

The Oxford-Berlin Lecture

Colonial Memory, Multicultural Commemoration

South Asia, Europe and the First World War

Mon 25 April 2022

17:00 hours s.t.

Centre for British Studies
Mohrenstr. 60, 10117 Berlin

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More than three million men of colour were drafted into the armies of Europe during WWI, including one and half million troops from South Asia. Using a range of sources, from archival letters, artefacts, and paintings to contemporary statuary and 'poppy hijabs', this lecture will address some of the complexities of the colonial war experience and how they have been instrumentalised during the centennial commemoration. While the centenary has expanded the nature of war memory, it has also resulted in the sanitisation of the violence of both war and empire. Such a process prompts broader questions: how do we recover the colonial past in a multicultural present, and is it possible to commemorate the war dead without commemorating war itself?

Santanu Das is Professor of Modern Literature and Culture and a Senior Research Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford. He is the author of *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (2005) and *India, Empire and First World War Culture: Writing, Images, and Songs* (2018) and, most recently, a co-editor of *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict* (2021).

Please note: due to changing COVID-19 restrictions, the details and the format of the events are subject to change. For the latest information see our website: www.gbz.hu-berlin.de