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.
Modern British Histories

Series Editors:
Deborah Cohen, Northwestern University
Margot Finn, University College London
Peter Mandler, University of Cambridge

‘Modern British Histories’ publishes original research monographs drawn from the full spectrum of a large and lively community of modern historians of Britain. Its goal is to keep metropolitan and national histories of Britain fresh and vital in an intellectual atmosphere increasingly attuned to, and enriched by, the transnational, the international and the comparative. It will include books that focus on British histories within the UK and that tackle the subject of Britain and the world inside and outside the boundaries of formal empire from 1750 to the present. An indicative – not exclusive – list of approaches and topics that the series welcomes includes material culture studies, modern intellectual history, gender, race and class histories, histories of modern science and histories of British capitalism within a global framework. Open and wide-ranging, the series will publish books by authoritative scholars, at all stages of their career, with something genuinely new to say.

A complete list of titles in the series can be found at:
www.cambridge.org/modernbritishhistories
Working-Class Raj

Colonialism and the Making of Class in British India

Alexandra Lindgren-Gibson

University of Mississippi
## Contents

*Acknowledgments*  
*Introduction*  
1 *Family Histories and Remaking Class in British India*  
2 *Writing Family Together across Imperial Distances*  
3 *Military Domesticity: Creating Working-Class Worlds in British India*  
4 *Servants in Empire: Wives, Daughters, and Domestic Service*  
5 *Class and Colonial Knowledge: Miseducation for Empire*  
6 *Fragmented Families: Tracing the Afterlives of Working-Class India*  

*Bibliography*  
*Index*
Acknowledgments

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.

This book would not have been possible without the generous support of the following organizations: the University of Rochester’s Humanities Center and Joanie Rubin for having me as a fellow for the 2019–20 academic year; the University of Mississippi’s Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies, College of Liberal Arts, and the History Department; the Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation; the International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture, and Society; the Sexualities Project at Northwestern, Northwestern University’s Buffett Institute, History Department; Chabraja Center for Historical Studies;
Acknowledgments

If I have learned anything over the course of the years I have spent working on this project, it is that no academic work is done alone. Whether excitedly writing home about how I stumbled upon a perfect and perfectly unlikely discovery in the archive, commiserating about my struggle through a chapter that would simply not come together, or realizing that the idea I had been joking about was actually kind of great, my work has been enormously enriched by the help, knowledge, and love of my friends, colleagues, mentors, and family. The research and writing of the book has taken me all over the world, and I want to acknowledge the people who have made the places I have lived, whether for months or years, into homes. Enormous thanks to the friends who I have met and who have taken me in while on research and conference trips and made them greatly enjoyable: Carol Gold, Marianna Potterton, Trang Tran, Ellen Filor (who, along with her family, also falls into the former category and put me up for three fantastic weeks in Edinburgh), Sabrina Rahman, Hilary Ingram, Arunima Datta, and Elizabeth Prevost. In Rochester, New York, thank you to Daniel Rinn, Jean Pedersen, Brianna Theobald, Stewart Weaver, Kate Phillips, and the writing group at the Susan B Anthony Institute. In Chicago and Evanston, Illinois, thank you to Tessie Liu, Ed Muir, Rajeev Kinra, Deborah Cohen, Alex Owen, Blake Smith, Sam Kling, Ian Saxine, Emma Goldsmith, Beth Healey, Rachel Taylor, Marlous Van Waijenburg, Sarah Roth, Ashley Johnson Bavery, Don Johnson, Sally Olson, Sara Jatcko, Rob Winkeler, Katie Gustafson, and especially to Kevin Baker for his brilliant and very last-minute guidance. In Oxford, MS, thank you to Mikaela Adams, Becky Marchiel, Peter Thilly, Eva Payne, Zack Kagan-Guthrie, Frances Kneupper, Theresa Levitt, Marc Lerner, Emily Fransee, Susan Stearns, Anne Twitty, Jared Pack, Jacqueline DiBiasie-Sammons, Kyle G. Fritz, Jonathan Klingler, Miles T. Armaly, Carolyn Freiwald for her Midwestern beers and friendship, Sudeshna Roy for being willing to book a flight at the drop of a hat, and to Tori Brown for forest bathing, gossip, and friendship. And thank you to Michelle Pusari, Karla Hurtley, Jen Coleman, Caroline Manning, and Dave Gibson for being in my life much longer than this book has.