial Society: Bradford, 1750-1850* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 103.

⁴³⁰ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 90-91; Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display*, 11 and 19.

⁴³¹ Peer, *France on Display: Peasants, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World’s Fair*, 103.

⁴³² Cundall, *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 29.

⁴³³ Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, 99.

⁴³⁴ Jun John Latey, “Our Illustrations,” *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 24 July 1886, p. 53.

British agriculture, advertising that “the primitive forms of the implements will not fail to interest visitors from the rural districts of England.”⁴³⁵ Although visitors relegated Indian agriculture to a “primitive” state, they also saw similarities in the British and Indian economies.

The Exhibition, furthermore, included some signs of industrial development in India’s textiles, particularly in jute and cotton. India had, in fact, witnessed somewhat of a restoration of textile production in the late nineteenth century, but overall, manufacturing remained limited until the First World War. Bombay and Ahmedabad in particular developed textile production as the most important manufacturing industry in India at this time. The commercial and industrial economy of Calcutta, as well, had been the centre of economic modernization in eastern India through the emergence of jute mills in the later nineteenth century. While English industries dominated in eastern India, the cotton textile industry of western India had been developed primarily by Indian businesses.⁴³⁶ The Economic Courts included cotton and cloth manufactures of Bombay spinning and weaving companies by the Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Bombay Millowners’ Associations. Companies that exhibited included Indian textile mills, such as Morarjee Goculdas Spinning & Weaving Company.⁴³⁷ According to one article, the Indian cotton mills of Bombay “rival any of our most famous English cotton factories.”⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition: First Article,” *Leeds Mercury*, 16 June 1886, p. 3.

⁴³⁶ Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India*, 100-121; Morris, “The Growth of Large-Scale Industry to 1947,” in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, 553-676; Chaudhuri, “Foreign Trade and Balance of Payments,” in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, 853. As Tomlinson notes, less than five percent of the manufacturing workforce had been employed in modern factories by 1901.

⁴³⁷ *Empire of India: Special Catalogue of Exhibits by the Government of India and Private Exhibitors*, 126.

⁴³⁸ Edmund Knecht, “Report on the Exhibits of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition,” *Journal of the Society of Dyers and Colourists* 2, no. 8 (August 25, 1886): 126.

The Colonial and Indian Exhibition demonstrated the burgeoning of Indian textile industries, and suggested the possible economic similarity of India to Britain.

Some visitors argued that displays of the Indian economy had nearly ignored the industrialization and urbanization that had already been introduced in the subcontinent. An article in the *Times* alleged that “a serious misconception must have actuated the selection and distribution of exhibits in the Indian courts.” The Indian section did not represent fully Indian industry, such as manufactured exports to Europe from the “Bombay cotton mills [and] the Calcutta jute mills.” The Economic Courts thus left the inaccurate “impression that India [was] a country of small artwares and raw products.” The article concluded that India had, in reality, increased its manufacture, and would eventually cease to be the largest market for European machine-made textiles.⁴³⁹

This particular review of the Exhibition criticized the selective omission of signs of Indian economic modernization. With only modest industrial development in India prior to the First World War, however, India’s connection to the world market relied on agriculture and handmade goods. British officials hoped to advertise and stimulate India’s worldwide supply of agricultural products and handmade artwares, and featured these exhibits as demonstrations of India’s pre-industrial difference. The Colonial and Indian Exhibition predominantly showcased Indian agriculture, alongside handmade goods, as representative of India’s pre-industrial economy that had been brought into the world market through British initiative. In contrast to Indian exhibits, Canadian sections featured mostly private exhibitors. Its manufactured articles “largely outnumbered” its agricultural products on display. Canada utilized the Exhibition to strengthen its export

⁴³⁹ “The Colonial and Indian Exhibition. India,” *Times*, 8 October 1886, p. 13.

markets; particularly, the selling of manufactured goods in Europe.⁴⁴⁰ Conversely, India's North Court of private exhibits featured mostly large European mercantile firms rather than Indian businesses. Indian merchants, according to the India Office, were "unaccustomed to any system of advertisement, and ha[d] not that appreciation of the advantage of making their products or wares widely known to the public which [was] possessed by European tradesmen."⁴⁴¹ Although the India Office had encouraged Indian participation in commercialized displays, officials postulated that Indians rejected their offer because they lacked modern knowledge about world-wide trade.

The 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition created a paradoxical set of images of India's economy. It depicted India's difference, as exemplified in its "traditional" economy of artisanal bazaars and agricultural villages, and lack of industrial growth and commercial expansion. According to imperial observers, however, signs of British influence in India limited the "authenticity" of these renditions. They also asserted that the decline of Indian artwares resulted from British intervention in the subcontinent, despite exhibits that showcased handmade goods as a centerpiece of Indian tradition. Indications of India's economic pre-modernity conflicted with those of Indian acculturation and British intervention, and blurred the stringent boundaries of colony and metropole created in the exhibitionary space. Signs of Indian "difference," moreover, did not always denote Indian inferiority, but rather elevated India's handmade goods above Western, industrial products. The tensions of representing Indian difference became even more visible in twentieth-century exhibitions.

⁴⁴⁰ Edward Cunliffe-Owen, "Third Meeting—Colonial and Indian Exhibition," *Society of Arts* 35 (Nov. 1886): 379.

⁴⁴¹ In private exhibits, Indian teas, coffees, and tobaccos were sold. "The Colonial and Indian Exhibition," *Times*, 24 April 1886, p. 7; *Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, 1886*, xxxiii, 91, and 289.

1908 Franco-British Exhibition

Exhibits at the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition resembled renditions of India's pre-industrial economic conditions at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition. The Franco-British Exhibition embodied the persistence of the Raj's nineteenth-century economic policy that discouraged Indian industrial competition with the metropole and therefore encouraged a more rural and agrarian Indian economy. Although by the late nineteenth century India's commercial agriculture had entered the world market, the Indian economy remained tied to agriculture rather than industry.⁴⁴² By the First World War, India had become the primary market for British manufactured exports, with British textiles accounting for a third of India's total imports.⁴⁴³ The agricultural objects of Indian displays at the Franco-British Exhibition asserted the continued importance of India's export "industries," including exhibits of "tea-planting, jute growing, [and] cotton cultivation."⁴⁴⁴ The Indian Pavilion also included pre-industrial forms of manufacture, such as the "products of the simple hand looms."⁴⁴⁵

At the Franco-British Exhibition, the Indian building continued to exclude economic development in states and provinces, presenting an abundance of hand-made objects. Because of India's late entry into the Exhibition, "it proved impossible to organize an elaborate, systematic and representative collection of products and manufactures, [and] efforts were therefore confined to making the section as popular and

⁴⁴² Metcalf and Metcalf, *Concise History of India*, 125.

⁴⁴³ Moore, "Imperial India," 441; Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 80.

⁴⁴⁴ "The Franco-British Exhibition. Their Majesties' Visit," *Times*, 28 May 1908, p. 5.

⁴⁴⁵ Herbert Shaw, "The Indian Pavilion," in *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review*, 270.

interesting to the general public as circumstances would allow.”⁴⁴⁶ The resulting collections of artwares understated India’s commercial importance in world trade. With a restricted display of Indian manufacture, the Pavilion displayed British attempts to preserve artisanal industries, and continued to represent India’s inherent lack of modern industrial capabilities.

Though drawing upon familiar representations of India, the Franco-British Exhibition did not simply replicate and enlarge Indian exhibits at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Rather, it presented a more nuanced version of the Indian economy, demonstrating the entrance of industrial-style production in India. The Exhibition framed its limited display of this industry around British interventionist attempts to preserve declining village crafts, and exhibited industry alongside the still-dominant agricultural and handmade objects.⁴⁴⁷ The Franco-British Exhibition, then, instructed visitors about the contrasts of colonial India. According to narrations of Indian exhibits, the subcontinent had experienced some economic modernization, through British initiative, but maintained an enduring Indian tradition. Markers of the introduction of industry in India included the motor-car bodies exhibited by Mr. Press of Bombay. This latter exhibit, according to the *Guide*, hoped to “indicate that India does not intend to be backward in this newest of industries.”⁴⁴⁸ The section devoted to “Raw and Manufactured Cotton” in the latter half of the Pavilion exhibited a collection of over 300 samples of cotton fabrics manufactured in Madras by the Buckingham Mill Company.⁴⁴⁹ The jute industry was illustrated “by a tableau of a Bengali Village, with a small tank in

⁴⁴⁶ *Report on the Indian Section: Franco-British Exhibition 1908*, 9.

⁴⁴⁷ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 82.

⁴⁴⁸ *Franco-British Exhibition: Official Guide*, 47.

⁴⁴⁹ *Report on the Indian Section: Franco-British Exhibition*, 19.

the foreground in which jute is being steeped and stripped.” Messrs. Thomas Duff & Co. of Calcutta contributed collections of raw and manufactured jute.⁴⁵⁰ Thomas Duff, a Scottish businessman, had developed Calcutta’s global markets in the late nineteenth century, building the growing jute industry into the First World War.⁴⁵¹

Most of the new industries exhibited by English manufacturers, however, were designed to sustain India’s handmade crafts. The latter half of the Pavilion had a display of Messrs. Hattersley’s “working installation of hand-power looms adapted for domestic use in India.”⁴⁵² In the early twentieth century, Messrs. George Hattersley & Sons developed hand-loom for Indian factories in order to preserve hand-made goods without introducing power-loom production.⁴⁵³ The use of this weaving machinery aimed to “contribute materially to the preservation of Indian village industries threatened with continued decay by the extension of factory enterprise in the dependency.”⁴⁵⁴ Unlike the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition visibly represented industry, but cast it through the maintenance of Indian tradition and the modern implements owned and brought to India by Britons.

Despite these indications of a semi-industrial presence in India in the second half of the Pavilion, visitors who entered the building viewed at once the local art wares and the handmade goods of the native states and provinces.⁴⁵⁵ The *Madras Times* boasted that, “In the main hall of the building is to stand a carved wood show case, which is a splendid example of the combined skill of native carvers from all parts of India. It is

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁵¹ Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India*, 120.

⁴⁵² *Franco-British Exhibition: Official Guide*, 47.

⁴⁵³ E.B. Havell, *The Basis for Artistic and Industrial Revival in India* (Madras, 1912), 186-187; *Report on the Indian Section*, 20.

⁴⁵⁴ “The Franco-British Exhibition. Their Majesties’ Visit,” *Times*, 28 May 1908, p. 5.

⁴⁵⁵ Shaw, “The Indian Pavilion,” in *Illustrated Review*, 266-267.

made out of every kind of indigenous wood.” Included in the Pavilion were “silks from Cashmere, sandal-wood carvings from Mysore, pottery from Jaipore, muslins from Gwalior, art objects from Bikahir,” amongst other handmade objects.⁴⁵⁶ The Pavilion showcased the arts and crafts of India’s semi-independent, “feudatory” states.⁴⁵⁷ The Kashmir state had a separate bay with exhibits of its silk industry. The Schools of Art of Madras, Punjab, Lahore, Bombay, and Jaipur contributed handmade art wares, including jewelry, embroideries, metal work, wood work, silver work, and carved ivories.⁴⁵⁸ The exhibits by various Schools of Art, including those sent by native states, could be purchased by visitors.⁴⁵⁹ After viewing objects from the various locales of India, the visitor observed cast brasses that “showed plain the life of the roads, the bazaars and the streets, the fantasies of the temples.”⁴⁶⁰ The display of an “authentic” India, like the India at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, continued to rely upon images of India’s artisanal goods sold at bazaars and the pre-industrial conditions of its villages.

Most imperial visitors praised demonstrations of skillful craftsmanship at the Franco-British Exhibition. One observer of the Exhibition noted that “owing nothing to the West,” India’s “delicate workers in wood, the men of the East displayed their skill to make envious the onlookers of the West.”⁴⁶¹ Similarly, the *Daily News* advertised that the wood carvings demonstrated the “incalculable” wealth of India, as did Indian jewels,

⁴⁵⁶ “The Franco-British Exhibition,” *Madras Times*, May 14 1908, p. 12.

⁴⁵⁷ *Report on the Indian Section*, 15-16; “The Franco-British Exhibition. Their Majesties' Visit,” *Times*, 28 May 1908, p. 5.

⁴⁵⁸ *Report on the Indian Section*, 17-18.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁶⁰ Herbert Shaw, “The Indian Pavilion,” in *The Franco-British Exhibition, Illustrated Review*, 267.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 266-268.

“superb ivory and other Oriental work, rich in colour and craftsmanship.”⁴⁶² Reviews of Indian arts and crafts continued to extol the craftsmanship of the subcontinent.

Despite its popularity, the Indian Pavilion digressed from its alleged depictions of contemporary, realistic colonial conditions. The Franco-British Exhibition purported to display colonies authentically, but resorted to typical versions of unchanging colonial marketplaces that would clearly project imperial hierarchies. Indian elites criticized the simplification of the Indian economy at the Exhibition. The abundance of Indian artwares at the Exhibition, as reported in the House of Commons, had caused “dissatisfaction among Indian traders, merchants, and visitors at the inadequacy of the Indian section of the Franco-British exhibition in showing the economic resources of the dependency and the development of Indian trade with Europe.” The handmade goods overshadowed India’s trade in the world market, transforming the Indian Pavilion into a mere bazaar. Indian commercial elites promoted a more nuanced image of the Indian economy, so “that the true resources of the Indian Empire are visualised.” In order to better represent India, the unnamed Indians argued for an Indian-run administration over exhibits in the future “by the appointment of Indian gentlemen on the committee.”⁴⁶³ Although these Indians protested against simplified portrayals of the economy, their requests were not addressed until the 1924 British Empire Exhibition.

⁴⁶² “Exhibition Gems,” *Daily News*, 29 May 1908, p. 9.

⁴⁶³ “Indian Exhibits in the Franco-British Exhibition,” *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 30 June 1908, Hansard, vol. 191, c. 564. This debate does not reference who these Indians were.

1924 British Empire Exhibition

Indian sections at the 1924 British Empire Exhibition presented a complex and even ambiguous picture of the Indian economy. Evidence of Indian economic initiative, industrialization, and political leadership became increasingly visible in the inter-war Raj. Imperial displays adjusted to these contemporary realities, and thus failed to wholly preserve the concept of an unchanging Indian economy. With the rise of Indian officials in the government and greater potential for economic growth associated with the First World War, Indian sections at the Empire Exhibition displayed India's industrial development. Similar to pre-war exhibitions, however, familiar displays of Indian "tradition," cultivated by Britons and Indians alike, often eclipsed these signs of Indian modernization in the metropole.

In many ways, the 1924 Indian Pavilion manifested inter-war shifts in the economic relationship between Britain and India. The years following the First World War brought Indian interests to a higher status in the imperial economy and Indian industrialization to the attention of world markets. India contributed extensive manpower and revenues towards the War, which had disrupted India's external markets. Overall, the classic system of trade in British India eroded as the complementarity of the two economies declined. As their supply waned, the prices of imported manufactures into India rose (including cotton textiles, iron, and steel). Tariffs on imported cotton textiles protected India's textile industries during the First World War, and thereafter under the increased fiscal autonomy of provincial governments granted in the 1919 Government of India Act. Therefore, the terms of trade had shifted in favor of industrial development

instead of agriculture and handicrafts, and the immediate inter-war period witnessed the growth of India's industrial sector.⁴⁶⁴ Although India in the nineteenth century had made some industrial gains in the cotton and jute industries of Bombay and Calcutta, respectively, the First World War led to the internal development of more extensive, diversified, and Indian-owned manufacturing. It is possible, however, to overestimate the extent of Indian industrialization following the First World War, as B.R. Tomlinson explains in *The Economy of Modern India*. Both production and employment remained tied to textile manufactures, and overall, "increases in industrial productivity in India were modest by international standards."⁴⁶⁵

India since the Victorian era had, nonetheless, experienced considerable economic growth and increased political autonomy as a result of constitutional reforms and economic changes during the First World War. These transformations engendered shifts in the administration of the 1924 British Empire Exhibition that allowed for elite Indians to shape exhibits and their economic features. Unlike previous exhibitions of India that had been designed and overseen by British officials, India's provincial and state sections of the 1924 British Empire Exhibition presented the collaborative efforts of the provincial and state governments of India and Indian businessmen.

In 1920, the Provincial Directors of Industries in India already voiced their desire to participate in the Empire Exhibition. The Indian Legislative Assembly, however, had to consent to the use of central revenues to fund an exhibition overall, including the initial costs of the Indian building and the Commissioner for the Exhibition to advise and assist

⁴⁶⁴ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 168-171; Gallagher and Seal, "Britain and India between the Wars," 399 and 403; Tomlinson, "The British Economy and the Empire, 1900-1939," 204-205; Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India*, 100.

⁴⁶⁵ Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India*, 94-95.

local Governments, Indian states, and other participants.⁴⁶⁶ Indian contributions to the fiscal burdens of the First World War resulted in a lack of revenues to fund extensive participation in the Exhibition. The financial strains of the Indian Government, and the devolution of some revenues to provincial governments under the 1919 Government of India Act, made it crucial for local governments to help finance exhibits. The provincial governments, however, also faced financial restraints and were under “schemes of retrenchment,” and this hindered the extent of their participation in the 1924 Exhibition.⁴⁶⁷

Even after the Indian Legislative Assembly agreed to an official Indian exhibit in February of 1922,⁴⁶⁸ several Indian officials argued against Indian participation because they could not realistically portray a “modern” India in economic terms. Rao Bahadur T. Rangachariar noted his disappointments with Indian industry, stating that “when I think of the poor part which my country can play at the exhibition, I feel depressed, I feel sad.” Lala Girdharilal Agarwala also opposed Indian participation because India had limited manufactures to display, concluding that India had nothing to contribute that would show “the brains of India.”⁴⁶⁹ India, moreover, faced a “grave financial crisis” and funding Indian exhibits seemed impractical in the immediate inter-war period. At a Bengal Legislative Debate, Rai Gupta Bahadur argued that India could not spend money on an

⁴⁶⁶ Williams, *India in 1922-1923*, 141-142.

⁴⁶⁷ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 19.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2-3 and 18-19; “Resolution Re India’s Participation in the British Empire Exhibition,” Legislative Assembly, 27 February 1922, BL, IOR L/E/7/1280.

⁴⁶⁹ “Resolution Re India’s Participation in the British Empire Exhibition,” Legislative Assembly, 27 February 1922, BL, IOR L/E/7/1280.

exhibition when thousands of Indians continued to die from disease, poverty, and ignorance.⁴⁷⁰

These Indian officials argued that India had not modernized enough to participate in the Exhibition and that exhibits would only reinforce a stereotypical image of the Indian economy. They also framed India's lack of economic development in terms of "de-industrialization" under British rule. Nationalists had long argued that de-industrialization occurred in India as a direct result of the Empire's political economy. Prominent nationalists such as Dadabhai Naoroji and R.C. Dutt asserted that the dislodging of India's economy resulted from the colonialist system, and that India's wealth had been "drained" and transferred to Britain. They pointed to the collapse of India's textile exports in the face of increasing Lancashire imports. Furthermore, nationalists argued, imperialist firms and networks had replaced indigenous commercial development and driven out Indian involvement in the modern economy.

Although historians debate the accuracy of de-industrialization, several scholars point to the very slow industrial growth in India prior to the First World War and the (varied) decline of India's handicrafts during the nineteenth century. The historical data of Indian economic conditions remains incomplete, and the effects of British rule differed according to locale, industry, and time period. Overall, however, the colonial presence in India variously entrenched and disrupted India's "pre-industrial" economy through the shifting of agriculture and commodity production towards British industrial and commercial interests. From the early nineteenth century, "free trade" in India became

⁴⁷⁰ "Demands for Grants," Bengal Legislative Council Debates, 16 August 1923, p. 306, BL, IOR L/E/7/1186.

crucial to securing Britain's prominence in the international economy.⁴⁷¹ India's connection to the world market and the gearing of its trade to benefit the British economy certainly diminished the capacity of Indian weavers and other artisans to compete with machine-made textiles imported from England, as India had not yet developed technologically-based industry.⁴⁷²

Even as the realities of de-industrialization and the breadth of its impact across India remain controversial, economic abuses of the colonial regime were central to nationalist visions of the Raj. Indian officials and nationalists in the inter-war era, as the recipients of devolved governance, sought to extinguish the exploitation of India under the imperial economy. They denied the perceived benevolence of imperial rule and objectivity of imperialist discourse, seeking to rectify what they saw as the damaging consequences of a self-interested empire.

In their debates about the Empire Exhibition, Indian members of the Legislative Assembly and provincial governments reasserted the criticisms leveled by nationalists against the colonial regime. In a Legislative Assembly debate, Lala Girdharilal Agarwala reiterated his opposition to Indian participation in the Exhibition because, under the British imperialist presence, Indian manufactures had been stifled by industrial imports.⁴⁷³ Once appointed as Commissioner, Vijayaraghavacharya toured provinces and states to encourage them to exhibit, but was met with opposition. He explained these difficulties in his *Report*:

⁴⁷¹ Chaudhuri, "Foreign Trade and Balance of Payments (1757-1947)," in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, 805-807.

⁴⁷² Sarkar, *Modern India*, 28-30; Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India*, 11-12; Morris, "The Growth of Large-Scale Industry to 1947," in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, 668.

⁴⁷³ "Resolution Re: India's Participation in the British Empire Exhibition in 1924," Legislative Assembly, 25 March 1922, p. 3698, BL, IOR L/E/7/1186.

Considerable misapprehensions existed about the objects of the exhibition. Reports were about that the object of the exhibition was the exploitation of Indian resources for the benefit of foreign manufacturers and capitalists, that India was being already exploited, and that if she joined, she would find, as a result of the exhibition, that there was a still more intensive exploitation.

When touring the provinces and states to encourage local exhibits, Vijayaraghavacharya faced particularly strong resistance in Bengal, a locale in which foreign firms had dominated industries prior to the First World War. Officials there argued that the Exhibition would reinforce the imperial exploitation of Indian resources. Indians who opposed a Bengal exhibit thought that the “few lingering Indian industries would be choked out by competition.”⁴⁷⁴

In the course of deliberating Indian participation in the 1924 Exhibition, officials in the Legislative Assembly also discussed the economic reasons to sponsor an Indian exhibit. They supported Indian exhibits for commercial reasons, arguing that Indian trade in Europe relied on the selling of India’s “traditional” handmade goods. B.S. Kamat, for example, urged participation so that India could market indigenous goods, learning foreign tastes and advertising strategies. At a Bengal Legislative debate, Babu Surendra Nath Mallik argued that the Exhibition should be viewed for its economic potential rather than through political viewpoints. Mallik stated that India’s “fine products” had no market in India, but depended upon a continued Western market that would be present at the Exhibition.⁴⁷⁵ According to Maulvi Abul Kasem, India needed to advertise its world-

⁴⁷⁴ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 19-21.

⁴⁷⁵ “Demands for Grants,” Bengal Legislative Council Debates, 16 August 1923, p. 305, BL, IOR L/E/7/1186.

renowned artwares: “you talk of motorcars but what are Fords and Rolls-Royce cars compared with these works of art and beauty.”⁴⁷⁶

The economic incentives of the Empire Exhibition, expressed in legislative debates, led Indian officials and businessmen to cultivate exhibits in provincial courts of the Pavilion. They fashioned a *mélange* of images of the Indian economy at the Exhibition. Displays of Indian industry and commercial enterprise suggested, in hitherto unprecedented visibility, economic similarities between Britain and India. At the same time, bazaar tableaus with artwares and agricultural products cultivated a familiar depiction of India, one that relied on the popularity of a “traditional” India in the West. India’s economy, viewed through enduring artisanal and village markets at the Empire Exhibition, drew upon broader exhibitionary trends that persistently localized, ruralized, and agriculturalized Indian societies. In these depictions, an “authentic” India—untouched by Western civilization—remained invulnerable to the modern forces of industrialization. India’s economic “tradition” had been reproduced in Western imagery to such an extent that it would be marketed by Indians themselves who catered to visitors’ preferences for buying exotic and handmade products.

Economic exhibits in the provincial sectors of the Pavilion largely featured Indian agriculture and artwares, but also industrial and urbanization schemes. The Pavilion included extensive models of railroad construction and displayed the activity of ports in

⁴⁷⁶ Kasem was a Bengali Muslim, member of Bengal Legislative Council founded under the 1909 Government of India Act, and from 1921-1935 under the 1919 Government of India Act; he was also a member of the Muslim League from 1913-1942; Prime Minister of Bengal from 1937-43; and a prominent official after independence in Pakistan. Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 383-384; Syedur Rahman, *Historical Dictionary of Bangladesh*, 4th ed. (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 97; “Resolution Re India’s Participation in the British Empire Exhibition,” Legislative Assembly, 27 February 1922, BL, IOR L/E/7/1280.

India.⁴⁷⁷ According to an *Official Guide*, “the pavilion makes a special feature of India’s ports, indices to her modern commercial prosperity. Visitors may learn something of the enormous volume of trade that passes through Calcutta, Bombay and Karachi, and learn how the transport problems of the East are met.”⁴⁷⁸ Madras, Bombay, and Bengal comprised the larger exhibits at the 1924 Empire Exhibition and visitors could view their artisanal productions alongside their industrial and commercial trade. As an *Official Guide* put it, the “kaleidoscopic” array of images ranged from harbors, to jungles and villages.⁴⁷⁹ Bengal, “an agricultural country” and “a region devoted to the minuter arts and crafts,” exhibited its “ivory, brass, and copper work, embroideries and specimens of tanned leather.” As a “Bazaar Surprise,” it also displayed “harbour activities and ... the jute mills, textile factories, and canneries of Calcutta.”⁴⁸⁰ The Madras Presidency, growing in urban and industrial prominence, included minor displays of textile industries developed by modern mills and machinery.⁴⁸¹ It also advertised its commercial ports through a model of the Port of Madras (Figure 3.3). Bombay had become a center of India’s textile trade, and its commercial and industrial developments showcased in the Pavilion rendered comparisons of the modern British and Indian economies. According to the *India Catalogue*, “Bombay city [was] the Manchester of the East.”⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁷ “India’s Pavilion at Wembley,” *Near East*, 27 September 1923, BL, IOR L/E/7/1186.

⁴⁷⁸ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 53.

⁴⁷⁹ Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 63.

⁴⁸⁰ *India: British Empire Exhibition 1924, Catalogue*, 126; “India at Wembley. Splendour of the East. A Bazaar in Being,” *Times*, 24 May 1924, p. xii; “India and Burma: Spirit of the Orient,” *Daily Mail*, 23 April 1924, p. 11; Vijayaraghavacharya, “India and the British Empire Exhibition,” 143.

⁴⁸¹ *India: British Empire Exhibition 1924, Catalogue*, 99, 104, and 114.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 139-157.

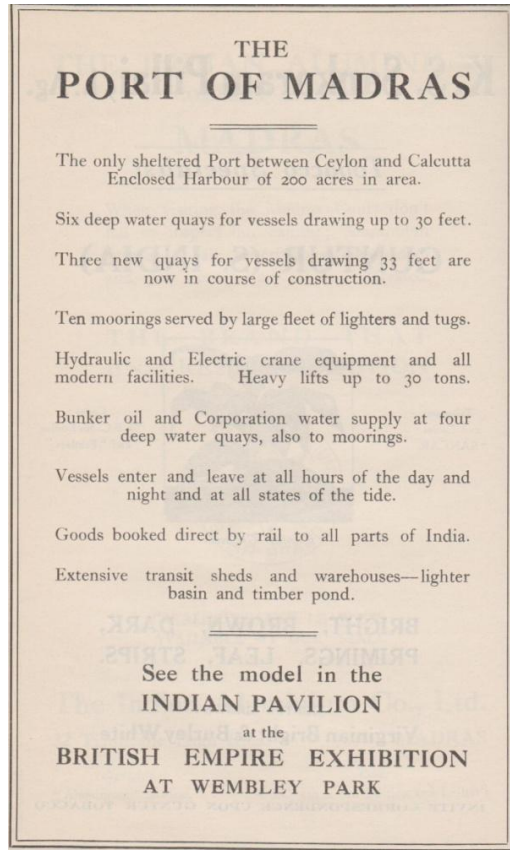


Figure 3.3. Port of Madras Advertisement. *India: British Empire Exhibition 1924, Catalogue*, xxiii.

The unprecedented visibility of Indian private exhibitors contributed to this depiction of a modernized economy in the Pavilion. Indians ran economic exhibits as independent businessmen, visibly demonstrating their capacity as leaders in the modern economy (Figure 3.4). They viewed participation in the 1924 Exhibition in terms of its economic benefits rather than in terms of politics. The involvement of Indian businessmen in the political arena, particularly in nationalist movements, remained limited until the 1930s. After the mid-1930s, these economic elites developed closer links to the Indian National Congress that were evident by the Second World War.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸³ Claude Markovits, *Indian Business and Nationalist Politics 1931-1939: The Indigenous Capitalist Class and the Rise of the Congress Party* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 4-6.

The total number of private exhibitors in the 1924 Indian Pavilion was about 500, of whom 90% were Indians.⁴⁸⁴ The *Catalogue* for India at the Exhibition advertised Indian manufacturers and manufactured goods, including photographs of Indian representatives wearing a hybrid of European and Indian clothes.⁴⁸⁵ This “mimicry” by Indian businessmen who “performed” a European style, in their dress and their employment of Western marketing strategies, traversed the constructed boundaries of the imperial regime, showing the ambivalence of imperial discourse in its separation of the colonizer from the colonized.⁴⁸⁶ One manufacturing representative in Madras advertised that he would “place his services at the disposal of big manufacturers of industries in any part of the world who may wish to be represented in South India” (Figure 3.5)⁴⁸⁷ Indian Woolen Mills, a large private exhibitor in the Bombay section, demonstrated that “India [would] not always be dependent for the finer qualities of woolen goods on imports from abroad.”⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁴ Council of State, “Expenditure Incurred by the Government of India on the BEE at Wembley,” 9 September 1925, pp. 275-6, BL, IOR L/E/7/1186.

⁴⁸⁵ For example, the Madras Wholesale Importers and Exporters, a Premier Firm of Indian Merchants, Industrialists, and Manufacturers via the South India Industrials Ltd.

⁴⁸⁶ See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

⁴⁸⁷ *India: British Empire Exhibition 1924, Catalogue*, xxi, xxxvi, and xxxvii.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 139-157.

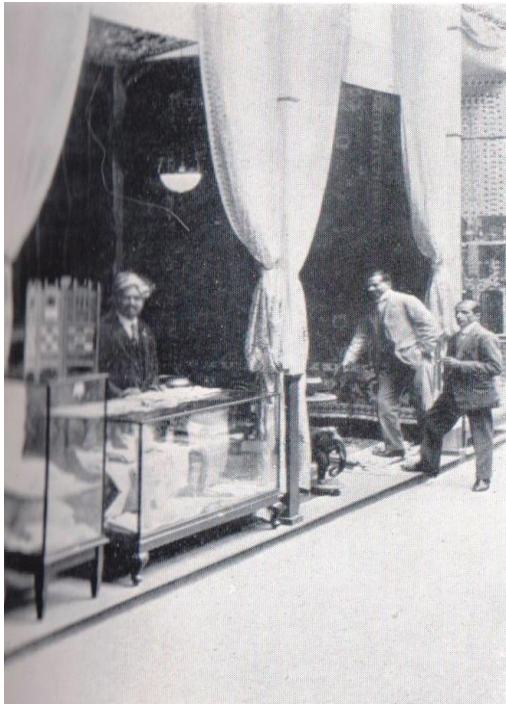


Figure 3.4. Bombay Court, India Pavilion
India: British Empire Exhibition
1924, *Catalogue*, 154.

**A. R. DURAISWAMI
AIYENGAR**
Manufacturers' Representative

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Representing —</i></p> <p>Messrs. LEVER BROTHERS, LTD., Port Sunlight, and their Associated Companies (viz.) —</p> <p>A. & F. Pears, Ltd. Vinolia Co., Ltd. Blondeau et Cie., Ltd. W. Woodward (1920) Ltd. Ed. Cook & Co., Ltd., London. Ben Brnoke & Co., Ltd., Port Sunlight. Hodgson & Simpson, Ltd. Hazlehurst & Sons, Ltd. R. S. Hudson, Ltd., Liverpool. Angus Watson & Co., Ltd. Newcastle-on-Tyne. Planters' Products, Ltd., Watford.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Representing —</i></p> <p>Messrs. C. & E. Morton, Ltd. Chas. Morgan & Co., Ltd. Alpeco Pencils, Ltd. Cosmic Crayon Co., Ltd. The Altrra Pen & Pencil Co., Ltd. L. G. Sloan, Ltd. Auto-Strip Safety Razor Co., Ltd. Ardath Tobacco Co., Ltd. W. P. Lowrie & Co., Ltd., London. Th. Muhlethaler, S.A. Nyon, Switzerland. Lamm Bros. & Co., Antwerp.</p>
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Chalmers, Guthrie & Co., Ltd.,
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Will be very pleased to place his services at the disposal of
big manufacturers of industries in any part of the world
who may wish to be represented in South India. All
enquiries will engage his personal and prompt attention.

Post Box No. 200, Madras, India
Telephone Nos. : 505 (Office) ; 140 (Residence).
Telegrams : "PERFUMES." Codes : Bentley's and Private Codes.

Figure 3.5. Indian
Manufacturer Advertisement,
1924. *India: British
Empire Exhibition 1924*,
Catalogue, xxxvii.

As administrators of economic displays, Indian businessmen and officials showed their expertise on the evolving Indian economy and the replacement of British administrators with capable Indian elites. Vijayaraghavacharya explained, for example, that “the greatest Indian industry, agriculture, was represented by a splendid exhibit in the Punjab Court with an agricultural expert in charge always ready to give information.”⁴⁸⁹ In the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, very few Indian firms exhibited in the metropole, and those few were confined to the cotton industries of Bombay. The British

⁴⁸⁹ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 54.

Empire Exhibition, however, emphasized Indian ownership of various exporting companies.

The official discourse of the 1924 Empire Exhibition, however, attempted to mediate displays of Indian modernity by attributing signs of economic progress to British intervention. The *Official Guide* framed exhibitionary models of Indian irrigation and jute mills around *British* progress in India, explaining “how ceaselessly Great Britain has wrought for India, how much has been accomplished, how much yet remains to do.”⁴⁹⁰ Bombay, emerging as a principal seaboard market and industrial center, had exhibits that narrated British progress in India, including exhibits of docks, and irrigation and housing schemes. The *India Catalogue* noted that the Government of Bombay developed an Improvement Trust at the turn of the century to reconstruct the city, and included photographs of urbanization in the city (Figure 3.6). The South Indian Railway exhibit, one of the most popular features of the Indian Pavilion, demonstrated the modern development of transportation in Southern India.⁴⁹¹ Its displays contrasted contemporary railway transport in India with, as the *Official Guide* put it, “models of men and animals illustrating how transport was carried out in the early days.”⁴⁹² Its glass cases contrasted the “modern civilization” brought to India by Britain with models of hills, “barren, scorched, and primitive,” and mud settlements that represented pre-colonial Indian conditions.⁴⁹³ The 1924 *Survey*, which “supplemented” the Empire Exhibition, explained that the land was and “ever has been, the backbone of the Indian economy.” One *Survey* writer recognized India’s desire to move “towards a policy of rapid industrialisation,” but

⁴⁹⁰ Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 63.

⁴⁹¹ “British Empire Exhibition,” *New India*, 25 April 1924, p. 7. India’s railway exhibits, according to a London correspondent, were a popular feature at the Exhibition’s opening.

⁴⁹² *India: British Empire Exhibition 1924, Catalogue*, 22.

⁴⁹³ “India at Wembley. Splendour of the East. A Bazaar in Being,” *Times*, 24 May 1924, p. xii.

also that “until quite a late stage in the British occupation” Indian manufactures “were confined to cottage industries and the village artisan.”⁴⁹⁴ Exhibitionary rhetoric reiterated official narratives that aligned India’s identity with its economic backwardness and its modern progress with British intervention.

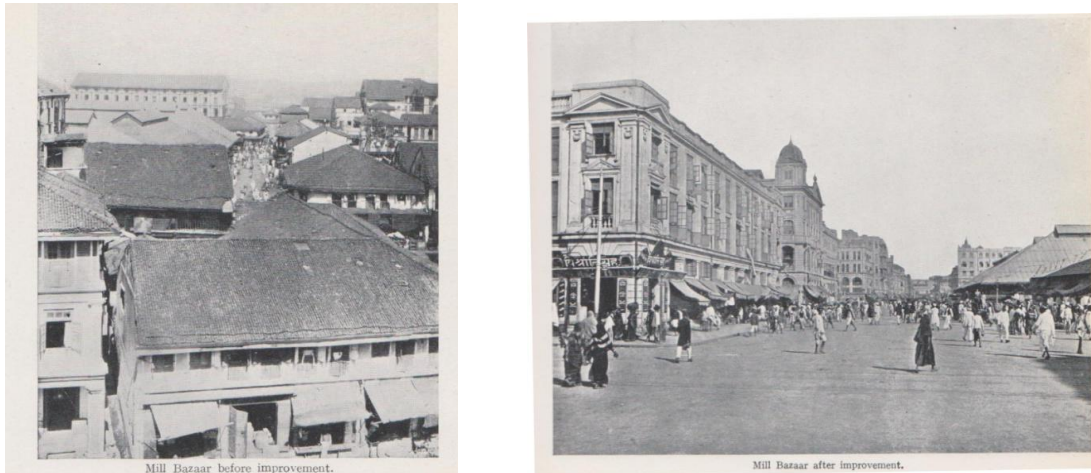


Figure 3.6. Mill Bazaar before improvement. Mill Bazaar after improvement. *India: British Empire Exhibition 1924, Catalogue*, 157.

The 1924 Empire Exhibition presented a complex picture of India’s economy. Indian businessmen advertised their exporting companies and provincial exhibits showcased India’s urban, industrial, and commercial development. At the same time, British officials laid claims to economic progress in India. Provincial courts, moreover, illustrated India’s changing economy, but paradoxically appealed to the metropolitan preference for “traditional” Indian wares and ethnographic displays of “native” artisans in order to sell Indian products. Indian businessmen partook in the construction of these exhibits to expand their markets. The commercially-focused reconstructions of bazaars,

⁴⁹⁴ Rt. Hon. Lord Meston, *The Dominions and Dependencies of the Empire*, vol. 5, in *The British Empire: A Survey*, 191.

run by Indian merchants, focused less on fixed local markets and more on securing India's international trade relationships. The 1924 Empire Exhibition thus continued to reconstruct the pre-modern scenery of bazaars and villages even as it projected a "modernizing" Indian economy.

The raw materials that facilitated the extension of British industry, as well as the handicrafts of the "endless exhibition of silks, embroideries, carvings in wood and ivory, and Indian art," figured prominently in Indian displays in inter-war London.⁴⁹⁵ The Empire Exhibition portrayed India's entry into world commerce through the lens of India's traditional staple exports. According to one *Official Guide*, the Exhibition had shown visitors that "in respect of modern industries India is rapidly reaching a place among the leading nations of the world" but emphasized that her commercialized agriculture and raw production "of rice, wheat, millet, pastoral products, jute, tobacco, indigo, tea, coffee . . . make her a formidable competitor in the markets of the world."⁴⁹⁶ The Exhibition continued to market Indian supplies of raw materials.

Provincial courts also included objects of "hereditary village crafts" and the handicrafts sold at the bazaars.⁴⁹⁷ They depicted rural India, "the background to the bazaars," such as the Indian hill stations and the plains of the North-west frontier.⁴⁹⁸ The specialized "arts and crafts" of India, the "main object of the Exhibition," included a range of products, including Agra carpets, Bombay silks, and Benares brassware.⁴⁹⁹ Like pre-war exhibitions, Indian sections reiterated the importance of preserving India's

⁴⁹⁵ "British Empire Exhibition," *New India*, 24 April 1924, p. 7.

⁴⁹⁶ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 54.

⁴⁹⁷ "India at Wembley. Splendour of the East. A Bazaar in Being," *Times*, 24 May 1924, p. xii; Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 62.

⁴⁹⁸ "India at Wembley. Splendour of the East. A Bazaar in Being," *Times*, 24 May 1924, p. xii.

⁴⁹⁹ Kendall, "India's Part in the British Empire Exhibition," 217; Vijayaraghavacharya, "India and the British Empire Exhibition," 143.

artisanal wares. The India *Catalogue* explained that, despite the introduction of the power loom in Bengal, “the hand-loom weaving industry, handicapped though it has been by lack of organisation, has survived.”⁵⁰⁰ The *Catalogue* for India at the Exhibition described the displays of Bombay’s industrial and urban improvement schemes, but emphasized the Arts and Crafts of the province: “that power industries have not destroyed the ancient handicrafts for which India has for centuries been famous is illustrated.”⁵⁰¹ Even as Bombay emerged as a “great industrial province,” it maintained “ancient arts and crafts.”⁵⁰²

Displays of a “traditional” India, fashioned by Indian businessmen and officials in the provinces, dominated the courts of the 1924 Empire Exhibition. Indian administrators appealed to visitors’ imaginings of India through its ostensibly “pre-industrial” markets, as the truly authentic representation of Indian conditions. As the *Near East* put it, despite industrial development in India, bordering “on the marvellous,” India would retain “her basic characteristics.” According to one article, “India will always be the country of romance . . . of an art which is like nothing else on earth, even if here and there industry may infuse an Occidental atmosphere into an Oriental setting.”⁵⁰³ Provincial and state courts depicted the exoticism and romance of India—represented outwardly by its “Oriental” architecture—through displays of unique and “traditional” artwares. These images of a traditional and timeless India dominated perceptions of India’s colonial identity as imagined within the Exhibition.

⁵⁰⁰ *India: British Empire Exhibition 1924, Catalogue*, 127.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 168.

⁵⁰³ “India at the Exhibition. A Wonderful Display,” *Near East*, 5 June 1924, 589.

The elevation of Indian artwares to an almost iconic status in the West had led provincial officials as well as businessmen to feature artisanal goods in their courts. The Officer of the Madras Court, S.K. Sundaracharlu wrote that the exotic lure of the architecture of the Indian Pavilion, in “its beauty, its strangeness, and its romantic charm,” was “deepened by a personal visit through the various courts.” Despite criticisms that “the commercial element . . . operated too powerfully,” making some sections into “little more than bazaars,” the “primary motive” of exhibitors was economic.⁵⁰⁴ The Madras court could not have excluded, according to Sundaracharlu, “living” artisans who displayed their handiwork in “metal, wood, and cotton and silk.” He argued that the importance of the Pavilion rested with its “ancient” features, which made Indian civilization “more venerable” than that of the West.

The exhibitionary division of pre-industrial India and industrial Britain, as a remnant of the Victorian era, persisted into the 1924 Empire Exhibition, which created more spectacular versions of colonial marketplaces. Like the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition, it combined entertainment and education in order to sell products and stimulate the economy in an increasingly competitive and vulnerable world market. The 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition had categorized and contained its model bazaars and villages, fashioning Indian exhibits into instructive scenes of Indian social and cultural conditions. The twentieth-century emphasis on “living” displays within economic scenes resorted to the popular appeal of the exotic—represented through “native” artisans and performers—at the same time that it commercialized handmade goods and industrial products.

⁵⁰⁴ Sundaracharlu, “Madras at Wembley: A Triumph of Cooperation,” 602-603.

The spectacle of colonial bazaars in the 1924 Empire Exhibition often overshadowed displays of an “authentic” India that had witnessed industrial growth. An advertisement for the Empire Exhibition, for instance, stressed that “when one has watched the making of Indian carpets by native experts, he may witness an Indian play performed by Indian actors in an Indian theatre, or—spellbound, gaze upon an Indian snake charmer.”⁵⁰⁵ Indian exhibits of the inter-war period deliberately marketed “traditional” Indian trades through renditions of “different” Indian cultures.

Vijayaraghavacharya noted that the “living” spectacles of the bazaars contributed to the success of India’s provincial courts. He explained that the “working demonstrations were much in popular favour, and it was a pity that the schemes worked out to send parties of craftsmen and weavers from the United Provinces, Benares State and the Central Provinces had to be abandoned” for financial reasons. The provinces and states that featured “living” craftsmen advertised Indian tradition as they marketed goods:

The potter and lacquerer from Sing at their work in the Khairpur Court were watched by large and interested crowds. The modelers in clay in the Bengal court ... and the Malayali carpet weaver in Mr. Sasson’s stall received considerable attention.⁵⁰⁶

Indian displays at the 1924 Empire Exhibition thus continued to center around the social and cultural differences of “natives” on display and their surrounding environments of villages and bazaars. Instead of offering ethnographically-focused displays—prominent in the exhibitions of Asia and Africa—British metropolitan and Dominion exhibits of the Empire Exhibition reproduced instructive scenes of their imperial economies. They differed substantially from colonial exhibitions, in which

⁵⁰⁵ “British Empire Exhibition,” *Times*, 6 May 1924, p. 9.

⁵⁰⁶ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition, 1924*, 43

“natives” produced and sold traditional handicrafts. The British Government Pavilion, for instance, educated visitors on the administration of the Empire through naval, military, and aerial displays. Upon the entrance of the Pavilion, a map of the world with model ships located the Empire as the center of world commerce.⁵⁰⁷

The British government’s aims to reinforce its economic importance were best seen at the Palaces of Industry and Engineering, the largest and the second largest buildings at the Exhibition. Despite the emphasis placed on colonial territories at the Exhibition, the British government could not resist showcasing the modern economy of the metropole. As an *Official Guide* boasted, “the United Kingdom will show that she is still the supreme manufacturing country.”⁵⁰⁸ In contrast to Indian and other colonial exhibits that integrated entertainment and instruction through displays of colonized peoples, the 1924 Palaces of Industry and Engineering educated visitors through objects and working mechanisms that highlighted Britain’s economic supremacy and initiative. One visitor explained that “for the practical business man,” the twin palaces of Industry and Engineering solely displayed the *products* of the British Isles.⁵⁰⁹ The intended edification of visitors by British exhibits differed from the ethnographic spectacles of colonial marketplaces at the 1924 Empire Exhibition.

Representing a “solidity and dignity that convey[ed] the utilitarian purpose of the building,” the concrete structure of the Palace of Industry housed industrial machinery, as well as displays of gas and building materials (Figure 3.7).⁵¹⁰ The Palace of Engineering exhibited the metropole’s industrial and commercial importance through displays of its

⁵⁰⁷ Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 44.

⁵⁰⁸ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 9.

⁵⁰⁹ Scarborough, “An Empire in Miniature. Special Correspondence from Harold E. Scarborough,” 279-280.

⁵¹⁰ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 20.

already-established industries, including cotton and wool textiles and its conversion of “raw fibers” into “the finished article of commerce.”⁵¹¹ Its other exhibits depicted how gas generated electricity and how developments in heating, lighting, concrete, and cement had modernized buildings.

The Palace of Engineering, moreover, continued to narrate the economic dominance of Britain in the world. It represented the expansion of British civilization into the colonies, including the construction of bridges and railroads that “unlock[ed] the doors of progress.”⁵¹² The Palace also included displays of over 300 engineering and ship-building firms from Great Britain, and working models of ports, canals, and docks. Its exhibits of electrical energy appealed both to the “technically trained observer” and to visitors interested in updating their homes. These displays, as an *Official Guide* put it, “illustrate[d] a fairy-tale of the modern world.”⁵¹³



Figure 3.7. Textile Machinery Working Exhibits: Palace of Industry. Lawrence Weaver, *Exhibitions and the Arts of Display* (London: Country Life Limited, 1925).

⁵¹¹ Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 46-52; Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 21.

⁵¹² Lawrence, *Official Guide*, 46-52.

⁵¹³ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 49-50.

As largely urbanized and industrialized countries, the Dominions of Canada and Australia also depicted their modern accomplishments.⁵¹⁴ Their exhibits evoked comparisons with the British buildings. Canadian officials emphasized the practical need to fashion educational exhibits that would stimulate Canada's economy and attract immigrants.⁵¹⁵ As one visitor remarked, the "Canadian Pavilion exhibits are purely educational, no one tries to sell you a lumber camp or a grain elevator."⁵¹⁶ Chiefly, the Canada and New Zealand pavilions were designed to attract immigrants and they used "pictorial representations of natural resources and scenery, historical monuments, [and] people engaged in agricultural and industrial processes."⁵¹⁷ In order to deter distractions from these instructional displays, exhibitors in the Canadian building were prohibited from selling articles or merchandizing directly (although orders for the future could be placed) because "Wembley was not a common trade fair but a means of advertising the potential of Canadian industry."⁵¹⁸ After Canadian businessmen voiced their desire to sell goods, Exhibition administrators allowed them to sell commodities at the re-opened Exhibition in 1925, but restricted their sales to items that would promise the development of an export trade. The Canadian Pavilion continued to emphasize instructive advertising rather than fashioning the Canadian building into "a bazaar permitting the sale of cheap souvenirs." Dominion exhibits intentionally differed from exhibits of colonies, which cultivated bazaar renditions that featured performances of craft-making and the selling of popular products.

⁵¹⁴ Tomlinson, "The British Economy and the Empire, 1900-1939," 202.

⁵¹⁵ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 9-10 and 35.

⁵¹⁶ Maxwell, *Wembley in Colour*, 37.

⁵¹⁷ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition, 1924*, 55-56.

⁵¹⁸ Canadian businessmen objected to this prohibition of selling goods, especially because Australia could conduct direct sales. Clendinning, "Exhibiting a Nation: Canada at the British Empire Exhibition, 1924-1925," 88-89 and 100.

Canada and Australia, moreover, cast industrial and agricultural growth as equally important features of their modern economies. One visitor, Donald Maxwell, viewed Canada through its “virgin forests and . . . commercial possibilities of her large towns.”⁵¹⁹ Maxwell went so far as to say that “modern commerce and machinery often enrich the pictorial possibilities of landscape, and perhaps we shall find much of Canada explored . . . by our twentieth-century captains of industry.”⁵²⁰ Similarly, Australia demonstrated its “productive capacity, and its manufacturing powers.”⁵²¹ In the Australia Pavilion, there was a “commercial story told” so that “no one could leave the Australian Pavilion without being impressed with the commercial possibilities offered by the Commonwealth, any more than he could fail to be charmed with its natural beauties.”⁵²²

Canada dedicated its main Pavilion to natural products and commercial development, with two smaller pavilions dedicated to railways.⁵²³ The central Pavilion allotted about half of its space to industrial displays and about half to natural resources. The latter half emphasized Canadian scenery through panoramas of Canadian landscapes and working models of Canada’s natural sites. It also included displays of agricultural products. As Ann Clendinning argues, the official objective to assert a national identity presented mixed images of Canada’s economic features. The de-emphasizing of Canada’s regional differences in favor of national virtues resulted in a variety of displays of Canada. The Dominion could be simultaneously viewed as “the granary of the empire,

⁵¹⁹ Maxwell, *Wembley in Colour*, 36.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵²¹ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 9-10 and 35.

⁵²² Maxwell, *Wembley in Colour*, 81.

⁵²³ Cook and Fox, *Official Guide*, 42-27.

but also the future workshop of the world; a land of untamed wilderness, and one of sophisticated modern cities.”⁵²⁴

India’s regionally-divided and commercialized exhibits, however, likewise cultivated contradictory images of India in the metropole. Vijayaraghavacharya explained that retail sales on the spot led to objections because “India consisted of a series of bazaars.” Indian exhibits included instructional objects as well as bazaar features, Vijayaraghavacharya countered, in order to “show the agricultural, industrial and artistic development of the country, in the way of transport by land and water, creation of ports and harbours, town improvement, cooperative work and so forth.”⁵²⁵ India’s simultaneous display of modern industrial and urban development and versions of “traditional” economies and cultures led to varying views of India. Spectacles of Indian “tradition,” nonetheless, often eclipsed more serious demonstrations of India’s economic growth.

Although official accounts and the majority of newspaper and journal articles offered glowing reviews of the eclectic array of Indian exhibits, one newspaper account criticized displays in the Indian Pavilion because the “ordinary visitor [had been] forgotten.” An “Anglo-Indian” writing in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* compared Indian displays to those of the Dominions, arguing that in the former “too little has been done to popularise all this information.” Unlike the “vast panoramas” and mechanized displays of Canada and Australia, the Indian Pavilion had an excess of handmade objects: “Water does not flow over real rocks, as in the Canadian vistas, nor do miniature horses leap over diminutive hurdles” (Figure 3.8 below). The commentator preferred nationally-

⁵²⁴ Clendinning, “Exhibiting a Nation: Canada at the British Empire Exhibition, 1924–1925,” 80-82 and 89-90.

⁵²⁵ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 54-55.

organized displays, rather than the disconnected provincial exhibits of the Indian Pavilion. At the Pavilion, “visitors le[ft] feeling confused and slightly disappointed.”⁵²⁶

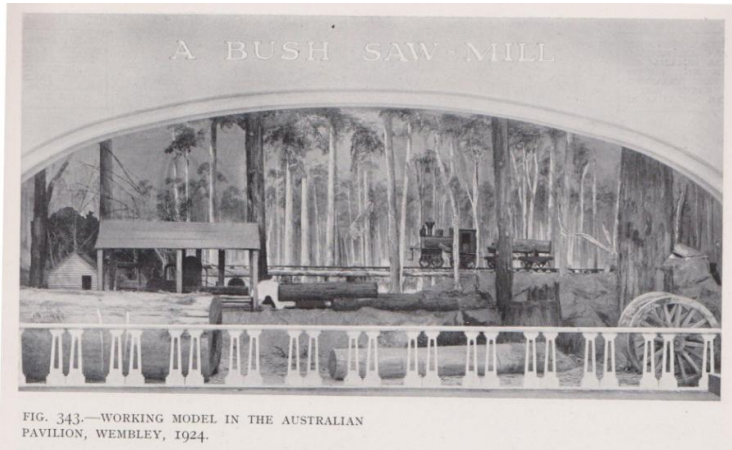


FIG. 343.—WORKING MODEL IN THE AUSTRALIAN PAVILION, WEMBLEY, 1924.

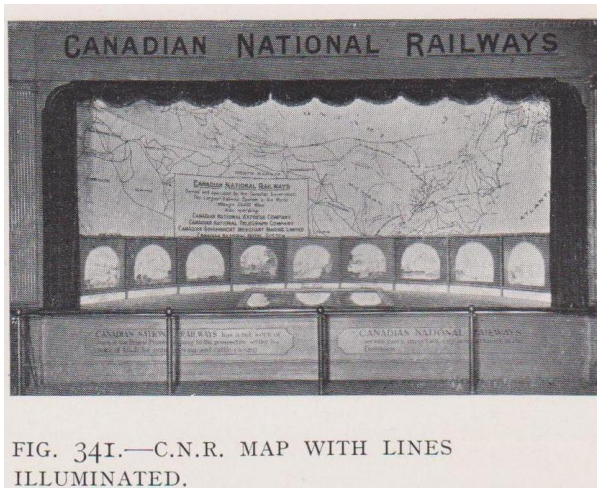


FIG. 341.—C.N.R. MAP WITH LINES ILLUMINATED.

Figure 3.8. Working Model in the Australian Pavilion. Canadian National Railways Map with Lines Illuminated. Weaver, *Exhibitions and the Arts of Display*.

⁵²⁶ “India and Burma at Wembley. An Opportunity Missed. By an Anglo-Indian,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 6 June 1924, p. 448.

The Indian Pavilion offered displays of commercial industry alongside illustrations of India's agricultural and artisanal features, but narrated a different story about the Indian Empire than the eclectic exhibits of the Dominions. The 1924 Empire Exhibition portrayed the industrial products and commercial success of central Indian cities alongside the still dominant handcrafted objects and their metropolitan consumption. These seemingly incongruous images represented Indian businessmen's desire to sell goods through appeals to popular preferences for a "traditional India," which persisted alongside the Indian and British desire to show improvements in the colonial economy. The metropolitan consumption of Indian exotic cultures and their products at the Exhibition included the British *and Indian* intent to promote India's industrial and commercial expansion. This differed from the pre-war exhibitions that limited the active participation of Indians in shaping economic exhibits and that, to a considerable extent, excluded the display of Indian initiative in industry.

The Re-opening of the Empire Exhibition in 1925

The second season of the Empire Exhibition in 1925 heightened the economic impetus to stimulate trade in India. Economic motives led to a privatized exhibition in the 1925 Pavilion, one that deliberately combined the selling of products with "native" renditions. A central goal of the 1924 Exhibition, in fact, was to strengthen trade across the Empire. After closing on November 1st 1924, however, the Exhibition had lost money. It re-opened in May of 1925 in order to recoup financial losses, as well as further

its objectives for imperial integration and a revival of post-war trade.⁵²⁷ The Chief Administrator for the Exhibition, Travers Clarke, declared at its 1924 closing that it “had not completed the task of Imperial education it had undertaken.” Clarke believed that the Exhibition could do more to strengthen the economic development of members of the Empire.⁵²⁸ The entertainment of exhibitions did not necessarily preclude education, and the re-opened Empire Exhibition of 1925 therefore attempted to instruct visitors on the economic importance of the Empire by appealing more directly to popular preference.

The British government consulted the High Commissioners of the Dominions and colonies when considering a possible re-opening, and in July 1924, the results did not “show enthusiasm for continuance.” This was especially true for India because the Government “cabled that they [thought] it would be useless to invite provincial governments to support the exhibition for a second year.”⁵²⁹ As late as February 1925, the British government still had no assurances that the Dominions and India would reopen their pavilions in an official capacity. The Dominions eventually participated, albeit with financial assistance from the British government. The Canadian government, for example, decided to participate only after the British government offered more financial incentives to the Dominions in October 1924. The British government offered monetary assistance to Dominion governments to re-open in 1925, but at that time, did not make a similar offer to India. The Indian government, without financial support, did not officially participate in the 1925 Exhibition.

⁵²⁷ “Report by his Grace the Duke of Devonshire (Chairman) to the Meeting of the Executive council on 3 March 1925,” BL, IOR L/E/7/1186; Lunn, “The Future of the British Empire Exhibition: Memorandum by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Dept of Overseas Trade.”

⁵²⁸ Clarke, “The British Empire Exhibition: Second Phase,” 175-6.

⁵²⁹ Lunn, “The Future of the British Empire Exhibition.”

The lack of enthusiasm for the Exhibition in both political and popular circles in India led the British government to refrain from “courting . . . opposition from political critics in the central and provincial Legislatures” of India.⁵³⁰ Reports on Indian views of the 1924 Pavilion showed that exhibits were not popular within India, which critics portrayed as inauthentic versions. Although commercial elites in India favored participation in the 1925 re-opening, a correspondent in Delhi noted a general apathy in India towards the 1924 Exhibition based on its lack of authenticity. This journalist explained that “one good judge” deemed the Indian Pavilion an “architectural atrocity” and that “the display of Indian wares had been unworthy of a third-rate baza[a]r.” The Delhi correspondent concluded that “non-official and non-commercial opinion . . . is now decidedly estranged, for most of the visitors to Wembley with real knowledge of India are unanimous in condemning the appropriateness of the India exhibition.”⁵³¹ Critics deplored the Exhibition’s appeal to the exotic in order to market products, and denounced the lack of realism in the Pavilion.

As a result of rising political unrest within India, and without financing from the British Government, Indian officials decided not to sponsor an Indian exhibition for another season.⁵³² Instead of an official exhibition, the 1925 Indian Pavilion featured a “syndicate composed chiefly of last year’s exhibition.”⁵³³ With the withdrawal of official Indian support, the Exhibition authorities, with approval from the Government of India,

⁵³⁰ “India and Wembley. No Participation Next Year,” *Times*, 17 November 1924, p. 14.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵³² “Letter from F.A.M. Vincent, the Controller of the Indian Section for 1925, to Colonel Wilson-Johnston,” 23 March 1925, BL, IOR L/MIL/7/15296.

⁵³³ “New Wembley,” *Times*, 9 May 1925, p. 15

took over the Indian Pavilion and “organise[d] an exhibit of Indian products.”⁵³⁴ The Exhibition Board purchased the Indian building and rented space to provinces and private exhibitors. In particular, a syndicate of Indian merchants—the Indian Merchants’ Association—operated the Indian Pavilion in 1925 as a private exhibition.

The 1925 Indian building re-focused exhibits on economic markets dominated by artwares because the 1924 Exhibition had demonstrated the profitable popularity of Indian bazaars and their “traditional” crafts. The Indian Trade Commissioner, H.A.F. Lindsay, reported that retail sales at the art and craftware stalls in 1924 were £113,000, and that additional orders were placed with manufacturers in India.⁵³⁵ Many reports viewed the 1924 Exhibition as an economic success and Indian businessmen saw exhibits through their possibilities for advertising products. A correspondent in India, for example, summarized the results of Indian participation in 1924 from the Director of Industries of the United Provinces Government. Exhibits opened new markets, secured future trade, and “spread a wider knowledge of industrial possibilities and enabled Indian manufacturers and dealers to acquire first-hand knowledge of the tastes of foreign consumers.”⁵³⁶

The sales of artwares and handmade goods created the opportunity for Indian merchants to participate extensively in world-wide markets. Vijayaraghavacharya detailed the economic successes of the provinces in the 1924 Empire Exhibition. For example, a Bombay firm dealing goods like brassware and ivory ware “started an independent business of their own in London.” Purchasers from America, Canada, and

⁵³⁴ “British Empire Exhibition,” Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 9 March 1925, Hansard, vol. 181, c. 907.

⁵³⁵ “Discussion,” *Royal Society of Arts Journal* 73, no. 3783 (May 22, 1925): 618-619.

⁵³⁶ “India at Wembley: Some Trading Results,” *Times*, 13 December 1924, p. 11.

France bought embroidery lace from a stall in the Madras section. Another firm “with a permanent business in London in all lines of Indian fancy goods, stated that, as a result of the exhibition, it was experiencing a revival of demand for Indian goods comparable only with that which followed the Colonial Exhibition of 1886.” Vijayaraghavacharya concluded that the Exhibition “provided the handmade and cottage industries of India with the most splendid advertisement they have ever obtained.” The 1924 Exhibition enabled Indians to establish permanent markets abroad, learn the trade terms of European firms, and become more familiar with the tastes of European purchasers. Most private exhibitors, Vijayaraghavacharya stated, “were eager to take part in the 1925 session of the Exhibition, and applied to me for large spaces, larger than what they had taken in 1924.”⁵³⁷

Vijayaraghavacharya’s account of the economic accomplishments of provincial stalls at the 1924 Exhibition were largely restricted to artware exhibits rather than displays of industrial firms. Many provinces did not report favorably on industrial exhibits, or on India’s ability to compete in the imperial economy. In the Bengal sectors, the limited display of manufactured articles resulted from the perceived inability of firms in India to compete with British manufacturing. Similarly, the Bombay report explained that “The important commercial and industrial concerns of Bombay did not participate whole-heartedly in the exhibition.” The industrial competition faced by Indian merchants had hindered their ability to commercialize goods, illustrating problems associated with

⁵³⁷ Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition*, 57-63.

India's connection to the world market and continued reliance on a "traditional" economy.⁵³⁸

Indian entrepreneurs who ran exhibits in 1925, therefore, used the image of the artisanal bazaar in order to expand markets. As an editorial in the *Times* demonstrated, Indian economic elites accommodated to imperial views of India's "traditional" economy. The article responded to criticisms of the Indian Pavilion, explaining that "the object of India's participation was to sell her products" and that "the Exhibition would not have been Indian without baza[a]r features."⁵³⁹ The 1925 Indian Pavilion was tailored to the commercial aims of Indian entrepreneurs who sold products through "traditional" bazaars and the "living" displays of Indians. The Indian section of 1925 did not "contain a representative collection of exhibits illustrating the life and government of the races and provinces of the Indian Empire" but rather took "the form of a bazaar, run by Indian merchants." Visitors could buy objects that attracted "the attention of visitors in the bazaars of Agra, Delhi, Lahore and other cities."⁵⁴⁰ One of the dominant markers of an unchanging Indian economy included the Chandni Chauk in "native Delhi," "one of the famous bazaar streets in India."⁵⁴¹ The 1925 Empire Exhibition reformulated the scenes of the United Provinces and Madras from 1924 into an elaborate commercial bazaar with Indian participants—making and selling their goods—similar to the Chandni Chauk.⁵⁴² The Indian Pavilion also retained its live performances (such as jugglers and

⁵³⁸ "Indian Pavilion," Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 6 July 1925, Hansard, vol. 186, cc. 16-17; "British Empire Exhibition (Indian Pavilion)," Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 20 July 1925, Hansard, vol. 186, cc. 1812-1813.

⁵³⁹ W.T. Coulton, "India And Wembley," *Times*, 21 November 1924, p. 8.

⁵⁴⁰ "Indian Bazaar At Wembley," *Times*, 1 April 1925, p. 13.

⁵⁴¹ Frank Carpenter, *From Bangkok to Bombay* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1924), 215.

⁵⁴² "Indian Bazaar At Wembley," *Times*, 1 April 1925, p. 13.

snake charmers) in the southern section and its Indian restaurant run by Messrs. Veeraswamy & Co.⁵⁴³

Like the Dominion and British government buildings, India in 1925 placed further emphasis on stimulating its economy, but contrasted even more with the industry exhibited in the British and Dominion pavilions. The British Government Pavilion continued to “show the activities of the various Government Departments which carry on the administrative part of the Empire’s business.”⁵⁴⁴ In 1925, the Palace of Engineering became the Palace of Housing and Transport. The new building included displays of railways, aircraft, and motor cars.⁵⁴⁵ The Canadian Pavilion continued to emphasize agricultural and industrial resources, and “the far-flung invitation to migrants.”⁵⁴⁶ As in 1924, Canada showcased its importance as a manufacturing country.⁵⁴⁷ In the 1925 South Africa building, agricultural and industrial interests dominated the exhibits, and some sectors advertised railways, harbors, and shipping facilities.⁵⁴⁸ The Australia building added mechanical effects to make industrial and agricultural models more “live.”⁵⁴⁹ With a continued emphasis on educational exhibits of commercial and industrial pursuits, the Dominion exhibits contrasted with the “tradition” of India’s pre-industrial goods in bazaar tableaus. Although “essentially a pastoral country,” New Zealand showed itself as “simple without being primitive.”⁵⁵⁰ The social and cultural differences of “natives” in India displays, largely excluded from Dominion exhibits, reinforced long-held conceptions of Indian changelessness in the metropole.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.; Lawrence, *Official Guide: British Empire Exhibition, 1925*, 75.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 46-47.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁴⁷ *A Pictorial and Descriptive guide to London and the British Empire Exhibition, 1925*, K.

⁵⁴⁸ Lawrence, *Official Guide: British Empire Exhibition, 1925*, 66.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 60.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 63.

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Exhibitionary renditions of Indian bazaars progressively conveyed the commercial entrepreneurship of Indian merchants as well as relying on Western perceptions of India's pre-industrial economy. Even though representations of India at the 1924-1925 British Empire Exhibition showed the economic and political changes of the inter-war era, de-emphasizing notions of India's inferior difference, they still situated India within hierarchical categories defined by the West. From the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, the social and cultural conditions of bazaar markets and rural villages were central to the demonstration of Indian difference, and thus to the visibility of the Empire's hierarchies. These depictions of Indian "tradition" dominated Indian sections at the 1886 Colonial and Indian and 1908 Franco-British exhibitions.

Like the British Empire Exhibition, however, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition and the Franco-British Exhibition also demonstrated the instabilities of cultivating a "pre-industrial" India in the metropole. The Indian economy had been transformed by Britain's imperial presence and, according to some visitors, inadequately reproduced in the metropole. Even as these exhibitions disrupted the carefully defined categories of British rule, it was the British Empire Exhibition that engendered the most visible changes in India's economic displays.

The 1924 Empire Exhibition testified to changes in the colonial economy through exhibits of industrial products and signs of Indian commercialization. The Exhibition, nonetheless, portrayed paradoxical visions of India through simultaneous displays of economic modernization and India's continued reliance on marketing handmade goods. Indian elites, furthermore, differed in their conceptions of India's economic importance

and relationship to the Empire. While some Indian officials hoped to promote India's industrial progress in the metropole, most Indian exhibitors catered to Western preferences for Indian "tradition" in order to advertise their provinces and sell goods. Other Indian officials contested the Exhibition based on the economic abuses of the Raj, in which Indian industrial and commercial potential had been stifled by a self-interested empire. They presumed that the Exhibition would present a stereotypical image of the Indian economy, and mirror the exploitation of India under the colonial regime.

Without official sponsorship, the 1925 Indian Pavilion reconstructed bazaars, run by Indian merchants that built upon traditional markets. Although some Indian officials hoped to use the Exhibition to showcase and commercialize Indian industry, in 1925, the economic incentives of savvy Indian purveyors of traditional commodities led to an extensive portrayal of India's "pre-industrial" economy. The Empire Exhibition provided opportunities to advertise and build upon Indian industry, but the 1925 Pavilion relied even more upon the selling of traditional crafts for profit. India under the inter-war imperialist system continued to witness the preference of Westerners for Indian "tradition," and Indian businessmen appropriated this image for their own ends.

The inter-war attempt of Britain to demonstrate its imperial prowess, industrial modernity, and colonial cooperation at the 1924-25 Empire Exhibition could also be seen at the 1938 British Empire Exhibition in Glasgow, as well as other imperial-themed exhibitions in Europe. The 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition, like the British Empire Exhibition, purported to represent a unified empire as demonstrated by colonial efforts to support the French Empire in the First World War.⁵⁵¹ These celebrations of empire in

⁵⁵¹ Hale, *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples, 1886-1940*.

the inter-war era would, however, be followed by the Second World War and its unparalleled consequences for empires across the globe.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN AND THE EMPIRE-COMMONWEALTH

The 1951 Festival of Britain, “conceived among the untidied ruins of a war and fashioned through days of harsh economy,” purported to showcase the industrial and scientific accomplishments of Britain and to instill a nationalistic sense of recovery after total war.⁵⁵² *Life*, for instance, advertised the Festival as a “colorful break from austerity” constructed under the Labour government as a “tonic for the war- and austerity-weary people.”⁵⁵³ It offered Britain “on show to the world” as “still something well worth seeing.”⁵⁵⁴ As the Director-General of the Festival, Gerald Barry, explained, “never before has a country decided to put itself on show and to be ‘at home’ to the world. The land of Britain itself, and the people of Britain themselves, will be, as it were, open to inspection in 1951, in order to demonstrate our achievements, our way of life, our contributions to Western thought and action in the past, in the present, and especially in the future.”⁵⁵⁵ Initiated during the Second World War as a centenary of the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition, the Festival of Britain aimed to buttress Britain’s national status, promote economic recovery, and offer a funfair for the British populace and tourists alike.

A unique feat of an economically and physically ravaged post-war Britain, the Festival of Britain marked a radical change in British exhibitionary tradition, which had, since the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition, constructed massive exhibits of colonies in the

⁵⁵² Festival of Britain Office, *The Official Book of the Festival of Britain, 1951* (London: H.M.S.O., 1951), 3.

⁵⁵³ “The Festival of Britain: It is a Welcome and Colorful Break from Austerity,” *Life* 31, no. 8 (August 20, 1951): 67.

⁵⁵⁴ “This is Festival Year,” *Times*, 9 January 1951, p. 2.

⁵⁵⁵ Gerald Barry, “The Festival of Britain,” *United Empire* 41, no. 2 (1950): 82.

metropole. As an “autobiography of a nation,” the Festival glaringly omitted colonized territories from a majority of its events. The Festival also reduced, to a considerable degree, direct Commonwealth participation. It took place at the beginnings of Indian independence and membership in the Commonwealth and, more broadly, formal decolonization of the Empire. As a nationally-focused event, the Festival de-emphasized international trade and British imperial prowess.

Imperialist conceptions, motives, and strategies on the ground were, nonetheless, embedded in the Festival and its planning. This chapter argues that economic exigency as well as the historical climate of a diminished formal empire—specifically, the unstable relations amongst Commonwealth countries—influenced the eventual understating of empire at the Festival. It pays close attention to official correspondence during the planning of the Festival of Britain, and how political relations in the Commonwealth shaped exhibits. British officials and Festival administrators promoted imperial and Commonwealth exhibits that would advertise the economic and political modernization of colonies. When the Festival opened, it obscured the violence and exploitation of empire by presenting a benevolent image of economic “development” and progress towards self-government in the colonies. The conspicuous absence of Commonwealth-sponsored exhibits, however, demonstrates that the Festival administrators could not reconcile reformulated portrayals of empire with Britain’s racially-infused imperial aims. Commonwealth members refused to partake in the Festival because it fictionalized a modernity that rested only in Britain. Perhaps more significant, India and Pakistan protested their unequal treatment in the Commonwealth, which emerged in the post-war era as an unstable body, imbued with racial perceptions of former colonies.

Advertised as a national display, the Festival of Britain differed very much from prior exhibitions held in London, and was an especially dramatic break from the 1924-5 British Empire Exhibition. The British Empire Exhibition had evinced the most obvious instabilities of Britain's colonial project in India prior to decolonization. At the time of the Empire Exhibition, nonetheless, British officials saw Indian independence as a very distant possibility, and Indian nationalism had made imperial governance difficult but not unmanageable. The growth of more potent nationalist movements in the 1920s and 1930s demonstrate that the 1919 Government of India Act did not manage to quell the discontent of Indians under the continuation of a putative autocratic rule. Anti-colonial unrest in India persisted through various strategies and strands of non-violent non-cooperation, violent uprisings, parliamentary agitation, and labor and regional protests. Though Gandhi was undeniably central to India's nationalist movement, there were more radical, and religiously-driven, movements for independence both inside and outside of the Indian National Congress. Within the Congress, Gandhi's non-violent and non-cooperation tactics often conflicted with those of other members who proposed more radical action. Unrest in India also hinged on communal agitations, notably led by the Muslim League, which had a very strained relationship with the Congress by the 1930s.

British officials responded to this vast range of anti-colonial movements with both reform and repression, with the former designed to placate Congress members and deter extremism without granting revolutionary changes in governance. The Congress continuously demanded reforms towards a Dominion status in the 1920s, and formally adopted a platform for *puna swaraj* (the full independence of India) under Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose. In 1928, radical groups in Bombay led by students and workers

staged labor strikes and protests. Though largely suppressed by late 1929, they were followed by militant activities and movements across the subcontinent. Gandhi, though initially reluctant to adopt the Congress's platform for full independence, gave the government until the end of 1929 to accept its demands. Instead, Viceroy Irwin offered India a nebulous "Dominion status." Following Gandhi's satyagraha campaign against the salt tax in 1930, the British government imprisoned about 60,000 non-violent participants. Viceroy Irwin led negotiations with Gandhi, leading to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March 1931. As a temporary settlement, the government freed political prisoners and Gandhi suspended the civil disobedience campaign. At a 1931 Round Table Conference, British officials promoted a federation scheme for limited reform, rather than the granting of real autonomy to India. Civil disobedience thus resumed under the Congress.⁵⁵⁶

The British government attempted to re-establish imperial control with the 1935 Government of India Act. The 1935 Act ended the diarchy system created in 1919. It introduced a federal all-India legislature, and made Indian ministers in the autonomous, provincial governments responsible to a direct electorate that was enlarged to approximately thirty-five million people. Despite these transformations, the Act placed provincial emergency powers in the hands of British officials. It also reserved the powers of finance and defense in the central government of the Viceroy, and allowed for the representation of collaborative princely states in the federal legislature as a counter-

⁵⁵⁶ Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience*; John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-war World* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 81-85; Muldoon, *Empire, Politics and the Creation of the 1935 India Act: Last Act of the Raj*, 54-101; Wolpert, *Shameful Flight*, 5. The Nehru Report demanded independence, but did not include demands for separate Muslim electorates in national elections; this led Jinnah to withdraw from cooperation with the Congress. According to Judith Brown, Gandhi's influence on a national level and in the Congress peaked from 1931 to 1934.

balance to elected Congress leaders. The curtailments on Indian authority in the Act angered prominent members of the Congress. Overall, however, British reforms embodied in the 1919 and especially the 1935 Government of India Acts gave elite Indians closer ties to the Raj and the leeway to negotiate terms of governance during the crises of the Second World War and widespread anti-colonial movements. After the 1935 Act, Congress members made considerable strides in infiltrating the reformed government. For example, in the first provincial elections of 1937, the Congress party gained a majority in six of the eleven provinces of British India. The Act, moreover, formed a basis for the federal structure of India's government after independence.⁵⁵⁷

As Indian nationalists pressured the government in the late 1930s and during the Second World War for more significant measures towards self-rule, British officials continued to respond with some concessions, but also a great deal of ruthless suppression. Subhas Bose, who would be arrested in 1940, advocated forceful agitation against the government during the impending war if India did not receive independence. Gandhi disagreed with Bose's more militant tactics and offered "moral support" at the provincial level, but non-cooperation and non-violence at the center. Nehru, whose plan was eventually adopted by the Congress, pushed for independence as a condition for the Congress to support the war effort.⁵⁵⁸ The British government rejected the demand for full independence. The Congress resolved to resign in provincial governments as a form

⁵⁵⁷ On the 1935 Government of India Act, see Sarkar, *Modern India*, 336-338; Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 124-127; Judith Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Wolpert, *Shameful Flight*, 6-7; Muldoon, *Empire, Politics and the Creation of the 1935 India Act*. Muldoon discusses the lead-up to the Act, with an emphasis on (mis)conceptions of the Indian nationalist movement held by British officials.

⁵⁵⁸ Johannes H. Voigt, "Co-operation or Confrontation? War and Congress Politics, 1939-42," in *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917-1947*, 351-354; Wolpert, *Shameful Flight*, 7.

of non-cooperation. On the eve of the Second World War, British-Indian relations had reached an impasse and the Congress remained divided along tactical lines.

The Second World War pushed forward latent forces of change associated with the radicalization and growth of anti-colonial movements and the rising status of Congress members in the government. It brought more grievances against British governance, and demonstrated to nationalists the hollowness of British promises of Indian self-rule. Without direct consultation with Indian officials, Britain brought India into war. The government used repressive measures to suppress nationalist movements during the war, putting down non-violent protests and imprisoning prominent nationalists. Indian revenues were used to defend the colony, and loaned to Britain in order to send Indian troops abroad. As one of the major shifts in the economic terms of British rule, India had transformed from a debtor to a creditor to Britain at the end of the Second World War.⁵⁵⁹ During the War, imports declined and led to shortages in India, prices for essential commodities increased, and inflation rose. More dramatically, Bengal experienced severe famine in 1943-44, killing 3.5 to 3.8 million Indians.

Japanese encroachments on South Asia during the Second World War, supported by the Indian National Army (INA), also made British officials more reliant on the Indian Army and the support of prominent Congress members. The Japanese made advances across Southeast Asia in early 1942, leading to the fall of Malaya and Burma to Japan. The INA, taken over by Subhas Bose in 1943, fought for the Axis Powers with the goal of attaining Indian independence. Bose had advocated violent resistance to imperialism in India, and formed his own party, All India Forward Bloc. Indians who fought against

⁵⁵⁹ For an assessment of the political economy of British India, and its importance for decolonization, see Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj 1914-1947*.

the British in the INA were recruited from the Indian Army, alongside civilian recruits, after their capture by the Japanese military.

In order to secure Indian goodwill at this critical war-time juncture, in August 1942, the infamous “Cripps Mission” sent Stafford Cripps to offer India Dominion status at the end of war in return for India’s wartime cooperation. The Congress rejected this offer and instead demanded full independence, endorsing Gandhi’s Quit India Movement. The imperial state responded with coercion against anti-colonial movements, arresting Congress leaders, but the Cripps Mission had already opened the gates for negotiating Indian self-rule. Widespread civilian uprisings ensued, leading to the imprisonment of at least 60,000 Indians and the deaths of at least 900 Indians. A final mass protest movement occurred, which included Indian armed forces, as a result of the Indian National Army trials in 1945 and early 1946. In the spring of 1946, the British government sent a cabinet mission to discuss India’s terms of independence.⁵⁶⁰

In August 1947, the partitioned India and Pakistan became autonomous states, divided on ostensibly communal lines. In early 1940, M.A. Jinnah announced at the Muslim League meeting in Lahore the goal of an independent Muslim state. Inter-war India, though, witnessed violent Muslim-Hindu conflicts, and the increasing antagonism

⁵⁶⁰ On the nationalist movement and decolonization of India, see L.J. Butler, *Britain and Empire* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2002); Sarkar, *Modern India*; Martin Shipway, *Decolonization and its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007); R.J. Moore, *Endgames of Empire: Studies of Britain’s India Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Brown, *Modern India*; Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*; Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 85-97; Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 109-134; Wolpert, *Shameful Flight*, 35-51 and 93-94. On the impact of the Second World War on India, see Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 128-166; C.A. Bayly and T.N. Harper, *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941-1945* (Harvard University Press, 2005); Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2006).

between the Congress and the Muslim League.⁵⁶¹ After longstanding debates amongst British officials, Congress leaders, and the Muslim League, Jinnah agreed to a partition across Bengal and the Punjab to create a sovereign, Muslim-majority Pakistan (with East Bengal as East Pakistan). The “shameful flight” of Britain from India, initially planned for June 1948, left India and Pakistan to deal with mounting communal violence, exacerbated by the partition.⁵⁶² In West Punjab, the non-Muslim minority fled east as the Muslim minority moved west, leading to the migration of millions. Hundreds of thousands of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were killed as they crossed the lines of partition.⁵⁶³ According to Stanley Wolpert, a “conservative estimate” of the number killed is 200,000, but more likely the total was over one million. The premature withdrawal of British troops from India and Pakistan, and the division of these religiously-diverse communities, not only contributed to the deaths of countless refugees, but would have long-term consequences for the ongoing dispute between India and Pakistan over the bordering states of Jammu and Kashmir.

Surprisingly, the newly-independent India and Pakistan became members of the Commonwealth in 1949.⁵⁶⁴ The British government had given them the choice to join the Commonwealth, even though India adopted a republican constitution. This offer seemingly initiated a reformed vision of the post-war Empire through the centrality of a more inclusive (non-“British” and non-“white”) Commonwealth. Disagreements over the desirability and terms of India and Pakistan as new Commonwealth members ensued,

⁵⁶¹ Wolpert, *Shameful Flight*, 120-123. In mid-1946, murder and destruction ensued through communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims in Calcutta. Communal violence followed in other Indian locales, including Bombay and East Bengal.

⁵⁶² Winston Churchill referred to Britain’s hasty withdrawal from India in these terms. Wolpert, *Shameful Flight*.

⁵⁶³ Wolpert, *Shameful Flight*, 165 and 176. In June 1947, 300,000 Hindus and Sikhs lived in Lahore, but by August 30, less than 1,000 Hindus and Sikhs resided there.

⁵⁶⁴ The “British Commonwealth” was referred to as the “Commonwealth” from 1948 onwards.

however, until Commonwealth ministers agreed on terms for the incorporation of India's republican government.⁵⁶⁵ The negotiated status of India and Pakistan in the Commonwealth, and the perceived differences between these newly-independent countries and "old" Dominions, made the Commonwealth an unstable alliance.

The 1951 Festival of Britain

It is within this narrative of Indian nationalism and independence—laden with the uncertainties of changed British-Indian relations—that this chapter examines India's participation in exhibitions in London. It examines a very different event created in the metropole under the aegis of the British government: the Festival of Britain (1951). Through an evaluation of the Festival, this chapter explores the effects of imperialist views on cultural representations in the immediate post-war era. Despite decolonization in some parts of the Empire following the Second World War, the ideologies and practices of imperialism persisted, and conceptions of racial difference remained embedded in the Festival.

As a nationalistic portrayal of Britain, the Festival presented a modern depiction of Britain and its accomplishments. Central exhibitions were held on the South Bank from May 4th to September 20th, with auxiliary events spread throughout the United Kingdom.⁵⁶⁶ The official program narrated that the Festival illustrated "our standards in

⁵⁶⁵ See R.J. Moore, *Making the New Commonwealth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 167-171 and 196-197; Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 176.

⁵⁶⁶ F. M. Leventhal, "'A Tonic to the Nation': the Festival of Britain, 1951," *Albion*, 27 (1995): 446; Mariel Grant, "'Working for the Yankee Dollar': Tourism and the Festival of Britain as Stimuli for Recovery," *Journal of British Studies* 45 (July 2006): 586-587; *The Official Book of the Festival of Britain*, 4-5.

the arts and in design, our integrity and imagination in the sciences and industry, the values—personal and collective—which have designed and now operate our society.”⁵⁶⁷

Across London, several sites held exhibitions devoted to Festival themes, including Science at South Kensington, Architecture at Poplar, the “Pleasure Gardens” at Battersea, and the Dome of Discovery on the South Bank. The Festival Office eventually chose the South Bank, located between Waterloo Bridge and County Hall, as “the ‘centre piece’” of the Festival. Constructed in a bomb-damaged area occupied by industrial spaces, the Festival provided an opportunity to reconstruct a sector of London after war.⁵⁶⁸ Exhibits on the South Bank advertised developments in science, technology, and industry through displays of British transport, sea power, natural resources, and wild life. Displays of rural England, for example, demonstrated that “A highly mechanised and most efficiently farmed countryside result[ed] from long experience, aided by science and engineering.”⁵⁶⁹

Covering twenty-seven acres, the unadorned South Bank site narrated to visitors the land, the people, and the discoveries of Britain (See Figure 4.1 below). As an article in *Great Britain and the East* explained, the South Bank exhibits illustrated:

the land of Britain and its resources; the way in which the British people have harnessed these resources and learned to manufacture goods with a high degree of craftsmanship and engineering skill; the scope of British inventiveness in machinery, transport and electronic communications; and British discoveries across the world and into the universe.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁷ Festival of Britain Office, *The Official Book of the Festival of Britain, 1951*, 3.

⁵⁶⁸ Mark Crinson, *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 112.

⁵⁶⁹ Ian H. Cox, *The South Bank Exhibition: A Guide to the Story it Tells* (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1951), 4-5.

⁵⁷⁰ “Festival of Britain, 1951,” *Great Britain and the East* 66, no. 1813 (October, 1950): 37-38.

The upstream section of South Bank had a theme of “The Land of Britain—how the British Isles were formed, and cultivated into agricultural fertility, how industry has transformed our mineral resources into the tools of every-day living and how these products in all their diversity have been distributed at home and abroad through the channels of transport by land, sea and air.” Downstream, “The People of Britain” section narrated Britain’s “origins, character, and traditions,” and the application of science and design in British homes, schools, and healthcare. Together, the “Land and the People” sections included pavilions on Britain’s “Natural Scene,” “The Country,” “Power and Production,” “Seas and Ships,” “Transport,” “Lion and Unicorn,” and “Homes and Gardens.”⁵⁷¹ The center of the South Bank exhibition focused on “the spirit of the Festival—Discovery and the developments that follow upon it.”⁵⁷² The focus of the South Bank exhibitions was a Dome of Discovery, made of aluminum.⁵⁷³ The Dome illustrated British discovery across and beneath the earth, the seas, the sky, and space.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷¹ *The Official Book of the Festival of Britain*, 8-9.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁵⁷³ “Festival of Britain, 1951,” *Great Britain and the East*, 37-38.

⁵⁷⁴ *The Official Book of the Festival of Britain*, 6-7.

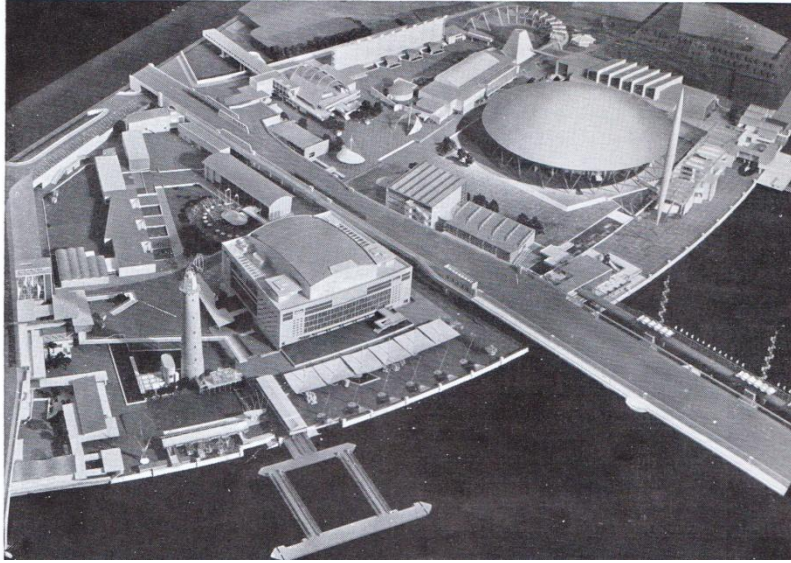


Figure 4.1. The South Bank Site, Festival of Britain. Cox, *The South Bank Exhibition*, 7.

Largely outside the scope of the Festival as a demonstration of *British* ingenuity and economic promise, exhibits of the Empire-Commonwealth were separated from the Festival's central events. Scholarly works largely view the Festival through its "national" framework, and the attempts to facilitate post-war economic recovery under the Labour government.⁵⁷⁵ There are only a few histories of the 1951 Festival of Britain, and even fewer studies that discuss colonial or Commonwealth participation in the Festival. Becky Conekin devotes a chapter of her book, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, to the "absence" of empire in the public, official rhetoric surrounding the Festival of Britain.⁵⁷⁶ Conekin argues that, despite the visible shift in exhibitionary representation from imperial to national in the post-war era, the official planning of the Festival did not wholly exclude empire. Conekin points to the importance of colonial considerations to the organization

⁵⁷⁵ Mary Banham and Bevis Hillier, *A Tonic to the Nation: The Festival of Britain, 1951* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976).

⁵⁷⁶ Becky Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation: The 1951 Festival of Britain* (Manchester University Press, 2003).

of the Festival despite the removal of initial references to empire in the Festival events. Similarly, Jo Littler asserts that imperialist views and ambitions shaped Festival displays. In her article, “‘Festering Britain’: The 1951 Festival of Britain, Decolonisation and the Representation of the Commonwealth,” Littler surveys the visual depictions of imperialism at the Festival.⁵⁷⁷

This chapter provides a more comprehensive account of how empire—in the colonies, the Commonwealth, and especially India—shaped the Festival planning and its exhibits. First, it details the origins and evolution of the Festival’s scope amidst post-war circumstances. It assesses the planning of the Festival as officials attempted to transfer the costs of imperial exhibitions to the colonies and former Dominions. The latter in particular did not respond favorably to an event designed to emphasize British accomplishments in the modern arena. Volatile Commonwealth relations, and the fallacies of a re-envisioned “multiracial” and equitable Commonwealth, lessened the possibilities for extensive contributions from India and Pakistan. Second, this chapter explores shifting conceptions of empire articulated during the Festival planning. British officials involved in the Festival reasserted Britain’s primacy in the world arena. They turned to the evolving Commonwealth and policies of colonial development and democratization as exemplars of Britain’s continued benevolence abroad, including its dedication to an international democracy. As various Colonial, Commonwealth, and Foreign offices promoted the inclusion of imperial themes at the Festival, they stressed the importance of advertising a democratic colonial and Commonwealth governance to sustaining British influence abroad. These appeals were particularly important during the

⁵⁷⁷ Jo Littler, “‘Festering Britain’: The 1951 Festival of Britain, Decolonisation and the Representation of the Commonwealth,” in *Visual Culture and Decolonisation*, eds. Simon Faulkner and Anandi Ramamurthy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 21-42.

Cold War in order for Britain to maintain its global influence and close relations with the United States. Finally, this chapter evaluates how reconfigurations of empire materialized at the Festival and how continued imperialistic visions became evident at the Festival events.

Planning the Festival of Britain

The economic restraints of the post-war era under a Labour government, coupled with the uncertain atmosphere of a diminishing empire, wrested the Festival from the familiar international scope of pre-war exhibitions. In the immediate post-war years, Britain experienced economic austerity, the rising world power of the United States and Soviet Union, and a considerable loss of imperial territories in Asia. British officials thus reasserted Britain's role in a changing international arena and sought a continued "special relationship" with the United States. In doing so, they reconsidered the role of the Commonwealth in facilitating British influence abroad, and created new policies of political and economic development in colonial dependencies.⁵⁷⁸ The historical context of unstable international relations and changing political priorities—including the desire for "security" amidst a burgeoning Cold War, the need for economic recovery, and the loss of formal governance in Asia and the Middle East—influenced the complex development of the Festival.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁸ Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 63-64; David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (Harlow: Longman, 1991), 31 and 176-178.

⁵⁷⁹ Jeffrey Auerbach argues that the Festival of Britain contrasted markedly with the 1851 Great Exhibition, and must be viewed through contemporary political developments such as the Cold War and rise of the Labour Party. See *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (Yale University, 1991), 222.

Immediately following the Second World War, Britain experienced a precipitous loss of colonies in Asia, and a re-evaluation of its mandates and formal influence in the Middle East. In the Middle East, for example, assistance from the United States replaced British military aid in Greece and Turkey in 1947. Shortly thereafter, Britain withdrew from its Palestine mandate. In 1947, as well, India and Pakistan achieved independence and in 1948, Burma and Ceylon also became autonomous states. The loss of colonial territory in Asia, however, did not signal to British officials an end to British hegemony or a new commitment to decolonization across the Empire. Rather, in the post-war era, British officials negotiated new ways to assert both formal and informal power in the face of anti-colonial sentiments in America, the Soviet Union, and the newly-created United Nations.

Although Britain's comparative world power had declined, officials maintained that Britain continued to hold substantial influence abroad, as indeed it did.⁵⁸⁰ Britain remained a major power after the Second World War, placing third in military and industrial terms to the United States and Soviet Union. Even with post-war military retrenchment, Britain kept significant imperial and occupying forces abroad. The transfer of military support in Greece and Turkey from Britain to the United States can be viewed through the continued reliance of Britain on an Anglo-American alliance. It also, however, can be seen as strengthening their Cold War partnership, helping to alleviate British responsibility abroad and allowing Britain to benefit from United States "internationalism" in order to secure its prominent global position.⁵⁸¹ Even with a new

⁵⁸⁰ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 1-2, 21, and 148; Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945-1951* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 90-91.

⁵⁸¹ David Watt, "Withdrawal from Greece," in *Age of Austerity*, eds. Michael Sissons and Philip French (Oxford University Press, 1986), 91-113; Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 167.

Labour government in power in 1945, British governance was, in the words of John Darwin, “remarkably unradical in its approach to foreign defence and imperial policy.”⁵⁸² Britain after the Second World War continued to act as a great power, albeit through new avenues and strategies of influence.

The Festival of Britain did not, therefore, indicate a muting of imperialist sentiments and aims for international supremacy in Britain.⁵⁸³ In October 1948, Gerald Barry (as the Director-General of the Festival) explained that the Festival should not be considered a “trade fair,” but rather it fashioned a “picture of British achievement, past, present and to come, and of its *contributions to the thought and action of the world*.”⁵⁸⁴ In early 1950, Barry stated that “the basic object of the Festival is really for Britain to re-establish and reassess her position in the world.” He added that, “the Festival of Britain should be a means of raising the morale of our own people and the prestige of our people and our nation abroad.”⁵⁸⁵ In July 1950, the Archbishop of Canterbury explained that the “chief and governing purpose of the Festival is to declare our belief and trust in the British way of life.” The Archbishop also, however, saw the Festival as a more sober demonstration of Britain as “a nation at unity in itself and of service to the world.”⁵⁸⁶

Although the Festival downplayed British imperialism, it did not wholly abandon conceptions of Britain’s importance as an international, and imperial, power. Throughout its planning, official circles, including ministers in the various Commonwealth, colonial,

⁵⁸² Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 70-125.

⁵⁸³ Fred M. Leventhal argues that the Festival did not entirely ignore Britain’s imperial legacy, nor the importance of the Commonwealth as a part of the British national identity. The government had not “abandoned imperial (or global) pretensions.” Reviewed work: “The Autobiography of a Nation: The 1951 Festival of Britain by Becky E. Conekin,” *Albion* 36, no. 3 (Autumn, 2004): 561-563.

⁵⁸⁴ Emphasis mine. “Festival of Britain 1951: Text of statement by the Director-General, Mr. Gerald Barry at a press Conference on Thursday, October 14, 1948,” p. 3, BL, L/I/1/647, File 441/17.

⁵⁸⁵ Barry, “The Festival of Britain,” 82.

⁵⁸⁶ Paul Rennie, *Festival of Britain* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors’ Club, 2007), 13.

and foreign offices, voiced their desire to include colonial and Commonwealth participation. During the varied considerations for including “international” exhibits, Festival planners emphasized the need for economic retrenchment by trying to shift the cost of displays to Commonwealth governments. Despite the eschewing of any evident imperial theme at the Festival, international and imperial concerns were neither irrelevant to its planning nor excluded from its publicity and events.⁵⁸⁷

The final product of the Festival of Britain represented official aims to stimulate the national economy through a showcasing of Britain’s modern accomplishments. The evolution and planning of the Festival evinced a continued appeal to imperial and international concerns. The first initiatives for holding the Festival of Britain aimed to demonstrate Britain’s sustained cultural, economic, and political prowess in the world. In 1943, the Royal Society of Arts proposed that Britain hold a post-war international exhibition to commemorate the 1851 Great Exhibition.⁵⁸⁸ At the end of the Second World War, Gerald Barry, as the editor of the *News Chronicle*, publicly suggested to Stafford Cripps, the President of the Board of Trade, that Britain hold this international “Trade and Cultural Exhibition.” The Labour Government then appointed a Committee to assess the possibilities for holding such an exhibition in London. The Committee published a report in 1946 on its recommendations for a “universal international exhibition.”⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁷ In his analysis of Jo Littler’s article, Mark Crinson argues that the Festival’s exhibition buildings, such as the Festival Hall in South Bank, “evoked a more generous if hesitant internationalism” that was “democratically open and free and, by extension, a preparation for the shedding of hierarchies of imperial imagery.” *Journal of British Studies* 46 (Oct 2007): 997-999.

⁵⁸⁸ Leventhal, “A Tonic to the Nation,” 445; Rennie, *Festival of Britain*, 13.

⁵⁸⁹ “Origins of the Festival of Britain,” *Royal Society of Arts* 99, no. 4848 (1 June 1951): 549; Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 220; Leventhal, “A Tonic to the Nation,” 445; Michael Frayn, “Festival,” in *Age of Austerity*, 307-326.

Despite these confident visions that Britain would emerge from the Second World War capable of staging an internationally-framed event, the Festival evolved amidst post-war economic restraints. The Festival planning took place during years of “austerity” in Britain under the Labour Government, and ended in late 1951 with the Conservative electoral victory and the beginnings of British “affluence.”⁵⁹⁰ After the Second War, Britain had substantial foreign debts, and in 1947 had accepted the terms of the \$2.7 billion allotted to Britain in the Marshall Plan.⁵⁹¹ During the immediate post-war period, Britain experienced several major economic crises, including a fuel crisis in 1947 and the extension of rationing.⁵⁹² In the summer of 1946, for example, the government instituted bread rationing, which had not occurred during the War.

Stafford Cripps, as President of the Board of Trade, had severe reservations about holding such an extensive exhibition amidst post-war economic recovery and the expenses associated with social services of the burgeoning welfare state.⁵⁹³ The Festival, therefore, shifted from an international to a national event, aimed to stimulate the British economy and to showcase British contributions to science, technology, and industry. The Board of Trade relinquished its role in overseeing the Festival because it no longer would advertise the British Empire and international trade. A Festival Office that included many prominent British officials administered the Festival of Britain. Herbert Morrison, the Deputy Prime Minister, appointed members of the Executive Committee of the Festival, which was supervised by a Festival Council. General Lord Ismay, the Chief of

⁵⁹⁰ Sissons and French, eds., “Introduction,” in *Age of Austerity*, xvii-xx.

⁵⁹¹ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 165 and 168.

⁵⁹² David Marquand, “Sir Stafford Cripps,” in *Age of Austerity*, 157-159; Hennessy, *Never Again*, 276-277.

⁵⁹³ “Origins of the Festival of Britain,” 550; Leventhal, ““A Tonic to the Nation,”” 446; Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, 28; “Festival of Britain, 1951,” 7 June 1948, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

Staff during the Second World War, chaired the Festival Council and Herbert Morrison became Lord President.⁵⁹⁴ Gerald Barry, as the former editor of the *News Chronicle*, became the Director-General of the Executive Committee in March 1948. The Executive Committee also included representatives of the Arts Council and the Council of Industrial Design, and councils specifically created for the Festival, like the Council of Science and Technology and the Council of Architecture, Town Planning and Building Research.⁵⁹⁵

Critics argued against even a limited version of the Festival because it wasted taxpayer money that could be used instead to repair the British economy. As *Life* explained, “The thought of putting out \$30 million for a carnival gave overburdened taxpayers and politicians the screaming shudders.”⁵⁹⁶ Winston Churchill and other Conservative officials, moreover, viewed the Festival as Labour party propaganda that squandered American financial aid.⁵⁹⁷ Under the Labour government, very early proposals on the Festival advocated that exhibits should not just show industrial progress, but post-war social services, for example, through comparisons of working-class housing in 1851 and 1951.⁵⁹⁸ As Jeffrey Auerbach argues, the organizers of the 1851 Great Exhibition promoted liberal values and, accordingly, “the organizers of 1951 use[d] the Festival of Britain to foster Labour values.”⁵⁹⁹ Although the Festival did not explicitly advertise Labour politics, Labour officials and sympathizers directly oversaw the

⁵⁹⁴ “Festival of Britain, 1951,” 7 June 1948, p. 1, TNA, CAB 124/1220; Leventhal, “‘A Tonic to the Nation,’” 446-447.

⁵⁹⁵ “Festival of Britain 1951: Text of statement by the Director-General, Mr. Gerald Barry at a press Conference on Thursday, October 14, 1948,” p. 3.

⁵⁹⁶ “The Festival of Britain,” *Life* (August 20, 1951), 67.

⁵⁹⁷ R.G.W. Anderson, “Circa 1951: The Festival of Britain, the Exhibition of Science and the Science Museum,” in *Chymica Act*, eds. R.G.W. Anderson, Peter J.T. Morris, and D.A. Robinson (Jeremy Mills Publishing, 2007), 111.

⁵⁹⁸ “Conclusion of a Meeting of the Committee held on Friday, 28th November, 1947 at 945 am.,” BL, L/I/1/647, File 441/17.

⁵⁹⁹ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 200.

Festival.⁶⁰⁰ The goals of the Labour government in an era of post-war reconstruction and welfare reforms framed Festival exhibits. Like previous exhibitions in London, the Festival was a product of contemporary political and economic circumstances and perspectives.

Festival Planning and the Commonwealth

Although the Festival focused on Great Britain, throughout its planning administrators hoped to demonstrate in some way the positive influence of Britain in the international arena. In particular, they corresponded with the Commonwealth Relations Office, the Foreign Office, and the Colonial Office in order to decide how to best represent Britain's ties to the colonies and Dominions. Publicly, Festival administrators continued to support some form of non-British representation amidst long-standing debates over imperial exhibits. Lord Ismay—as the Chairman of the Council of the Festival—explained publicly that the Festival would “weave the story of the Commonwealth into the Festival theme wherever appropriate, and that in addition His Majesty's Government intend to get in touch with Dominion Governments on the general question of Commonwealth representation in the Festival.”⁶⁰¹ The many proposals for including displays that would advertise Britain's contributions in the international arena demonstrate that, at least in official circles, Britons had not relinquished their desire for a continued world-wide prominence and for retaining colonial possessions. At the Festival,

⁶⁰⁰ Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, 3-4.

⁶⁰¹ “Festival of Britain 1951: Text of statement by the Director-General, Mr. Gerald Barry at a press Conference on Thursday, October 14, 1948,” p. 3.

they turned to an image of empire as a munificent, modernizing influence, one that obscured the economic exploitation and racialized policies of the imperial regime.

The original decision to limit the Festival to displays of Britain had restricted the administrators' ability to directly fund Commonwealth and colonial exhibits. The Festival Committee, therefore, dictated early in their planning that it would not be financially feasible for Britain to sponsor elaborate exhibits on Commonwealth or colonial countries, such as separate pavilions for each country in the metropole. As a result of these stipulations, Festival administrators contemplated several alternatives to funding expensive exhibitions on the colonies and Dominions, hoping to still include Commonwealth participation and demonstrate Britain's benevolence in the colonies. In June 1948, Gerald Barry proposed that the Dominions fund their own shows, as they had previously sponsored pavilions at the 1924 British Empire Exhibition. Rather than serving as central features of the Festival, however, their exhibitions would serve as auxiliaries to Festival exhibits.⁶⁰² Festival authorities continuously promoted this idea throughout the planning process. The hope that Commonwealth countries would sponsor exhibitions during the Festival, either within their respective countries or within the metropole, eventually subsided, but not without several failed attempts on the part of Festival administrators to convince Commonwealth governments to construct exhibits.

Attempts to fashion Commonwealth-sponsored events and exhibits were particularly laden with confusion as a result of post-war re-evaluations of the Commonwealth and its recent inclusion of India and Pakistan. In the inter-war years, the Dominions achieved increasing autonomy within the Commonwealth. The Statute of

⁶⁰² The Council of the Festival of Britain 1951, "Festival of Britain 1951. Executive Committee. Commonwealth Participation. Memorandum from the Secretary, Leonard Crainford," 28 July 1948, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

Westminster (1931), for example, granted the Dominions an independent status, in which they could amend their constitutions and enact legislation without British interference. Under the Statute, the Dominions could also determine their own foreign policies.⁶⁰³ Even as the Dominions contributed substantially to the Second World War and benefited from close economic ties with Britain, they continued to assert an independence from Britain. The membership of India and Pakistan after the War profoundly altered the Commonwealth, and began the transformation of what had hitherto been a white man's club into a "multi-racial community."⁶⁰⁴ The "ethos" of the Labour government (from 1945-1951), for example, embodied the premise of racial equality in the Empire-Commonwealth. Ideally, as colonies became independent, they would join the Commonwealth. By 1965, seventeen new members joined the Commonwealth as "non-white" Dominions.

Although outwardly the Commonwealth was more inclusive, notions of racial difference, embedded in the colonial regime, shaped British policies, such as those on immigration and citizenship.⁶⁰⁵ India and Pakistan's inclusion marked a "watershed" for the Commonwealth to eventually become a "multi-racial community," but its members remained divided between the "old" and "new" Dominions. British officials aimed to safeguard their influence abroad by maintaining special relations with Commonwealth countries after the Second World War. The international tensions of the Cold War, for example, led to the official preoccupation with coordinating Commonwealth military efforts. Many British officials supported the inclusion of India and Pakistan in order to

⁶⁰³ Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 5-6 and 37.

⁶⁰⁴ Frank Heinlein, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation, 1945-63: Scrutinising the Official Mind* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 3.

⁶⁰⁵ Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1997).

counterbalance Soviet influence in Asia. India and Pakistan, nonetheless, maintained neutrality through non-alignment. Some British and “old Dominion” representatives, moreover, contested the inclusion of Asian Dominions and doubted the latter’s long-term membership in the Commonwealth.⁶⁰⁶ Although supported by Prime Minister Clement Attlee and other Labour officials, members of the Foreign Office, including Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, opposed opening the Commonwealth to India and Pakistan. Bevin eventually agreed to India’s inclusion under the opinion that, if India did not join the Commonwealth, South East Asia would become susceptible to the growing Soviet influence there.⁶⁰⁷ Rather than fostering a new racial equality and intimacy among members, the inclusion of India and Pakistan transformed the Commonwealth into “a far more deliberate and self-conscious instrument for the preservation of British influence in the Afro-Asian world.”⁶⁰⁸ Commonwealth relations from 1945 to 1951 show that British officials did not pursue equality and decolonization across the Empire, but rather made efforts to consolidate a continued global dominance.

The initial planning of Commonwealth exhibits at the Festival was fraught with disagreement and confusion that made visible the instabilities of the very concept of a more equitable Commonwealth, and the tensions amongst the Dominions and in their relationship to Britain. Very early in the Festival organization, the Commonwealth Relations Office (C.R.O.) agreed with the initial decision for the Festival to remain national in scope, rather than “transform[ing] the Exhibition into the British Empire Exhibition of 1924.” The C.R.O. lacked sufficient funds to support exhibits on the

⁶⁰⁶ Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 67-73 and 101-102.

⁶⁰⁷ Moore, *Making the New Commonwealth*, 167-171 and 196-197.

⁶⁰⁸ Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 152-154. Also see Moore, *Making the New Commonwealth*; Heinlein, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation*, 63-70.

Commonwealth.⁶⁰⁹ Most importantly, according to the C.R.O., the nationalism of the old and new Commonwealth members made them more averse to constructing exhibits that focused on the modern accomplishments of *Britain* in the world. The C.R.O. informed the Office of the Festival Council that the Dominions would be less than enthusiastic regarding Barry's proposition for the Commonwealth sponsorship of exhibitions. According to C.W. Drocon of the C.R.O., some Dominions, especially the newly-independent states of India and Pakistan, would have "political objection ... to participation in a central Exhibition of this kind."⁶¹⁰ The C.R.O. indicated mostly political reasons for possible non-participation on the part of the Dominions. The "powerful nationalistic elements" in many Dominions would, according to C.G. Costley-White of the C.R.O., hinder their commitment to an exhibition designed to "emphasize the British connection." The status of India in particular during the "interim" period between 1947 to 1949 as a tenuous member of the Commonwealth led the C.R.O. to explain to the Festival Office that, "it would be rash to bank with too great certainty [sic] of India still being a member of the Commonwealth in 1951."⁶¹¹

Relations between new Commonwealth representatives and Festival authorities eroded in early 1949. Gerald Barry explained to Herbert Morrison's under-secretary, Max Nicholson, that he had been the "victim of an embarrassing conference with the Deputy High Commissioners of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon." Barry had met with these officials to explain why the Festival was confined to the UK and to "discuss the

⁶⁰⁹ 27 July 1949, TNA, DO 35/4194. After Indian independence, the India and Dominion Offices combined to form the Commonwealth Relations Office.

⁶¹⁰ Commonwealth Relations Office, "To: Nicholson (Secretary to Office of Lord President of the Council). From: C.W. Drocon," 17 February 1948, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

⁶¹¹ "To: Miss Lidderdale, Office of the Lord President of the Council. From: C.G. Costley-White, of the CRO," 24 June 1948, TNA, CAB 124/1220. Attempts to reconcile the dispute over Kashmir between Pakistan and India in 1948 complicated British attempts to include them as Commonwealth members. See Moore, *Making the New Commonwealth*, 62-96.

possibility of their staging exhibitions on their own responsibility in London in 1951.” Barry thought that there had already been communications with all the Dominion representatives regarding their potential roles in the Festival. He “was nonplussed . . . by being informed by the representatives of India and Ceylon that they had received no word from HMG [Her Majesty’s Government], a fact which they very obviously resented and which led our discussions into an impasse.” These new Dominions, according to Barry, reacted quite harshly to their decentralized roles in the Festival when compared to the responses he had received from the representatives of Canada and South Africa. Both Barry and Lord Ismay had “been pressing for many months for a clear definition of the relationship between the Festival of Britain and the Commonwealth.” Barry concluded that, “After endless delays the baby has now been handed over to us in such a shape as to make it almost impossible for us to nurse.”⁶¹²

The Festival Committee affirmed that the High Commissioners for India and Ceylon had in fact been contacted regarding their participation in the Festival prior to Barry’s meeting. The Festival Committee, however, determined that “the real difficulty is that these two new Dominions’ High Commissioners feel touchy because they did not receive the same sort of communication from HMG as the old High Commissioners.”⁶¹³ The new Dominions of Asia refused to collaborate with an organization that made political differentiations within the Commonwealth, segregating recently-independent colonies from the “old” Dominions. Festival administrators tried to rectify this problem in future meetings. At a meeting several months later, in July 1949, Paul Wright (the

⁶¹² “Festival of Britain 1951. To: Max Nicholson. From: Gerald Barry,” 20 January 1949, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

⁶¹³ JH Lidderdale, “To: Mr. Nicholson. Commonwealth Participation,” 21 January 1949, TNA, CAB 124/1220. Lidderdale explained that the High Commissioners for India and Ceylon had in fact been contacted on their possible participation in the Festival.

Director of Public Relations in the Festival Office) “was emphatic” that if there would be another meeting with the High Commissioners to determine their contributions to the Festival, “it would be better to have all High Commissioners at the same meeting and not to segregate the old from the new Dominions as happened previously.” He had “recalled, with some feeling, the bitterness shown by the High Commissioners of India, Pakistan and Ceylon when they realised that they had been invited to a meeting quite separate from ... a meeting for the older Dominions for precisely the same purpose.”⁶¹⁴

The political desires of India and Pakistan to assert their equality within the Commonwealth made it virtually impossible to garner their support for a British-focused event that, during its planning, separated the “old” Dominions from former colonies. This differentiation is not surprising, considering that ideas of racial difference were embedded in the colonial regime and only a few years earlier, India was a colonial possession. Officials in Canada, moreover, hoped to use the Festival to assert the importance of the Canadian nation-state rather than the central role of Britain in Dominion accomplishments. Festival administrators had informed the U.K. High Commissioners in Canada that because of the “modest scale” of the Festival, it could not “illustrate the special contribution to civilisation of [other] countries.”⁶¹⁵ The U.K. High Commissioners in Canada wrote to the C.R.O in March 1949, explaining that Canadians had not shown a “lively response” to the Festival because individual sections were not given “at least to major Commonwealth countries.” Instead of focusing on the contributions of Britain to world civilization, Canadian officials wanted “a clear recognition that other Commonwealth countries had made a distinctive contribution of

⁶¹⁴ 27 July 1949, TNA, DO 35/4194.

⁶¹⁵ “To: UK High Commissioners in Canada, Festival of Britain, 1951,” 9 March 1949, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

their own to the arts and sciences.” The U.K. High Commissioners explained that, because the Festival was exclusive to Britain, “it might be thought that we were intent merely on puffing up our own achievements while pointing here and there to what others had done who had followed in our wake.” They concluded that this assumption contributed to their failure to entice Canada to donate “gifts of material” for the Festival.⁶¹⁶ Barry had asked Commonwealth countries to provide materials for the construction of Festival buildings on the South Bank site.⁶¹⁷ This suggestion “did not receive a favourable response,” so the idea was dropped.⁶¹⁸ It had become likely that Commonwealth countries would not stage exhibitions in their countries, nor would they finance supplementary exhibits within the metropole.

Contemporary political strains complicated Commonwealth cooperation with the Festival Office, despite the persistent proposals by British officials to showcase Britain’s world-wide contributions across the Empire. Festival designers attempted to conceal the political and economic tensions of the post-war era; they nonetheless became evident during the organization of Festival events. The tenuous relationship between Britain and the newer members of the Commonwealth—in particular India and Pakistan—decreased the possibilities for their extensive participation. A stronger post-war nationalism and desire for equal political footing within the Commonwealth made the Dominions unwilling to participate in a festival that would portray Britain as the center of modernity.

⁶¹⁶ “To: CRO. From: U.K. High Commissioner in Canada,” 31 March 1949, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

⁶¹⁷ “Festival of Britain 1951. To: The Lord President of the Council. From: Gerald Barry, Director-General,” 25 February 1949, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

⁶¹⁸ “Festival of Britain 1951. Executive Committee. Commonwealth Participation. Memorandum from the Secretary, Leonard Crainford,” 27 May 1949, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

Re-envisioning Empire at the Festival

Rather than endorsing nationalistic portrayals of former colonies, many officials—both inside and outside the Festival committees—wanted to emphasize Britain’s role in promoting democratic governments in the Empire-Commonwealth. To these officials, imperial-minded exhibits of colonial and Dominion self-governance did not represent the process of losing empire, but rather Britain’s contribution to world civilization. This re-envisioning of the Empire continued to showcase Britain’s central role in the international arena, but focused on the facilitation and spread of democracies. At one meeting, members of the Festival Council argued that “the whole purpose of the Festival would be destroyed if it did not demonstrate to the world Britain’s greatest contribution to civilisation—namely, the foundation of the British Empire.”⁶¹⁹ Other British officials wanted to use the Festival to increase commercial trade through an event similar to the British Empire Exhibition. In the House of Commons, MP Brigadier Ralph Rayner asked Herbert Morrison to “reconsider” the Festival’s scope and its exclusion of the Empire’s “products and potentialities.”⁶²⁰ The Festival planning thus served as a forum for British officials to reassert Britain’s international power. These officials hoped to demonstrate a continued contribution to world civilization, to appeal to American requests for a “democratization” of empire, and to improve the British economy by stimulating imperial trade.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Morrison responded that the British Industries Fair of 1951 would include such a display rather than the Festival. As a short-lived exhibition held April 30th to May 11th, the British Industries Fair served as an “international market place” in Earls Court London and Birmingham. “Festival of Britain, 1951 (Empire Products),” Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 11 November 1948, Hansard, vol. 457, no. 13, c. 1720; “British Industries Fair,” *Times*, 26 April 1951, p. 3.

The many proposals for including the Empire-Commonwealth in the Festival showed an evolving conception of empire, one that would maintain Britain's international power but also portray a more democratic approach to formal and informal rule. Such an approach would appeal to American anti-colonial sentiments and fulfill the promises of democratic values abroad, as a contrast to the recently dismantled Nazi and Japanese empires. During the Second World War and immediate post-war era, British officials recognized the need to democratize governance over colonial territories, albeit through a long-term timetable that would sustain British world power. The Colonial Office took the lead in "democratizing" the Empire through the development of local self-governance and modernized economies in the colonies that would eventually result in their self-rule.

As the Foreign, Colonial, and Commonwealth offices urged Festival administrators to include empire-related exhibits, they were anxious to attract American visitors through more "enlightened" depictions of imperialism. The Festival administration, as well, recognized the need to appeal to American visitors at a time when a near-bankrupt Britain relied on financial aid from the economically and politically powerful United States.⁶²¹ The continuation of British world power relative to the United States and Soviet Union rested on the Commonwealth and a more democratic influence abroad.⁶²² An empire more committed to democratization became a sort of compromise in order to secure a continued Anglo-American alliance in the Cold War era. As William Roger Louis explains, "the United States eased the pressure for decolonization in return

⁶²¹ Grant, "'Working for the Yankee Dollar': Tourism and the Festival of Britain as Stimuli for Recovery," 581–601. In her article, Grant emphasizes that Festival organizers were concerned with attracting American tourists in order to stimulate economic recovery and advertise Britain as a recovering nation in the post-war era. Festival planners, however, faced the delicate task of appealing to American tourists in order to stimulate the British economy without "overstat[ing] its level of recovery."

⁶²² Wm. Roger Louis, "Introduction," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 22-3 and 27.

for assurances that the British would modernize as well as democratize the Empire.” The maintenance of British colonies and Western influences abroad would, under American containment policy, provide a defense against Soviet and Communist expansion.⁶²³

Although assertions of imperial supremacy and racial superiority “were no longer an appropriate rhetoric” to espouse in the post-war era, officials did not propose a radical restructuring of empire. British officials kept American approval in mind and, at the same time, the United States moderated its anti-colonialism.

Keeping these political balances in mind, offices of the Empire-Commonwealth hoped to convince Festival authorities to sponsor more imperially-minded exhibits. As the Festival Office noted, there had been “haziness, if not confusion, in the minds of the Foreign Office, the C.R.O., and particularly the Colonial Office people who have been discussing ‘Commonwealth participation’, about the scope of the Festival.” These officials attempted to expand the Festival Office’s proposal to include “British contributions to civilization” in order to represent the colonies and Dominions.⁶²⁴ The Commonwealth Relations Office, for example, wanted the Festival to include a British-sponsored display of “the founding and growth towards democratic self Government of the British Empire.” On several occasions, the C.R.O. restated to the Festival Office that the Dominions would most likely refrain from contributing to the Festival because it

⁶²³ Ibid., 29; Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 41-64 and 128-152; Wm. Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire, 1941-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire*, 13 and 26; Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 167. In *Imperialism at Bay*, 567, Louis argues that the major contrast in attitudes towards imperialism in the United States and Britain can be seen in the wartime views of Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt. Churchill supported a continued Victorian-era Empire while Roosevelt argued, ultimately, for the independence of colonies. In addition, Churchill suspected that the “trusteeship” of colonial territories that would come to fruition under the United Nations was intended as a device for American expansion. Louis explains that, after the Second World War, “the general policy of the American government, in pursuit of security, tended to support rather than break up the British Imperial System.”

⁶²⁴ “To Mr. Nicholson. From JH Lidderdale,” 19 September 1949, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

advertised the accomplishments of modern Britain. The C.R.O., however, continued to promote an exhibition that would instead emphasize “the size and importance of the self governing independent Member States of the Commonwealth and on their complete freedom from United Kingdom control.” The C.R.O. reiterated the desire of Commonwealth members to have a more nationalistic display of their governmental development. It therefore wanted Commonwealth displays to remain separate from colonial displays, informing Gerald Barry that Commonwealth countries should not be invited to partake in the proposed “Exhibition of Native Colonial Art.”⁶²⁵

The Colonial Office, as well, voiced the need for exhibits on the Empire at the Festival. In mid-1949, the C.O. promoted a more extensive exhibition on the Empire to be held on the South Bank site. Mr. Blackburne of the Colonial Office “considered that scattered references to the Commonwealth in various sections of the South Bank exhibition would not bring home one of the most important contributions of this country to civilisation, i.e. the Commonwealth, and he pressed very strongly indeed for the setting aside of some section, not necessarily large, where this fact could be driven home.”⁶²⁶ The policies of the C.O. formulated in the post-war era had, in fact, stressed the importance of guiding colonies towards self-government under the Commonwealth.⁶²⁷ Concurrently, they also stressed the growing necessity of “identify[ing] the colonies more and more with the United Kingdom.”

Much later in the Festival planning, the Colonial Office reaffirmed the need to exhibit the civilizing influences of British colonization. The Festival could advertise what Britain was “really doing in the colonies” in order to offset growing criticisms

⁶²⁵ “The Director-General, Festival of Britain Council,” 25 August 1949, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

⁶²⁶ JH Lidderdale, “Note for Record,” 26 July 1949, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

⁶²⁷ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, 162.

associated with Britain's maintenance of empire in the post-war era.⁶²⁸ The C.O. cited the "criticism which came to a head at the last session of the United Nations in New York when the UK was alone in opposing certain proposals put forward by the Assembly in regard to colonial matters." British officials feared that critics of empire in the United Nations, especially under the new terms of "trusteeship," would oppose colonial policies.⁶²⁹ The UN Trusteeship system, as a successor to the League of Nations Mandate system, created new schemes for the oversight and accountability of colonial powers.⁶³⁰ Although not explicitly devoted to colonial independence, "self-government" in colonies emerged as a goal of the United Nations in 1945. Through Festival displays, British officials hoped to offset UN and U.S. criticisms of British imperial policies by demonstrating that Britain had begun to hasten constitutional and economic change in the colonies. Even though the United States ultimately conceded to, and even buttressed, British colonial governance, the perceived threat of American anti-colonialism persisted in the minds of British politicians after the Second World War.

Ministers of the Foreign Office corresponded with the Festival Office about their desire to more fully exhibit British contributions to democratic governments abroad. One such member was Ernest Bevin, Labour Foreign Secretary, who saw the Commonwealth as a foundation for Britain's continuing world power.⁶³¹ Bevin hoped that the Festival would include an exhibition to show Britain's role in the self-government of colonial and Commonwealth countries, including their parliamentary and legal systems. This proposal

⁶²⁸ "To: James Crombie (Treasury). From: C.J. Jeffries," 21 March 1950, TNA, CO 875/55/6.

⁶²⁹ Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 81. Mark Mazower argues in *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton University Press, 2009) that, until the mid-1950s, proposals for "imperial internationalism" persisted in the UN. British officials continued to use the UN to preserve empire, and the UN was very much a continuation of the League of Nations.

⁶³⁰ On the United Nations Trusteeship Council, as it pertained to relations between the United States and Britain, see Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, 95 and 115-117.

⁶³¹ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, 100.

located the origin of democratic institutions within Britain. Bevin, for example, suggested that a visual “tree” could demonstrate the spread of “parliamentary institutions on the British model.” This example would include the colonies, demonstrating “to what extent natives of so-called backward areas participate in the government of their colonies, in the administration of law etc.” The F.O. explained that, “Americans with their prejudices about Imperialism would be particularly important in this conne[ction] and one knows how much they like the instructional.”⁶³² The Foreign Office insisted upon the importance of an Anglo-American alliance in the post-war era of the Cold War. They hoped that this exhibition would appeal directly to the sentiments of American visitors by stressing the growth of democratic self-government in the colonies.

Although the principal events of the Festival of Britain marked a dramatic shift from previous exhibitions, administrators supported various forms of colonial themes and Commonwealth involvement. When the Festival opened, exhibits promoting the humanitarian and democratizing influences of Britain in the Empire-Commonwealth aimed to facilitate Britain’s world-wide power by appealing to the sentiments of visitors from the United States. The Festival thus portrayed the Empire through Britain’s civilizing presence across the world, but did not include a central event for nationalistic depictions of Commonwealth countries. It became clear during the planning of colonial and Commonwealth-sponsored exhibits that the unstable relations amongst the Dominions made the construction of extensive, “imperial” events very difficult. Both the newer and older Dominions objected to the Festival as an event designed only to showcase British contributions to modernity. India and Pakistan, furthermore, used the

⁶³² “To: Nicholson. From: C.F.A. Warner (Foreign Office),” 5 September 1949, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

Festival as a forum to assert their equality within the Commonwealth, contesting their unjust treatment during the Festival planning.

Festival of Britain: The Final Product

Despite the many proposals for imperial exhibits put forward by Festival authorities and Commonwealth and colonial departments, the Festival eventually downplayed—but did not entirely exclude—imperial themes. The Festival fashioned auxiliary, rather than central, exhibits devoted to the Empire-Commonwealth. These exhibits promoted a re-envisioned portrayal of imperialism that stressed British contributions to international “civilization.” The rhetoric of the post-war Labour government and C.O. had envisioned the remaining colonies through their gradual developments towards democratic self-government, under the guidance of British authority.⁶³³ Auxiliary displays kept in line with contemporary visions of the British Empire and with the Festival’s scope. They emphasized the long-term development of parliamentary institutions and democratic self-government in the Empire-Commonwealth, and the concrete examples of (a benevolent) British modernity abroad.

The Imperial Institute in South Kensington, distant from the South Bank site, encompassed the most comprehensive displays of Commonwealth and colonial countries. Its main exhibition suited the financial constraints of the Festival because the Institute had already been equipped with permanent exhibits on the colonies and Dominions. Established in connection with the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the Imperial Institute underwent many changes associated with the evolution of empire over time.

⁶³³ Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 80; Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire*, 94-95 and 162.

Originally designed for the taxonomic collection and dissemination of information on imperial resources, the Institute in the post-war era emphasized education rather than research. Exhibits at the Institute in the immediate post-war era, moreover, stressed the multi-racial composition of the Empire-Commonwealth through displays of ethnography alongside economic products.⁶³⁴

The already-established, permanent sections of Commonwealth countries at the Institute—each with its own court—were brought up to date, or redesigned, for the Festival.⁶³⁵ During the Festival planning, the C.R.O. had stressed the importance of maintaining stable Commonwealth relations by including Dominion input on as equal terms as possible. The schemes of the exhibition at the Imperial Institute were thus submitted to the C.R.O. so that “no country’s susceptibilities were likely to be offended.”

⁶³⁶ The West entrance of the Institute led to Canada Courts and then into the courts of the West Indies, Malta, Gibraltar, Cyprus, West Africa, New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, East Africa, and South East Asia. The East Entrance led to India, Pakistan, and Ceylon. In these courts, pictures, dioramas, and samples depicted the “facts” of the Commonwealth. The Imperial Institute advertised that “real rice and wheat, real ores, real coconuts, [and] real cotton and wool” took the place of “dull exhibits.” The courts focused on natural features and industries in Commonwealth countries; they also

⁶³⁴ Crinson, *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire*, 100-112.

⁶³⁵ Festival of Britain Office, *The Official Book of the Festival of Britain*, 61. Colonial Office and Central Office of Information, *The Festival and the Commonwealth: Three Shows at South Kensington* (London: Fosh & Cross Ltd, 1951), TNA, CAB 124/1220.

⁶³⁶ “Record of a discussion between Mr. B.C. Sendall (Controller, Festival Office) and Mr. Swinnerton,” 16 August 1949, TNA, DO 35/4194.

included arts and crafts and the “life of the people” through displays of “wild life and scenery, farmers and farming . . . [and] manufacture.”⁶³⁷

In addition, the Institute fashioned two temporary exhibitions arranged by the Colonial Office: a touring exhibition called “Focus on Colonial Progress” and a “show of traditional sculpture and craft work from the Colonies.”⁶³⁸ Although the Festival de-emphasized notions of racial difference, it did not omit representations of colonial “tradition” and “backwardness.” The exhibition titled “Traditional Art from the Colonies” continued the familiar display of the cultures of colonial countries, but eschewed more racialized references to colonial inferiority. The exhibition, arranged by the Colonial Office in collaboration with colonial governments, included displays of artwork and handmade crafts from Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, South East Asia, and Central Africa. Exhibits largely excluded “modern work produced under extraneous influences,” and instead displayed “traditional” objects that had long been exhibited in the metropole. Festival authorities, however, avoided obvious references to the perceived racial inferiority of colonial dependencies. At a meeting at the Festival of Britain Office, for example, the Colonial Office protested against “the proposal for an exhibition of primitive art in the Colonies, as so many native people are rather touchy about it.” The C.O. did not wholly object to an exhibition along these lines at the Imperial Institute.⁶³⁹ The name of the exhibition, therefore, changed to the euphemistic “traditional” rather than “primitive.”

⁶³⁷ Colonial Office and Central Office of Information, *The Festival and the Commonwealth: Three Shows at South Kensington*.

⁶³⁸ Festival of Britain Office, *The Official Book of the Festival of Britain*, 61.

⁶³⁹ JH Lidderdale, “Note for Record,” 26 July 1949, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

William Fagg, the Assistant Keeper of the Department of Ethnography at the British Museum and Honorary Secretary at the Royal Anthropological Institute, explained Western conceptions of the colonies in the context of the “Traditional Art from the Colonies” exhibition. Fagg promoted a less racialized view of colonial peoples that appreciated their artistic capabilities. In his review of the exhibition, Fagg referred to the perceived differences between Europeans and “primitives,” putting the latter word in quotation marks.⁶⁴⁰ Harry Lindsay of the Imperial Institute asked Fagg to give a lecture introduction to the exhibition. Fagg explained that, like the word “tribal,” the word “primitive . . . is even more open to misunderstanding, although both artists and anthropologists use it nowadays in a sense which is complimentary rather than derogatory.”⁶⁴¹ Similarly, the *Festival and the Commonwealth* pamphlet explained that exhibitions at the Imperial Institute would show “cultural traditions . . . entitled to rank among man’s greater artistic achievements.”⁶⁴² Official rhetoric of the Festival recognized the growing criticisms of racialized conceptions, and this engendered a more cautious approach to displays of the “traditional,” “tribal,” and “primitive” colonies. Although these shifts in imperial rhetoric demonstrated a growing sensitivity to anti-colonial sentiments, it did not represent a complete or widespread rejection of racial conceptions.

The “Focus on Colonial Progress” exhibition, also held at the Imperial Institute, similarly presented ethnographic exhibits to the public. The exhibition, arranged by the Central Office of Information for the Colonial Office, aimed to display the “colourful

⁶⁴⁰ Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, 194.

⁶⁴¹ William Fagg, “Tribal Sculpture in the British Colonies,” *Royal Society of Arts* 99, no. 4852 (July 27 1951): 692-693.

⁶⁴² Colonial Office and Central Office of Information, *The Festival and the Commonwealth: Three Shows at South Kensington*.

lands and diverse peoples of the Colonies and trace[d] the story of their association with Britain and of their development and progress in partnership with the British people.” This exhibition, much like the “Traditional Art from the Colonies,” included familiar depictions of colonized peoples. The “Colonial Peoples” section exhibited “life-size models,” continuing the imperialistic portrayal of colonial ethnography. The Exhibition also promoted the modernization taking place in colonies at the behest of imperial governance. The “Men at Work” section, for instance, showed how problems of colonial environments—especially tropical lands—had been overcome through a modern British intervention that raised the standards of living in the colonies. The *Festival and the Commonwealth* pamphlet characterized the two-way trade between Britain and the colonies as mutually beneficial to both locales, and to “the whole *democratic* world.”⁶⁴³

The Festival exhibits at the Institute thus demonstrated what Jo Littler calls “imperial mastery” and “benevolent partnership.” Publications on the Festival depicted Britain’s scientific discovery and economic advancement abroad through “imperial benevolence” towards colonies and Dominions. They portrayed Britain at the apex of civilization in its overcoming of both “primitivism” and nature abroad.⁶⁴⁴ During the Second World War, newly-formed plans for the Colonial Office to promote “development” in African colonies stressed the importance of modes of self-governance and the modernization of economies. The prospect of post-war economic recovery, viewed through evolving visions of the Empire, rested upon the exploitation of colonial territories through projects of “colonial development” that would profit Britain as well as

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Jo Littler, “Festering Britain,” 21-42.

the colonies.⁶⁴⁵ The Colonial Development and Welfare Acts of 1940 and 1945, for example, allocated money for economic and social development in the colonies, administered under the Colonial Office. Colonial development appeased anti-colonial sentiment and justified a continued colonial rule, while drawing upon the economic profitability of tropical colonies.

Another exhibition separated from the Festival on the South Bank, “Parliament Past and Present,” also advertised the Empire as a benevolent presence, particularly in terms of facilitating political modernization abroad. The Parliamentary Supervisory Committee on the Festival of Britain organized this display, which was held in the Grand Committee Room of the Palace of Westminster during the “summer recess.” Through a series of models, this exhibition provided a history of the British parliament and its achievements, as well as the influence of British democracy on institutions abroad. Sections elucidated the functions of parliament, the Houses of Commons and Lords over time, the officers of Parliament, and the “influence of parliament overseas.”⁶⁴⁶ The “Parliament Past and Present” exhibition focused on the export of British political modernity rather than displays of colonial “tradition.” This exhibition centered on the modernizing influences of Britain through depictions of its internationally-prominent democratic institutions. It thus pertained to the requests of the Foreign Office to demonstrate “political ideas and constitutional theory and practice in the Commonwealth, U.S.A., and other foreign countries and in the sphere of development towards self-

⁶⁴⁵ Louis, “Introduction,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 27-28; Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, 100-103; Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 51-53 and 146; Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 176-178.

⁶⁴⁶ “Parliamentary Exhibition (Future),” Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 15 May 1952, Hansard, vol. 500, cc. 1622-3; Lord Morrison, “The Parliamentary Exhibition,” Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 24 July 1951, Hansard, vol. 172, cc. 1145; “Festival of Britain (Exhibition),” Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 13 February 1951, Hansard, vol. 484, c. 178; “Parliamentary Committee (Report),” Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 21 November 1951, Hansard, vol. 481, cc. 196-200.

government as exemplified in the Commonwealth.” The F.O. wanted the exhibition closely associated with the Festival, and this connection to be “made obvious in all Festival publicity.”⁶⁴⁷ The “Parliament, Past and Present” exhibition, however, remained separate from the South Bank site and was not advertised in official Festival guides.

Aside from separated exhibits of the colonies and Commonwealth countries not sponsored directly by the Festival Office, the South Bank site referenced Britain’s achievements abroad. These references, confined to the original framework of the Festival, publicized Britain’s concrete advancements in science, industry, and technology. The Festival of Britain Office had reiterated during the planning of the Festival that “the importance of the founding and growth towards democratic self-government of the British Empire cannot find a major place in the theme of the Exhibitions, which are primarily intended to demonstrate Britain’s contributions to civilisation in the fields of science, technology and industrial design.”⁶⁴⁸ The Festival Office, therefore, decided that the South Bank site would have various houses for displays, but it could not fund an elaborate house devoted to a Commonwealth or colonial theme. Particular houses would, instead, reference the Empire where relevant to the Festival topics.

The “Dome of Discovery” exhibition on the South Bank included sections on British exploration pertaining to “the land, the earth, polar, sea, sky, outer space, the physical world, [and] the living world” (See Figure 4.2 below).⁶⁴⁹ This exhibition praised Britain’s expansion across the Empire-Commonwealth, concealing the violence and

⁶⁴⁷ “To: Bernard Sendall, Esq (Controller, Festival of Britain). From: G.W. Aldington (Foreign Office),” 26 January 1950, TNA, CAB 124/1220.

⁶⁴⁸ “To: Under Secretary of State, CRO. From: B.C. Sendall, Controller,” 29 September 1929, TNA, DO 35/4194. Referring to letter of August 25th.

⁶⁴⁹ Cox, *The South Bank Exhibition*, 4-5.

oppression of colonial expansion. The Land section of the Dome included sub-sections such as tropical medicine, water engineering, agriculture, and Commonwealth links (See Figure 4.3 below). This section emphasized the triumph over nature in the Dominions and colonies through concrete examples of British modernity. An official guide to the Festival explained that, “by some persistent anomaly, the British have always been lured to discovery and exploration by those very regions of the world where nature has been most extravagant or most severe—Livingstone by the jungles and lakes of Africa, Scott by the icy Antarctic, Sturt by Australia’s barren heart, Mallory by the supreme isolation of Everest.” The “Agriculture” sub-section, for example, emphasized scientific and technological developments overseas that aided the export of agriculture from Commonwealth countries and “tropical areas.” As the official guide explained, “the modern trend, therefore, is even further development of overseas producing areas, but with a vastly increasing application of scientific knowledge which is already saving bitter years of trial and error.”⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., 40-43.

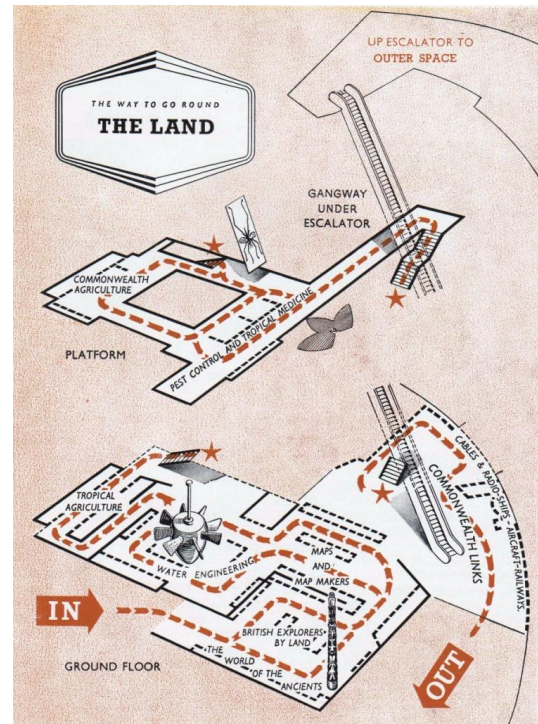
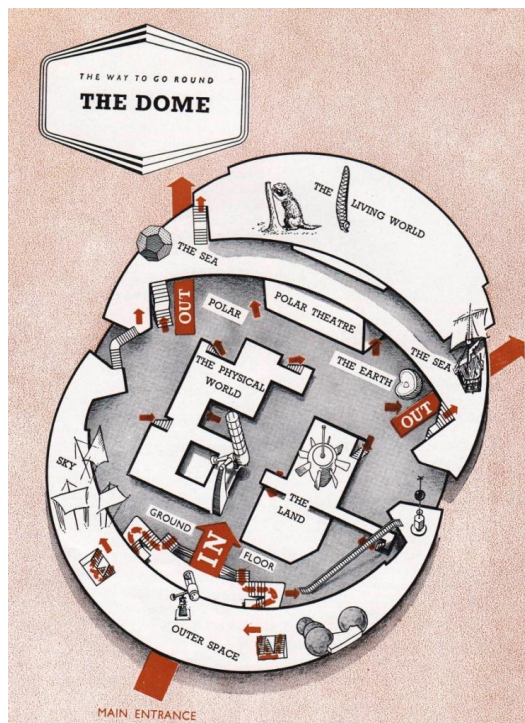


Figure 4.2. The Dome, 1951.
 Figure 4.3. The Land, 1951.
 Cox, *The South Bank Exhibition*, 40 and 42.

In keeping with the Festival’s rhetoric of Britain’s modernizing influences over time, pertaining to science, technology, and industry, the Dome of Discovery further reiterated Britain’s world-wide contributions. The “Commonwealth Links” sub-section of the Land Section showcased “cables and radio-ships-aircraft-railways” that emphasized the concrete links between Britain and the Commonwealth that would facilitate the spread of ideas (like parliamentary institutions). As one guide explained,

the “visual evidence of ... the vast communications system which came into being as a result of British enterprise” aimed to advertise the strongest binding force of the Commonwealth, “common ideas and ideals.”⁶⁵¹ Visitors, for example, could listen to some of the forty-four languages of the Commonwealth through a radio system that showed Britain’s “contribution to the welfare of mankind.” Despite the official narration of the spread of ideas from Britain to other Commonwealth (including non-white) countries, the Dome of Discovery’s exhibits of imperialist enterprise centered on tangible examples of “Commonwealth links.” These scattered references to the Commonwealth at the South Bank site, alongside auxiliary events, did not fulfill the nationalist expectations of Commonwealth officials, or the expectations of various ministers in the Commonwealth, Colonial, and Foreign offices.

* * *

The initial decision for the Festival to emphasize domestic Britain had stemmed from economic retrenchment; the Festival also occurred at a time of decolonization and alterations in Britain’s relationship with Dominions as well as colonies. Such political reconfigurations and uncertainties, alongside economic concerns, became evident in many meetings and correspondence during the planning of the Festival. During the organization of the Festival of Britain, many of the proposals for demonstrating the continued significance of the Empire had been turned down by members of the Commonwealth governments. A growing range of self-governing Commonwealth countries influenced the possibilities for exhibiting the British Empire in the post-war era.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 43. This rhetoric on the benefits of British imperialism in spreading democracy and liberal institutions is echoed in Niall Ferguson’s *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (London: Allen Lane, 2002).

The Festival, however, maintained that Britain persisted as a benevolent world power, and as the center of progress and modernity. It appealed to the ideals of the United States by de-emphasizing colonial inferiority and re-envisioning empire through democratic self-government and economic modernization, as exports of Britain. Even as the Festival masked the violent and destructive consequences of British rule, it also showed the difficulties of portraying a variable and contested empire in the post-war era.

Like the 1951 Festival of Britain, exhibitions held in London prior to the Second World War emerged as demonstrations of “modernity” and its centrality to notions of Britain’s political legitimacy and world power. This modernity, construed as an exclusively Western trait, was debated and imbued with variable meanings. Signs of indigenous modernization and nationalist unrest in India challenged the exclusivity of modernity to Britain at the 1924 Empire Exhibition. The racial inequalities and violence of imperial rule in the inter-war era also led to an unparalleled Indian dissent against the Exhibition. Although the Festival of Britain’s national focus marked a radical change from imperial-centered exhibitions of the pre-war era, members of the Commonwealth laid claims to their own modernity in ways that complicated the planning of the Festival. India and Pakistan, no longer bound to British governance, opposed the Festival as a result of their anger over unequal relations in the Commonwealth and Britain’s exclusive claims to modernity.

CHAPTER SIX: EPILOGUE

In his travel book of 1889, T.N. Mukharji expressed his disconcertment that, despite his position as an elite Indian adviser, observers of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition nonetheless viewed him through his lesser status as a colonized “native.” Approximately forty years later, the Commissioner for the Indian section of the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, T. Vijayaraghavacharya, publicly promoted Indian exhibits as advertisements of India’s political and economic modernization following the First World War. As comprador administrators of the Empire and the exhibitions, both Mukharji and Vijayaraghavacharya viewed exhibits through India’s contemporary imperial status. Their differing outlooks and influences on the exhibitions, however, testify to the significance of historical circumstances to cultural events. Mukharji played a small role in shaping the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, which purported to represent colonial racial difference and economic backwardness. In contrast, Vijayaraghavacharya played a central role in shaping Indian participation in the 1924 Exhibition. As Vijayaraghavacharya worked alongside British and Indian officials, the latter critiqued the Exhibition as a guise for the Raj’s economic exploitation and political injustice.⁶⁵²

The political context of empire in India over time determined the ability of Indian administrators to influence exhibitions in the metropole. With the importance of historicizing exhibitions in mind, this study has examined exhibitionary representations of colonial India as unstable cultural assertions of British power, contextualizing and comparing exhibits and their administration. The historical backdrop of the 1924 British

⁶⁵² Vijayaraghavacharya, *British Empire Exhibition, 1924: Report by the Commissioner for India for the British Empire Exhibition*; Vijayaraghavacharya, “India and the British Empire Exhibition”; Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*.

Empire Exhibition evinced the most obvious instabilities of Britain's colonial project in India until decolonization. By the Empire Exhibition, British administrators could no longer exclude Indian industry and political change whilst emphasizing India's unchanging ethnography and pre-industrial economy. In many of its displays, the 1924 Exhibition continued to distinguish colonial India from exhibits of British modernity. It portrayed an Indian "tradition" of a pre-modern era that would naturalize India's subordination in the Empire. British narratives of Indian spaces also sought to emphasize that signs of modernization stemmed from British intervention. The importance of comprador Indians like Commissioner Vijayaraghavacharya to the Raj, Indian industrial and commercial development, and growing nationalist movements in the inter-war period, however, challenged Britain's alleged ideological, political, and economic dominance over India.

In turn, the 1924 Empire Exhibition displayed Indian entrepreneurship and India's transformed political status through a reformed administration, in which Indian officials and businessmen ran exhibits. As Burton Benedict argues, colonized peoples appropriated exhibitionary images in order to construct separate national identities.⁶⁵³ They also used exhibitions for their own ends. This deliberate use of exhibitions could be seen in 1924 through the participation of Indian businessmen in exhibitionary markets, the administration of Indian officials over provincial sections, and the dissent of Indians who rallied against the Exhibition in order to protest the racial inequalities of empire.

The administrative changes in inter-war India, therefore, created a forum for Indian officials and nationalists to criticize the political and economic inequalities of the Raj. In legislative debates about the 1924 Exhibition, these Indian elites denounced the

⁶⁵³ Benedict, "International Exhibitions and National Identity," 5-9.

“deindustrialization” of the Raj economy and its racially unequal policies, made conspicuous at the time by the Kenya white paper. Influential elites in India, however, did not represent a monolithic entity, but rather a wide range of views within and across nationalist, administrative, and business circles. The reification of images of Indian “tradition” by comprador Indian officials and businessmen conflicted with the protests of the Exhibition leveled by Indian nationalists, along with some official and economic elites.

Debates about India’s participation in the Exhibition show that it was a contested event, shaped by nationalist critiques of the imperial economy and governance as well as the compliance of some Indian elites. Although during the 1924 Exhibition, T. Vijayaraghavacharya publicly celebrated the administrative decentralization of the Indian Pavilion, his *Report* put forth mixed views about his experience serving as the Commissioner. In this *Report*, published after the 1924 Pavilion closed, Vijayaraghavacharya boasted the economic successes of many Indian provinces and their ability to construct exhibits as they wished. He also detailed his frustrations traveling India to entice provinces and states to participate. His difficulties convincing some provinces to fashion exhibits, especially as the political climate of India heated, unraveled official narratives of the Exhibition as manifesting a “Family Party” of empire or a “triumph of cooperation.”⁶⁵⁴ Several states and provinces declined participation entirely, while Indian officials in locales that constructed exhibits faced resistance by nationalists in the government. Rather than depicting Indian acquiescence to a reformed British rule, the Pavilion embodied a plethora of Indian views regarding British governance across comprador, nationalist, and economic standpoints.

⁶⁵⁴ Sundaracharlu, “Madras at Wembley: A Triumph of Cooperation.”

Rooted in the evolving political and economic conditions of empire over time, the exhibitions depicted not only the certainties of empire but the ambiguities and tensions of imperial governance from the later nineteenth century through decolonization. Even in the early stages of British governance in India, exhibitions in London emerged out of colonial anxieties and disputes, and invoked a variety of perspectives on colonial governance. The establishment of Raj governance in 1858 accompanied official attempts to organize “knowledge” about India to better assert political control. Indian spaces at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition distilled India into a series of “traditional” and “different” categories that reinforced imperial dominance but also signaled the insecurities of governance. The carefully engineered representations of India were ambiguous and contested, as visitors and officials alike debated the effects of British imperialism on India.

Even though the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition sought to broadcast a confidence in the hierarchies of empire, it also unraveled the fictionalized portrayals of British governance. The Royal Commission of the 1886 Exhibition, administrators of the Indian section, and visitors to Indian exhibits reflected upon the harmful consequences of British rule on the subcontinent. Not only had competition in the imperial economy caused the degradation of aesthetically-beautiful and unique indigenous artisanal goods; the institutionalization of crafts under the Raj reproduced inauthentic versions of Indian handmade products. Indians who performed their “native crafts” during the Exhibition betrayed colonial authenticity through reproductions of goods made in imperial jails. Public admiration for “authentic” Indian crafts in the industrial metropole denoted the

nostalgia of visitors for what Saloni Mathur calls the “cult of the craftsman.”⁶⁵⁵ At the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, visitors praised “authentic” representations of Indian craftsmanship, deploring the imposition of “Western” ideas and institutions into the arts of the subcontinent. At the same time that visitors observed and consumed India’s “traditional” and “different” cultures, they elevated Indian craftsmanship above Western commodities and industrial products.

The deterioration of Indian crafts under British rule serves as just one example of the many ways in which the exhibitions challenged the perceived benevolence of imperial rule and the hegemony of its discourse. Throughout colonial and post-colonial India, British and Indian elites used notions of Indian “tradition” and “modernity” to legitimize their claims to political authority. Indian “tradition” served as contested terrain, in which both British rulers and Indian nationalists asserted their competing claims to governance in India.⁶⁵⁶ As Indian nationalists of the early twentieth century disputed imperial rule, they politicized various constructs of Indian “tradition” that emerged in the nineteenth century. Indian nationalists argued that only they could guide Indian economic development, including the protection of artisanal industries. They challenged the very definition of Indian “difference,” embracing positive notions of Indian “tradition” and illuminating the exploitive processes of British imperialism. Featuring Indian “tradition” and its contrasts with British modernity, the exhibitions provided a forum to publicize debates over governance in India.

The exhibitions manifested notions of “modernity” and their centrality to the validation of British rule, but this modernity was a variable and contested concept as

⁶⁵⁵ Mathur, *India by Design*.

⁶⁵⁶ McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India*, 6-8.

well. Although exhibitions of the Victorian and Edwardian eras nearly excluded indications of an Indian modernity, inter-war exhibits enabled more nuanced depictions of Indian conditions that demonstrated India's modernization. Even though representations of India at the Empire Exhibition reiterated inter-war economic and political changes, de-emphasizing conceptions of Indian difference, they still situated India within hierarchical categories defined by the West. As a double-edged sword, the inter-war display of Indian industry and political growth disregarded non-Western conceptions and adaptations of modernity.⁶⁵⁷ Exhibits of India in the inter-war period, located within Western trajectories of historical progress, asserted that India had not "caught up" to Britain's modern civilization.

Diverse strands of Indian nationalism challenged these imperial assumptions and the universality of a Western modernity to which India did not fully belong. Most notably, but not only,⁶⁵⁸ through the Indian National Congress and Gandhi's non-violence campaigns, Indian nationalism questioned the objectivity of the Western worldview, and the perceived ownership of the West over "modernity." In the early twentieth century, Gandhi celebrated Indian tradition and rejected the universal status of the European experience. In Gandhi's well-documented repudiation of Western industry, and in turn, British political dominance, he supported the tradition of India's indigenous, handmade

⁶⁵⁷ In *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that histories of India continue to view political modernity there through Western conceptions. This view of India's "transition" into a Western-conceived modernity, in turn, has led to the view of India as "incomplete" and perpetuates colonial discourse that elided India's difference with its weakness. Chakrabarty, instead, views Indian history as a "translation" through its adaptations of Western capitalist modernization, recognizing the nuances, differences, and tragedies of Indian modernity.

⁶⁵⁸ Postcolonial scholarship has argued that, by focusing solely on the Congress, historical narratives work within a narrowly-framed modernist framework and thus ignore more complex versions of Indian nationalism. In particular, they argue for indigenous processes of nationalism, particularly those associated with the subaltern. See: Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*; Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*; Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

industries. Indian craftsmanship, according to Gandhi, exemplified India's "national culture" and offered the only acceptable alternative to Western industrialization.⁶⁵⁹ Gandhi united his movement around the image of the craftsman and the peasant to symbolize that Indian "difference" necessitated the rejection of British governance. His renowned swadeshi movement stressed the replacement of imported machine-made cloth with Indian hand-made cloth. Rather than viewing Indian difference as a reason for colonization, Gandhi and other nationalists used it as a platform for Indian independence.

While Gandhi rejected British economic modernity, other Indian nationalists proclaimed India's ability to adopt and identify with the material elements of the West. Diverse strands of Indian nationalism promoted differing constructions of India's nationhood and its relationship to modernity and tradition. As Partha Chatterjee explains, nationalists demonstrated India's "material" modernity at the same time that they kept "the marks of 'essential' cultural difference so as to keep out the colonizer from that inner domain of national life and to proclaim its sovereignty over it."⁶⁶⁰ Gandhian nationalism preserved and reinstated Indian "tradition" as part of India's "inner domain." Gandhi argued that Indian "difference" necessitated the rejection of the Western experience. Other leaders of the Congress, working more within Western conceptions of modernity, refuted the notion of Indians' inability to promote economic and political progress. They asserted their exclusive ability to promote Indian economic development, including industrialization.⁶⁶¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, who became the first Prime Minister of India, envisioned a fully-independent India as a social democracy. Despite his close

⁶⁵⁹ McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India*, 2-3.

⁶⁶⁰ Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, 26.

⁶⁶¹ Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, and Bipan Chandra, *India After Independence: 1946-2000* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1999), 23-25; Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics, 1915-22*, 41-45; Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*.

relationship with Gandhi, Nehru championed economic development through state ownership of key industries and the development of modern industry and agriculture based on science and technology.⁶⁶²

Exhibitions in the post-colonial era illustrated the desire for India to reconcile its “tradition” with its ability to be “modern.” India’s supposed lack of “modernity” and immobility within “tradition” rendered it incapable of self-rule under British standards, and these imperialist claims continued to affect India after its independence. Indian officials opposed the 1951 Festival of Britain, in part, because it continued to assert Britain’s exclusive claims to modernity. The remnants of imperial-era debates about Indian “tradition,” as well, shaped cultural representations of a post-colonial India. As Saloni Mathur accurately puts it, notions of Indian tradition “continue to reemerge in significant ways and often remain the primary precepts through which post-colonial culture is imaged and staged.”⁶⁶³

The 1982 Festival of India demonstrated the ongoing salience of Indian “tradition” to depictions of the Indian nation-state. As the largest government-sponsored event designed to exhibit India in London since independence, the 1982 Festival advertised India “past and present,” including its historical and contemporary relations with Britain. It incorporated a multitude of public and private exhibitions that were meant to better familiarize Britons, and Indians living in Britain, with India’s culture and economy. From March 22nd to November 14th 1982, the Festival of India hosted events and exhibits that displayed Indian music, dance, art, crafts, science, and technology. As a

⁶⁶² Mukherjee, Mukherjee, and Chandra, *India After Independence: 1946-2000*, 24-25.

⁶⁶³ Mathur, *India by Design*, 167.

form of “cultural diplomacy,”⁶⁶⁴ the Festival also aimed to demonstrate the amicable relations between the two countries (and their prime ministers), even amidst the strains of Cold War politics, and Britain’s revised immigration and citizenship policies, amongst other tensions. The Festival was co-sponsored by the British and Indian governments, and the Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and Indira Gandhi served as patrons. Both governments, alongside museums and cultural organizations, funded major exhibitions and events for the Festival, supplemented by additional funds from private sponsors in both countries.⁶⁶⁵ Britain and India each had a central Festival Committee, respectively the Festival Committee UK and the Indian Advisory Committee. Pupul Jayakar chaired the latter, appointed by Prime Minister Gandhi, and she collaborated with British committees in order to organize many aspects of the Festival.⁶⁶⁶

As an event designed to illustrate India’s “continuity and change,” the Festival showcased an eclectic array of images. It offered a plethora of events that demonstrated the economies and cultures of India’s past, and their continuation in the present. The Festival also, to a lesser degree, promoted Indian scientific and industrial modernity. It fashioned more novel displays of India in the metropole that advertised India’s modern progress in the fields of science and technology.⁶⁶⁷ The Festival’s diverse scenes, for

⁶⁶⁴ K.N. Malik, *India and the United Kingdom: Change and Continuity in the 1980s* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), 242 and 259-260. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, there were many strains on British-Indian relations, including (but not limited to): India’s relations with the USSR, the Sikh response in Britain to Operation Bluestar and tensions regarding Indian diasporas in Britain, and the limits to immigration and citizenship in the 1981 British Nationality Act.

⁶⁶⁵ *Festival of India, March to November 1982, Preliminary Brochure* (November 1981), BL, Mss Eur F215/236; “Festival of India. Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the Festival Trust,” 2 June 1981, BL, Mss Eur F215/147. In Great Britain, the Chairman of the Festival Trust was Sir Michael Walker, former British High Commissioner in India.

⁶⁶⁶ Saryu Doshi, ed., “Introduction,” in *Pageant of Indian Art: Festival of India in Great Britain* (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1983), 5.

⁶⁶⁷ New committees for the Festival were set up in India for the exhibition of science and technology. “The Festival of India. Festival Trust. Visit to London of the Chairman of the Indian Advisory Committee for the Festival,” 29 June 1981, p. 1, BL, Mss Eur F215/147; “Festival of India:

example, included India's "villages and the modern cities; the cottage and handloom industries rubbing shoulders with gigantic mechanised modern industries; the ancient arts and contemporary artists..."⁶⁶⁸ Just as the Festival of Britain demonstrated British modernity in its technological, scientific, and economic progress thirty years earlier, the Festival of India laid India's claim to similar modern achievements. A preliminary brochure for the Festival explained that exhibits would combine images of India in the past and present, and of Indian tradition and modernity: "For India today, the Festival will seek to portray the richness of variety and colour in modern India displaying on the one hand the continuity of her traditional skills in textiles, pottery and folk art, and on the other her remarkable technological achievements."⁶⁶⁹

Most of the Festival exhibitions, however, did not focus on "modern" developments in India. Rather, only three out of about eighty events and exhibitions advertised in the *Festival Programme* demonstrated scientific and technological developments in India.⁶⁷⁰ A vast majority of the Festival events, rather, were associated with India's past and cultural heritage, emphasizing a continuous Indian "tradition." In depicting Indian tradition in a modern environment, Festival events echoed previous

Minutes of a combined meeting of the Festival Committee and Working Committee held at the Arts Council of Great Britain," 4 June 1981, p. 5, BL, Mss Eur F215/147; "Proposal of Book to be Published in Association with the Festival of India in the UK Feb-Sept 1982," BL, Mss Eur F215/144; S. Rangarajan, "When India was the Cynosure of all Eyes," *The Hindu*, 15 May 2009; Bazaz, ed., *Festival of India Publication in the U.K.* (London: Delhi Diary, 1982), BL, Mss Eur F215/236.

⁶⁶⁸ Mohini, ed., "Editors Note," in *Festival of India Publication in the U.K.*, BL, Mss Eur F215/236.

⁶⁶⁹ *Festival of India, March to November 1982, Preliminary Brochure*, BL, Mss Eur F215/236.

⁶⁷⁰ "Programme of Events" in *Pageant of Indian Art: Festival of India in Great Britain*. An official exhibition, "Science in India" at the Science Museum, depicted innovations in space, research, nuclear power, agriculture, and medicine. The National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad constructed an exhibition, "Design in India" at the Commonwealth Institute. The exhibition "traced the historical development of modern Indian design in the fields of industry, transport, consumer goods, graphics and architecture since the early 1940s." The "Medicine and Science in India" exhibition detailed science in India, but only covered the sixteenth century through "the establishment of western science up to the early 20th century."

exhibitions held in Britain of colonial India, which featured cultural performances and “traditional” economic renditions.⁶⁷¹ Despite its resemblance to imperial exhibitions, the Festival praised signs of Indian difference instead of viewing them through colonial inferiority.

The Festival of India portrayed an Indian tradition, reconfigured in the post-colonial era, that legitimized and celebrated Indian “difference” alongside Indian modernity. Festival administrators—Indian (aided by British) scholars, officials, and curators—aimed to dissolve the (neo)imperialistic division of tradition and modernity, and East versus West, by reclaiming these notions and asserting the significance of India’s economic and cultural tradition in the modern world. The Festival had the objective of “emphasising the unique quality of the Indian Civilisation which enables its traditions to carry forward the India of the past into the India of the present and the future.”⁶⁷² Unlike imperial-era depictions of Indian tradition, the Festival organizers aimed to present India “in its own terms.”⁶⁷³ In doing so, they granted Indian tradition legitimacy in a modernized world, dislodging Western contrasts of modernity and tradition that equated the latter with inferiority. As they re-appropriated conceptions historically defined by the West, the exhibitions in 1982 most clearly (though not absolutely) testified to the limitations of a “totalizing” imperialist discourse and provided alternative frameworks for viewing Indian history.

⁶⁷¹ “Programme of Events,” in *Pageant of Indian Art: Festival of India in Great Britain*; Doshi, “Introduction,” in *Pageant of Indian Art: Festival of India in Great Britain*, 6; “Arts Council of Great Britain. Press Notice. The Living Arts of India,” BL, Mss Eur F215/236; Arts Council of Great Britain, *The Living Arts of India: Craftsmen at Work* (London: Gavin Martin Ltd., 1982), BL, Mss Eur F215/236.

⁶⁷² Doshi, “Introduction,” in *Pageant of Indian Art*, 5.

⁶⁷³ Kapila Vatsyayan, “India Presented in its Own Terms,” *Museum* 34, no. 4 (1982): 204.

But the 1982 Festival of India promoted a “totalizing” discourse of its own, that of India’s “unity in diversity,” in which its diverse ethnicities, religions, languages, and regions were unified under the Indian “nation.” In its government-sponsored representations, the Festival offered a distilled image to the Western public of the Indian nation that glorified its diverse, yet unified peoples. As one article explained, the Festival sought to promote “a new understanding of the continuity and change, the unity and plurality of Indian culture, its ability to carry forward the India of the past into the present and the future.”⁶⁷⁴ The very concept of national cohesion in India, nonetheless, remains the subject of debate, as many scholars argue that “unity in diversity” is a hollow claim, masking the violence and volatility amongst India’s varied peoples. As Srirupa Roy argues, however, the cultivation and persistence of this notion of Indian national unity needs more attention.⁶⁷⁵ The assorted, and even oppositional, discourses of the Indian nation during its struggle for independence were molded, after Indian self-rule, into a meta-narrative of “Indianness.” Roy explains that India since 1947 “has been represented in terms of its intrinsic and inalienable subnational diversity—nationhood called up as a mosaic of ethnocultural fragments.”⁶⁷⁶ The production of an “institutional pluralism” entailed the selective inclusion, and exclusion, of certain identities and perspectives through an array of public projects.

The 1982 Festival of India, as an expression of this dominant national discourse, then, formed part of a larger, state-led attempt to define, produce, and perform an

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., 204.

⁶⁷⁵ Srirupa Roy, *Beyond Belief, India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism* (Duke University Press, 2007), 1-4. Roy examines the construction and reproduction of “Indianness” through the film industry, public celebrations, and state-led initiatives of technological, scientific, and industrial growth in the post-colonial era.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., 7.

essential Indianness. The reproduction of this nationhood, through the image of “unity in diversity” at the Festival, contrasted sharply against the contemporary political landscape of India. In the 1970s and 1980s, India witnessed a highly polarized and volatile political climate. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi re-emerged to state power in 1980 after her state of emergency from 1975 to 1977. The Indian state—under the reigning Congress party—endured factions and splits. Not only did the government represent a divided political community, but Indian peoples were a highly fraught “nation in the making.” As one particularly potent example, Sikh separatists in the Punjab, calling for an autonomous state, resorted to terror and violence in the early 1980s. An armed struggle between Sikh militants and the government led, in 1984, to the Indian Army invasion of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Consequently, in the same year, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards. In northern India, retaliation took the form of anti-Sikh pogroms and killings. Though India long suffered from ethnic, linguistic, and other forms of communal conflict, potent religious identities in the 1980s threatened state authority and its assertions of national cohesion.⁶⁷⁷

At the Festival of India, then, administrators carefully painted an ideal portrait of the diverse peoples who constituted the Indian “nation” and their relationship to the state, one that masked the challenges to governmental rule and its ability to foster national unity. In doing so, administrators turned to images of an essential Indian tradition that traversed the boundaries of time and space, exemplified through local villages and artisans, and their various tribal, caste, and linguistic identities. Exhibitions and performances were deliberately grounded in “central concepts which portrayed India—its

⁶⁷⁷ Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 108-114; Mukherjee, Mukherjee, and Chandra, *India After Independence: 1946-2000*, 309-310 and 328-334.

Indian-ness and the creative attitudes embodied in its artistic and cultural manifestations.”⁶⁷⁸ Brian Durrans, who works at the British Museum and helped construct displays for the Festival, viewed the Festival through its production of “an image of India.” The Festival presented an “idealisation of the village, and of the village-based tradition.” Durrans saw the Festival, overall, as “the artistic expression of quintessentially Indian values . . . held to transcend regional variations and aesthetic categories.” The Indian government sought “to balance what it may perceive as a distorted image of its country which highlights mass poverty and the problems of development” with a “counter” image “of India as a ‘special case’, with distinctive spiritual traditions rooted in the continuity of village life; of handicrafts, embodying qualities of pan-Indianness which remain transcendently secure beyond space and time.”⁶⁷⁹

As just one example of this production of an “Indianness,” the Crafts of West Bengal exhibition portrayed Indian tradition as an expression of India’s nationhood. Administrators of the exhibition used depictions of artisanal, local economies to demonstrate that India’s varied peoples remained steeped in an essential tradition, which unified the diverse national community. The reproduction of a “timeless” Indian tradition, used as a counter-image to the West’s modern progress during imperial rule, served in the post-colonial era as a “top down” instrument for asserting national unity at the Festival.

⁶⁷⁸ Doshi, “Introduction,” in *Pageant of Indian Art*, 3-4.

⁶⁷⁹ Briain Durrans, “Handicrafts, Ideology and the Festival of India,” *South Asia Research* 2 (1982): 15-18.

The Crafts of Bengal exhibition, held at the Commonwealth Institute in London, was associated with the Crafts Council of West Bengal.⁶⁸⁰ As an affiliate of the Crafts Council of India, the Crafts Council of West Bengal was established in 1964. The exhibition advertised the Council's efforts to preserve the Indian tradition of hereditary and local crafts and to enhance Indian craftsmen's capacity to compete in a modernized, industrialized market. The Crafts Council aimed to revive village crafts and "make their creation an economically viable proposition in an age of rapid industrialization."⁶⁸¹ At the Crafts of Bengal exhibition, master craftsmen displayed "live" their artisanal skills.

The Crafts of Bengal exhibition imbued local spaces with national meaning, and in a sense, nationalized India's diverse, regional communities. For this exhibition, a "team of connoisseurs and experts" visited villages and rural craft centers to find Eastern Indian handicrafts for display. In guidebooks and official publications, the narratives of festival administrators replaced the voices of Indian artisans themselves, fitting them neatly into an account of India's crafts development, and the timeless traditions that exemplified India's national community. The exhibition publication for the Crafts of Bengal explained the origins of each craft alongside a biography of each craftsman. Wood-block printing onto textiles, for example, had "a long tradition in India." Mohammad Rafiq, a wood block printer, came from a family that "ha[d] been engaged in the traditional art-of-block printing for generations." When detailing the dhokra metal craft, the exhibition publication stated that "the Dhokras are one of the traditionally nomadic Adivasi tribes who have been engaged in the craft of metal casting for

⁶⁸⁰ R.P. Gupta, ed., *Arts of Bengal and Eastern India, Crafts of Bengal, Craftsmen at Work, Crafts to Buy: An Exhibition Organised by the Crafts Council of West Bengal, April 23-May 9, 1982, at the Commonwealth Institute, London* (Calcutta: Crafts Council of West Bengal, 1982), 4.

⁶⁸¹ Gupta, ed., *Arts of Bengal and Eastern India, Crafts of Bengal, Craftsmen at Work, Crafts to Buy*, 3 and 17-29.

centuries.” These craftsmen, according to exhibition authorities, exemplified India’s “ageless beauty.” Their crafts were “an expression of the human spirit in material form”⁶⁸²

At the Crafts of Bengal exhibition, moreover, administrators defined which craftsmen represented an “authentic” Indian tradition, and in turn, the Indian national community. The craftsmen specialized in wood block printing on textiles, solapith work, the dhokra metalcraft, pottery, the conch-shell craft, wood carving from Darjeeling, mat weaving, and sitar making.⁶⁸³ Officials of the Crafts of Bengal exhibition contrasted these “ordinary” artisans with “modern” artisans. The former personified the indigenous processes of Indian tradition, while modern artisans produced a “superficial Indianness” because they remained out of reach for a majority of the population.⁶⁸⁴ The Crafts of Bengal exhibition praised the “ordinary craftsmen” who “[were] embedded in the life of the community.” Like imperial-era exhibitions, this Festival exhibition relied on “experts,” British and Indian alike, to determine which local craftsmen—representing an array of crafts, locales, religions, languages, tribes, and castes—to include in its reproduction of a timeless Indianness.

The unity fostered through Indian “tradition,” however, represented only “an abstraction” at the Festival because, according to Durrans, “in detail, most traditions are particular and regional or local.”⁶⁸⁵ In her book on the production of “traditional” paintings in Orissa for sale to wealthy Indians and foreign tourists, Helle Bundgaard similarly shows that state and institutional discourses on Indian “tradition” sought to

⁶⁸²Ibid., 3 and 15-19.

⁶⁸³ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., 3 and 17-29.

⁶⁸⁵ Durrans, “Handicrafts, Ideology and the Festival of India,” 15-16.

represent an essential Indianness. She argues that in advertisements of Orissan handicrafts, “state and national propaganda placed great emphasis on the pervasiveness of the past with the present. A crucial feature of their discourse is the stress on the unbroken tradition: the abundance of master craftsmen mystically in touch with the spiritual heritage of India.” Bundgaard demonstrates, however, that this “idealised model of the master craftsman” did not resonate with craftsmen themselves, whose production of handicrafts was based on pragmatism.⁶⁸⁶ Similarly, the concept of “unity in diversity” at the Festival relied on rhetoric of inclusion, even as it selectively incorporated and reimagined a set of local, religious, ethnic, and other identities into a national discourse on Indian unity.⁶⁸⁷

The 1982 Festival of India dislodged, and offered new meanings to, depictions of India popularized in the imperial era. Its administrators hoped not only to demonstrate the positive meanings of a continued Indian tradition, but to challenge the alleged exclusivity of the West’s modernity as well. Exhibitions of colonial India had portrayed Indian tradition through its inferior difference, and through the benefits of imperial commercialization. In contrast, the Festival of India sought to legitimize the Indian nation-state through depictions of its timeless tradition. In the post-colonial era, debates about the meanings of “modernity” and “tradition” shaped state-sponsored attempts to represent a unified Indian nation. Exhibitions of Indian tradition in London had,

⁶⁸⁶ Helle Bundgaard, *Indian Art Worlds in Contention: Local, Regional and National Discourses on Orissan Patta Paintings* (Curzon Press, 1999), 39-40. Also see Ravina Aggarwal, *Beyond Lines of Control: Performance and Politics on the Disputed Borders of Ladakh, India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁶⁸⁷ For another specific example of this state and institutional “effort to display the diverse regional artistic forms on a common national platform,” see Purnima Shah, “State Patronage in India: Appropriation of the ‘Regional’ and ‘National,’” *Dance Chronicle* 25, no. 1 (2002): 125-141.

therefore, transformed from demonstrations of India's contrasts with the West under a modernist presence in the colonial period, to examples of India's nationhood.

The Festival of India endorsed India's "tradition" as a staple of its economic viability and national uniqueness. In doing so, it drew upon notions of Indian tradition politicized and disputed in the era of imperial rule. Exhibits featured India's "timeless" tradition as an exemplar of India's nationhood, and advertised public attempts to preserve Indian artisanal crafts in an era of global markets. Administrative narratives attempted to create a sense of unity, through India's diversity, and in doing so, portrayed the diverse regional, linguistic, ethnic, and regional identities in India through a national framework.

Without providing a comprehensive account of the 1982 Festival of India, this epilogue hopes to show that cultural displays, whether constructed by colonial powers or former colonies, serve as mediums for nation and state-building. The Festival of India, like imperial-era exhibitions, served as a vehicle for the invention and reinvention of national identities. In doing so, it accompanied the exclusionary practices of selecting and omitting specific perspectives, identities, and experiences in order to shore up the nation-state. Festival administrators aimed to inculcate an "Indianness"; to perform a nationhood that was both diverse and unified. In doing so, the Festival excluded subversive identities and movements in India, selectively choosing, and reproducing, what it meant to be "Indian."⁶⁸⁸

Exhibitions, then, are part of the constant imagining and re-imagining of nations.⁶⁸⁹ As such, their totalizing discourses often fall apart in the face of alternative and opposing identities, perspectives, and experiences. As idealized constructions of

⁶⁸⁸ Rebecca M. Brown, *Art for a Modern India, 1947-1980* (Duke University Press, 2009), 40-41.

⁶⁸⁹ Corbridge and Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy*, xvii.

nation-states, exhibitions are, in the words of Nicholas Thomas, “project[s]” that remain “localized, politicized and partial.”⁶⁹⁰ Through its official and institutional exhibitions, the Festival of India sought to create and perform a sense of collective belonging, but conflicted with the realities of potent communal divisions in India that challenged state authority. Although Festival administrators framed displays of Indian tradition through an essential national community, this dominant identity may not have resonated with Indian artisans whose crafts were selected for display at the exhibitions. This study, then, argues for the interrogation of cultural technologies of rule over time, bridging the gap of colonial and post-colonial eras.

In doing so, it historicizes exhibitions of India and the shared, conflicting, and contested meanings they put forth from the era of Britain’s “high” imperialism through Indian independence. While recognizing that exhibitions held prior to the Second World War were constructed by and for imperial powers, this study problematizes Western-defined categories depicted within the exhibitions. The power over discourse did not solely rest within colonizers, but was created and contested by colonized peoples. As the agents of oppositional discourse, Indian elites provided alternative narratives for viewing India that challenged the very precepts of imperial rule. Because Britons envisioned a long-standing empire, yet Indians continually contested British rule, each exhibition carried with it the certainties as well as the strains of imperial governance.

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⁶⁹⁰ Thomas, *Colonialism’s Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*, 40-46 and 105.

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