

## Working-Class Raj

Focusing on the military men, railway workers, and wives and children of the British working class who went to India after the Rebellion of 1857, *Working-Class Raj* explores the experiences of these working-class men and women in their own words. Drawing on a diverse collection of previously unused letters and diaries, it allows us to hear directly from these people for the first time. Working-class Brits in India enjoyed enormous privilege, reliant on native Indian labor and living, as one put it, “like gentlemen.” But within the hierarchies of the Army and the rail yard, they remained working class, a potentially disruptive population that needed to be contained. Working in India and other parts of the empire, emigrating to settler colonies, often returning to Britain, and all the while attempting to maintain family ties across imperial distances, the British working class in the nineteenth century was a globalized population. This book reveals how working-class men and women were not atomized individuals, but part of communities that spanned the empire and were fundamentally shaped by it. This title is part of the Flip it Open Programme and may also be available Open Access. Check our website Cambridge Core for details.

**Alexandra Lindgren-Gibson** is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Mississippi. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* and has been supported by the Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation, the International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture, and Society, and the University of Rochester’s Humanities Center.

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# Working-Class Raj

*Colonialism and the Making of Class  
in British India*

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Alexandra Lindgren-Gibson  
University of Mississippi



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## Acknowledgments

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When I was growing up, my mom worked as an archivist at the Minnesota Historical Society. She occasionally would have to work on Saturdays and would take me along with her to the reading room. Between grumblings about having to thread the umpteenth microfilm for weekend genealogists, she would pull folders for me to look at. Sitting in a corner of the reading room, I read 1890s farmers' daybooks (very dull, mostly weather), news clippings, and letters. The letters were my favorites. Written by settlers, farmers, and immigrants, even if they didn't have much to say, they still carried with them the illicit thrill of reading someone else's mail and the magic of reaching back into the past. It was memories of these Saturdays that came back to me sitting in the Asia, Pacific, and Africa Collections reading room (whose staff deserves an enormous thanks) at the British Library, reading shelf lists in search of working-class histories. The letters I found there were in so many ways similar to those I had looked at as a child. These were once again the records of people of no particular note, who wrote about the immediate things that mattered to them, and who left their histories behind, even if what remained was fragmented and seldom seen. It never occurred to me that these records would be difficult to find, because I had spent my childhood reading ones just like them. So I would first like to acknowledge and dedicate this book to my mom, Dallas Lindgren, for teaching me to find delight in histories of the ordinary and everyday and that these histories exist if you take the time to look for them.

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