

Joppa George, *Princeton University / International Institute for Asian Studies at Leiden University*

For "Airborne Colony: Culture and Politics of Aviation in India"

Joppa George's research examines the cultural history of aviation in late-colonial India. He shows that aviation, a key part of global culture and commerce, was also crucial to India's transition from colony to nation. George's scholarship brings together existing research on Indian colonial and cultural history with newer trends in studies of technology and colonialism.

George analyzes aviation both as a source of British colonial power in India, and as a resource used by colonial subjects to build an image of India as a modern nation. His account of aviation during the interwar period provides a fascinating juxtaposition of the traditional and the modern. It considers princely gift economies, physical and economic infrastructures, aerial mapping and surveillance, and Himalayan exploration. He draws on a wealth of sources from around the world, range from the content of diplomatic letter pouches, to personal correspondence of gentlemen explorers, to popular accounts of aviation exhibitions, to films and novels featuring planes and pilots.

George will use the Hindle Fellowship to research and write two new chapters for his dissertation, one on the development of airports and aviation infrastructure, and a second on Indian aviation during World War II. In his analysis of airports in India, George will draw on environmental perspectives to examine how aviation accelerated urban development and altered the built environment. The airport itself created a new material environment, erasing the existing occupants of the land and showcasing Modernist architectural styles. This infrastructure also required networks of meteorological stations linked by radio. A second new chapter will examine changing fortunes of airpower in India during World War II. George starts with military aviation in the North-West Frontier Province, where British forces used airplanes to assert control over restless tribes on the Afghan frontier. During the world war itself, India became a source for airpower in the fight against Japan. The war gave rise to an indigenous aircraft manufacturing and repair industry in India, most importantly through the company Hindustan Air Limited.

George's research promises to transform the history of aviation in colonial India. The Hindle selection committee is excited to support Dr. George as he expands his dissertation into a successful monograph.