

IMPERIAL AND COLONIAL CURRENCIES

Monetary supply, policy, and circulation, 16th-20th centuries

On 7 June 2024, the Sciences Po Centre for History (Paris) will host a one-day workshop on Imperial and colonial currencies: monetary supply, policy, and circulation, 16th-20th centuries, in collaboration with the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and the University of Geneva. The workshop will bring together young and advanced scholars to discuss the role of money in the building and working of empires. Building on the commonalities and singularities of a wide range of imperial and colonial settings, we aim to reflect on the relevance of the category of imperial currencies. Whether money is a vector of integration for different parts and social groups within the empire, enabling them to tap into world's markets, or whether it reinforces socio-economic boundaries which are at the heart of the empire's politics of difference, is an open question that we hope some contributions will address.

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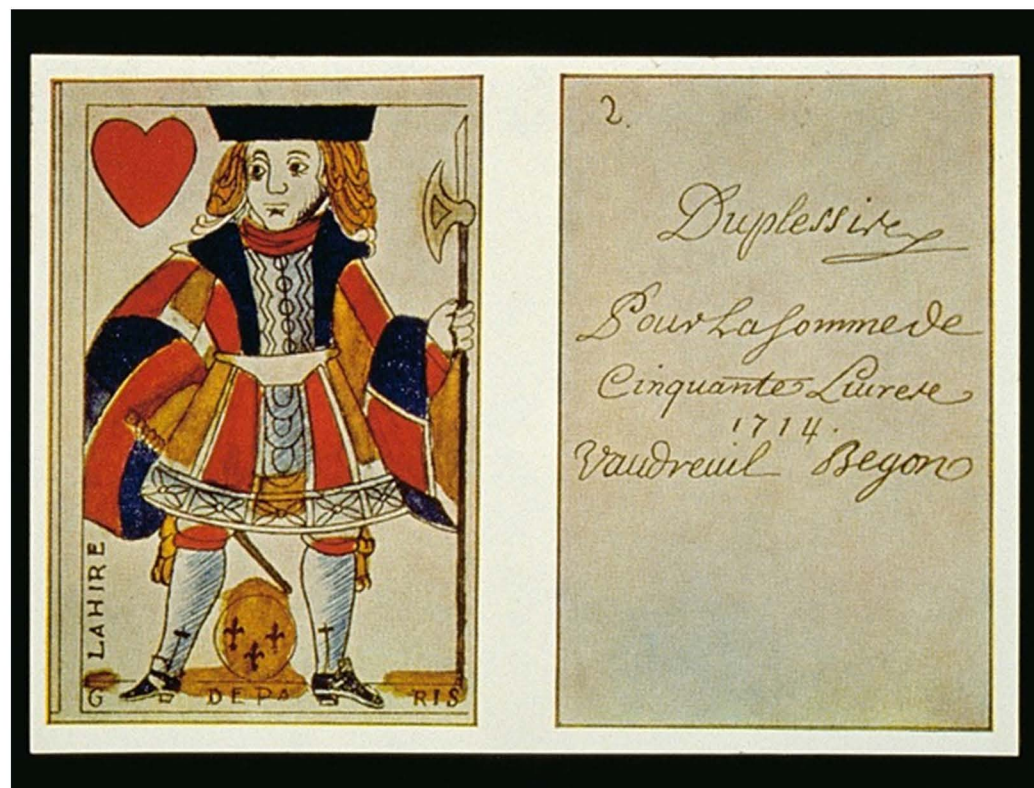
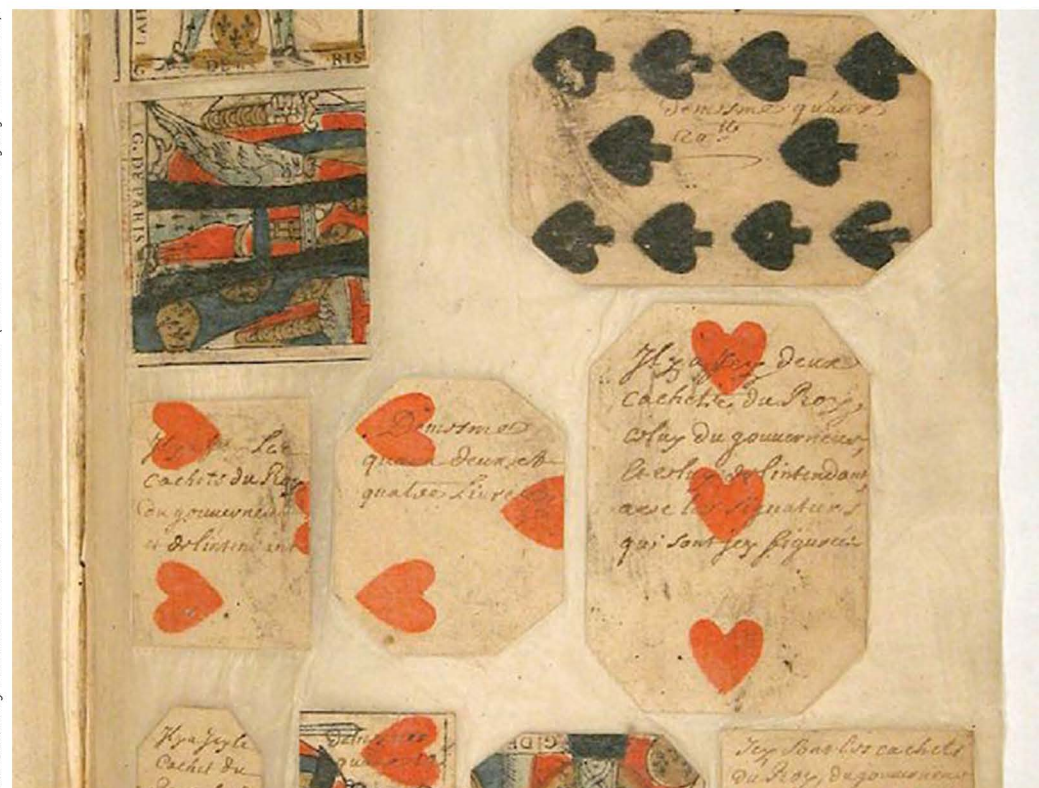
Applications

To apply, please submit a short CV and an abstract of no more than 500 words of your communication in French or in English by no later than 10 December 2023 to imperial.colonial.currencies@gmail.com. We will inform the selected participants by 31 January 2024.

Fundings

Participation is free of charge and refreshments (lunch/diner/coffee breaks/snacks) will be covered. We can provide travel and accommodation stipends. Please indicate in your application whether you would like to apply for travel and/or accommodation support.

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Money does not only belong to economic history nowadays but has become a fruitful field of inquiry for political, social, and cultural history in the last decades. The newfound dynamism of monetary history owes deeply to the traditional area of expertise of numismatics as well as economic anthropology and sociology's renewed interest in the institution of money (Zelizer 1994; Maurer, 2006; Neiburg and Dodd 2019). Beyond the classical "money is a matter of functions four: a medium, a measure, a standard, a store", heterodox economics conceives money as a totalizing social institution as it implies not only socio-economic exchanges but also cultural, symbolic, and moral meanings, binding its users together in debt relationships and releasing them from it (Théret 2008, Alary et al. 2016). At the junction of these different perspectives are the issues of power structures and economic change since money has implications for wealth distribution and authority across time and space (Cohen 2015).

Since the 1990s, scholarship has identified money as one of the devices used by diverse political entities to exert control over territories, especially by nation-states (Gilbert and Helleiner 1999, Helleiner 2003). Recent collaborative projects have questioned the role of money in colonial contexts since antiquity (Kemmers and Myrberg Burström 2022). The collective volume *Monetary Transitions* (Pallaver 2022) envisaged money as a lens through which to analyze certain dimensions of the social and economic impact of colonialism on African societies and institutions. Compared to these scales of government, less attention has been paid to the role of money in the formation process of different types of empire. Even in this perspective, empires are too often reduced to modern colonial empires (Helleiner 2002; Narsey 2016).

We argue that encompassing a wider range of political forms of territorial dependencies going beyond colonies could bring new insights into the working of money, but also of state-empires. Indeed, empires usually dominated directly or indirectly and to a greater or lesser degree colonies, tributary states, dominions, protectorates, or coastal factories for instance (Adas 1998). Following Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, empires are indeed "large political units, expansionist or with a memory of power extended over space, polities that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people" (2010). This definition offers an attractive framework to reflect on monetary multiplicity and heterogeneity which are decisive features of imperial monetary configuration (Kuroda 2020). This workshop emphasizes the political dimension of money, as states slowly seized money, making it a sovereign matter. Economists indeed support the existence of different configurations and standards of monetary sovereignty throughout history (Blanc 2002). Yet, while they expose the singularities of imperial sovereignty, historians less often use currencies to capture this concept (Benton 2001, 2010; Wilson and Dilley 2023). The link between money and law reaches far beyond the issues of sovereignty. What role money played in the shaping of pluralistic legal imperial orders - to treat different groups according to different statuses and rights - remains an open-ended question (Benton and Ross 2013, Dewar 2022).

Studying imperial and colonial configurations through the lens of money offers three advantages. First, it allows us to think about the working of expansionist political entities which recent scholarship views as loose, geographically imprecise, and encompassing multiple differently legally defined dependencies which were always only partially controlled by the metropole (Heuschert 1998; Benton 2010; Lignereux 2017). Second, money brings the constitutive, violent, and unequal economic dimension at the heart of empires' history (Cogneau 2023). Whether money is a vector of integration for different parts and social groups within the empire, enabling them to tap into world's markets, or whether it reinforces socio-economic boundaries which are at the heart of the empire's politics of difference, is an open-ended question that we hope some contributions will address. Third, our intention is to adopt an "on-site" perspective on imperial and colonial monetary dynamics without isolating the dominated imperial peripheries but rather replacing them within different and overlapping imperial, regional, trans-imperial, and global monetary scales (De Luca 2016; Gardner 2023). In particular, as New Imperial History emphasizes, the co-constructed relationship between the metropolises of empires and the imperial peripheries deserves close attention, including monetary dynamics. When intently observed, imperial territories reveal themselves as laboratories of monetary experimentation sometimes steered from the metropole, sometimes devised "on the ground" to address urgent monetary needs (Desbarats, 2021). Focusing on daily practices of money might enable us to better apprehend the workings of imperial and colonial societies, people's agency, and their constantly enacted and renegotiated relationship with imperial powers (Guyer 1999; Pallaver 2015 ; Jambu 2021 [A], 2021 [B]). Empires created money and often set its value, gave legal tender to some means of payment, and delineated their geographical and socio-economic scope of circulation, but did they issue imperial currencies? Did contemporaries (civil servants, economists and political philosophers, merchants, bankers, imperial and colonial elites, and money users in general) conceive the currencies circulating in the dominated peripheries of empires as imperial currencies? This workshop strives to address these questions and reflect on the relevance of the category of imperial currencies alongside that of colonial currencies.

The workshop welcomes papers about money in imperial and colonial settings around the globe from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. The objective is to bring together a wide range of different imperial and colonial monetary experiences across time and space to think about singularities and commonalities (Richards 1987; Pamuk 2000; Barreyre 2014; Barth 2016 ; Hongzhong, Qiao et Xu 2018 ; Garg 2019 ; Volckart 2020 ; Pravilova 2023). The sixteenth century witnessed not only the formation of European overseas empires (Cardim et al. 2012; Do Paço, 2019), but also the rise of the global economy of which the first global commodities were gold, silver, and copper, whose global circulations were notably driven by the demand for commodity-money from the East (Von Glahn 1996; Flynn, Giráldez and Von Glahn 2003). The twentieth century fall of empires and decolonization processes also involved monetary stakes. Newly independent nation-states introduced national territorial currencies or currency unions while they were also subjected to external monetary pressures, sometimes resolving to foreign currency pegs and partial or full currency substitution.

Themes and questions

The workshop invites participants to address the following themes and questions. Participants are not limited to the below proposals, however, we welcome submissions around:

Monetary sovereignty. Can money, as a sovereign matter, provide some insights into the layered and impermeable imperial sovereignty?

The materiality of imperial and colonial currencies. Does the materiality of money items inform us of the realm of symbolism attached to imperial and colonial rule and its uses by different social groups?

Institutions in charge of imperial and colonial monetary policy. How did specific institutions (currency boards, banks) emerge, and how did they operate and influence each other?

The creation process of imperial and colonial currencies. How were imperial and colonial currencies designed, produced, and transported and what was the decision-making process at different levels and in different places of the empire?

The uses of imperial and colonial currencies. How did different groups of users on the ground adopt, adapt, or refuse imperial and colonial currencies? To what extent can colonial currencies be seen and used as imperial currencies?

Monetary problems and crises. Were there monetary problems specific to imperial settings? How did the imperial authorities as well as monetary users address them?

Monetary history of thought. How did contemporaries think, write, and debate about money in relation to empire-state building, imperial and colonial ventures, and the ruling of peripheral dependencies? How did ideas, knowledge, and techniques about imperial and colonial currencies circulate within and between empires?

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