

VISUAL CULTURAL PRACTICES OF POSTCOLONIAL ELITE SCHOOLS IN GLOBALIZING CIRCUMSTANCES

PRÁCTICAS CULTURALES VISUALES DE LAS ESCUELAS DE ÉLITE POSTCOLONIALES EN CIRCUNSTANCIAS GLOBALIZADORAS

PRÁTICAS CULTURAIS VISUAIS DE ESCOLAS DE ELITE PÓS-COLONIAIS EM CIRCUNSTÂNCIAS DE GLOBALIZAÇÃO

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Abstract

In this article the author reports on the matter of the contemporary management and conservation of histories in the visual domains of three postcolonial elite school sites: Old Cloisters in Barbados, Rippon College in India, and Straits School in Singapore. These schools form part of a 5-year, 9-country study of postcolonial elite schools in globalizing circumstances—a flash point of articulation between these schools and profound change. The article turns on this fundamental fact: that these schools, which are the products of societies marked historically by British colonial and imperial encounters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the first half of the twentieth, are now driven forward by new energies associated with marketization, neoliberalism and globalization as these countries lurch forward unevenly towards a postdevelopmental era. This turn towards neoliberal globalization has precipitated radically new needs, interests, desires, capacities and competitive logics among the middle class and upwardly mobile young and their parents in each of these societies that then press powerfully onto these elite schools, and their cultivated pasts as they reside in school anthems, flags, emblems, banners and rituals of assembly, formal dress and decorum. All of this is taking place in the glow of digitalization as these schools increasingly move online locating themselves in photo and video-sharing websites such as YouTube, Facebook and Flickr as well as websites that each individual school is creating to consecrate school heritage. In what follows, then, the author calls attention to the theoretical significance and practical dimensions of the work that these select schools are doing on their rich heritages and historical archives in response to the new demands of globalization and transforming educational markets.

Keywords: Postcolonial; Elite Schools; Ornamentalism; Globalization; Transnational; Educational Market.

Resumen

En este artículo, el autor informa sobre el tema de la gestión contemporánea y la conservación de las historias en los dominios visuales de tres escuelas de élite poscoloniales: Old Cloisters en Barbados, Rippon College en India y Straits School en Singapur. Estas escuelas forman parte de un estudio de 5 años y 9 países sobre las escuelas de élite poscoloniales en circunstancias de globalización, un punto crítico de articulación entre estas escuelas y un cambio profundo. El artículo gira en torno a este hecho fundamental: que estas escuelas, que son el producto de sociedades marcadas históricamente por los encuentros coloniales e imperiales británicos de los siglos XVIII y XIX y la primera mitad del siglo XX,

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ahora están impulsadas por nuevas energías asociadas con la mercantilización. , el neoliberalismo y la globalización a medida que estos países avanzan de manera desigual hacia una era posdesarrollista. Este giro hacia la globalización neoliberal ha precipitado necesidades, intereses, deseos, capacidades y lógicas competitivas radicalmente nuevas entre la clase media y los jóvenes con movilidad ascendente y sus padres en cada una de estas sociedades que luego ejercen una poderosa presión sobre estas escuelas de élite y sus pasados cultivados a medida que avanzan. residen en los himnos escolares, banderas, escudos, pendones y rituales de asamblea, vestimenta formal y decoro. Todo esto está ocurriendo en el resplandor de la digitalización a medida que estas escuelas se mueven cada vez más en línea y se ubican en sitios web para compartir fotos y videos como YouTube, Facebook y Flickr, así como en sitios web que cada escuela individual está creando para consagrar el patrimonio escolar. En lo que sigue, entonces, el autor llama la atención sobre el significado teórico y las dimensiones prácticas del trabajo que estas escuelas selectas están haciendo sobre sus ricos patrimonios y archivos históricos en respuesta a las nuevas demandas de la globalización y los mercados educativos transformadores.

Palabras clave: Poscolonial; Escuelas de élite; ornamentalismo; globalización; transnacional; Mercado Educativo.

Resumo

Neste artigo, o autor relata a questão da gestão contemporânea e conservação de histórias nos domínios visuais de três escolas de elite pós-coloniais: Old Cloisters em Barbados, Rippon College na Índia e Straits School em Cingapura. Essas escolas fazem parte de um estudo de 5 anos em 9 países sobre escolas de elite pós-coloniais em circunstâncias globalizantes – um ponto crítico de articulação entre essas escolas e uma mudança profunda. O artigo gira em torno deste fato fundamental: que essas escolas, que são produtos de sociedades marcadas historicamente pelos encontros coloniais e imperiais britânicos dos séculos XVIII e XIX e da primeira metade do século XX, são agora impulsionadas por novas energias associadas à mercantilização , neoliberalismo e globalização à medida que esses países avançam desigualmente em direção a uma era pós-desenvolvimentista. Essa virada para a globalização neoliberal precipitou necessidades, interesses, desejos, capacidades e lógicas competitivas radicalmente novos entre a classe média e os jovens ascendentes e seus pais em cada uma dessas sociedades que então pressionam poderosamente essas escolas de elite e seus passados cultivados à medida que avançam. residir na escola hinos, bandeiras, emblemas, estandartes e rituais de assembleia, traje formal e decoro. Tudo isso está ocorrendo no brilho da digitalização, à medida que essas escolas se movem cada vez mais online, localizando-se em sites de compartilhamento de fotos e vídeos, como YouTube, Facebook e Flickr, bem como sites que cada escola individual está criando para consagrar o patrimônio escolar. A seguir, então, o autor chama a atenção para o significado teórico e as dimensões práticas do trabalho que essas escolas selecionadas estão fazendo em suas ricas heranças e arquivos históricos em resposta às novas demandas da globalização e transformação dos mercados educacionais.

Palavras-chave: Pós-colonial; Escolas de Elite; ornamentalismo; globalização; Transnacional; Mercado Educacional.

Introduction and Context

“I entered Old Cloisters High School for the first time in September 1944 on the bar of my father’s bicycle. Head Teacher of Canterbury Boys’ Elementary School at the time, my father was a great lover of history, a gene that I apparently inherited from him. As we passed through the Magnolia Street gates, he said to me, ‘I say to you what Sir Francis Drake said to his troops as he prepared to attack the Spanish town of Porto Bello: I have brought you to the treasure house of the world, the rest is up to you’” (Old Cloisters Alumnus).

In the quote above taken from a speech given by one of the alumni of Old Cloisters High School in Barbados (Bledsoe Edith), one gets the sense of the shock and awe that elite colonial educational institutions in the island generated at a time when members of the gentrified working class were beginning to enter them in the 40s and 50s, when these institutions were still the preserve of the planter-mercantile elite. The father in this story, an elementary school teacher, delivers his son to the door of Cloisters (the so-called “Eton of the West Indies,” then predominantly a zone of exception for the white planter mercantile class) and peddles away, not daring to enter. What were the objects and possessions of this school that generated such awe? What were material elaborations in the visual domain and social aesthetics of the school (as MacDougall [1999] describes them with respect to the Doon School in India) that in fact echo into the present of similar schools constructed in the high colonial period of the British Empire around the globe? How are these postcolonial elite schools now responding to globalization and the tremendous pressure of the new transnational education markets as new education actors enter the scene such as the 5000 plus IB schools (Fabian, Hill, & Walker, 2019) established in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean in the past two decades?

In what follows, I want to describe some of the “tangled historicities” (Clifford, 2012, p. 425) that are registered in the visual and iconographic domains of three of the schools in a 5-year, 9-country international study on “elite schools in globalizing circumstances” that I conducted with colleagues from India, Singapore, South Africa and Australia and my graduate students who hail from India, Kenya, Turkey, China and Chile and the United States. The schools - Old Cloisters (mentioned in the quotation above), Straits School and Rippon College - are gold standard institutions in Barbados, Singapore, and India, respectively. They are all over 200 years old and were established during the high point of British colonialism. This “high point” period covers an arch of British domination of these 3 societies that extends from the second half of the eighteenth century to the first half of the twentieth - just prior to independence in India, Singapore and Barbados. This is a point of departure for this study in that the period witnesses the erection and elaboration of facsimiles of British institutions - schools,

hospitals, courts, etc. in these former colonies). As such, they each harbor features of cultural bequeath or cultural retention in their visual domains - their architecture, emblems, crests, flags, bunting, portraits, school songs etc. - that emulate the British public-school model. These three schools are therefore selected from the wider study because they represent such profound examples of the imprint of the British colonial past and the dynamic cultural contradictions that persist into the present. I maintain in what follows that it is by giving attention to the active dimensions of what is too often overlooked and commonly understood as the dead, inert life and objects of these schools that, paradoxically, we might in fact see more deeply into the contradictions of the living present.

In this regard, I look closely at what postcolonial elite schools in our international study are doing with their historical archives, preserved cultural objects, architecture, emblems, mottos and their school curricula (increasingly now lifting this entire ornamental furniture online) as they martial these cultural resources at the crossroads of profound change precipitated by globalization and attendant neoliberal imperatives. This change is articulated across the whole gamut of global forces, connections, and aspirations. And, it is in relation to and through these dynamics that postcolonial elite schools must now position and reposition themselves - acting and intervening in and responding to new globalizing circumstances that often cut at right angles to the historical narratives and the very social organization of these educational institutions linked to England.

Globalizing developments have precipitated efforts on the part of these schools to mobilize their rich heritages and pasts as a material resource and not simply as a matter of indelible and inviolate tradition. This is a process that I am calling, after Cannadine (2001), “burnished ornamentalism” or the imbuing of cultural objects and practices with the particular cultural and ideological work of mobilizing school identities in fraught present times. History, then, I maintain in this context, cannot be reduced to the realm of epiphenomena, of codified narratives, consolidated pasts and securely linear school chronologies. Instead, drawing on scholars such as Benjamin (1968), Bhabha (1994), Hobsbawm (1998), Cannadine (2001), Hall (1990), and Said

(1993, 1994), I look at the way in which postcolonial school histories and cultural inheritances are “active in the present” and the way in which schools in India, Barbados and Singapore are adroitly and selectively managing their school identities in the light of globalization. The results of these interventions are not guaranteed. They often run up against the revolution of rising expectations of school youngsters and their parents, the taste for global cultures and global futures indicative of the global ambitions of the young, and the pressures of alumni and other stakeholder interests which must be navigated. This globalizing pressure lurks in the environment of postcolonial elite schools engaged in class making processes in changing times. This pressure is scribbled into transactions of the present with the past, in the processes of consecration of the dead objects and high-watermarks of the high colonial period that still reside in many of these schools as they come into collision with present circumstances defined by globalization and neoliberalism. By pressure I am not only talking about a negative weight of an external kind, but of currents of change, volitional energies of class subjects that generate contradictory infrastructural effects, breaks and fractures—revealed often in hybrid and cabalistic signatures or registers in the visual landscape of physical structures, practices and objects that are part of the cultural inheritance and cultural production of these schools.

We believe now that schools, like Cloisters of Barbados, Straits of Singapore, Rippon College of India, cauldrons of class making, are entering a new era defined by globalizing circumstances. These schools are coming under new pressures, new circumstances that challenge their consolidated institutional narratives and their present existential reality set against glorious pasts. These schools are at an awkward juncture of history and the present as new institutional actors arrive on the educational scene, making a play for this stream of high achieving students and their tuition-paying capacity and resources. It is this conjuncture in which new institutional energies are being roughly grafted onto traditional forms, where history and consecrated objects are coming under tremendous volatility, that I seek to address in this chapter.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In Section One, I foreground three vignettes to draw out the present visual context of these schools and the working tension

between past and present circumstances. The vignettes are intended to help call the reader into the visual domains of the schools under pressure of globalizing change. Culling scenarios from our fieldwork in the domains of visual culture at Old Cloisters, Straits School and Rippon College, I foreground the operationalization and the fraught nature of the use of history and tradition in these settings, what I have called ornamentalism above. In Section Two, I discuss more specifically what ornamentalism means and explore theorization for understanding the manipulation of historical narratives and cultural heritages by our research schools. Finally, Section Three addresses the matter of the postcolonial discontinuities attendant on the contradictions and the blessed ironies that emerge from these postcolonial elite schools' manipulation of cultural retentions from the high colonial period.

Section One: Three Vignettes

Vignette I

Our Barbados team of researchers at Old Cloisters were invited by some of the sixth form students to view an extraordinary transaction of the current students with the past not only of their school but the island. We were led into the hallowed space of the assembly hall of Old Cloisters; a space, as the school's historian, Tom Cross, notes where the school's ornamental and cultivated past—its emblems, its plaques listing the names of the prestigious Barbados Scholarship holders and the portraits of its dead, white, British school masters going back to 1733—beams down from on high onto the school body comprised largely of Afro Barbadian youngsters. Picture this layered scene of images latent with allusions to the colonial past, trophies of the present, and the iconography and high-water marks of the British public school in the postcolonial setting. But look again! This hall normally reserved for formal gatherings—morning assembly, the hosting of “speech day” in which the island's dignitaries, school officials, alumni and the parents congregate to celebrate the students' achievements and the continued success of the school—was now hosting something else. As a sign of the times, it is here that contemporary students chose to stage a modeling event engaging with their past and the ethnic history of the school in a form of self-orientation (Potuoglu-Cook, 2006) as they signal their interests in exotic futures—modeling over the traditional career paths of lawyering or doctoring! It was a striking scene of hybridity as the models dressed in traditional costumes of many different ethnic groups—Chinese, Yoruba, Scottish, Native American—strutted across the dais, as if they were on a catwalk. As the models walked by, a large-size version of the Old Cloisters school crest featuring two lions with raised paws provided an impressive backdrop affixed to the wall behind them—a powerful reminder of past glories and future hopes. Here, too, the school crest, served as an ironic backstop as the student audience made up of the models' peers responded with a mixture of delight and

orientalist curiosity, seeing their school friends as models of something alluring drawn from the circulation of images in the virtual domain.
(Fieldnotes, Round Two Visit to Old Cloisters, Barbados)

Vignette II

Our arrival at Rippon College in India brought us to an interface of the present and the past. Like Old Cloisters, Rippon College is a site of curation, but on a much grander scale—121 acres of well-manicured land as opposed to 13 in the Old Cloisters' case. We came in off the dusty streets of Ripon City—busy with tuk-tuks, hucksters selling their ware, and the unending and undefined lanes of traffic—into the pastoral and orderly quiet of Rippon College. Entering from the streets into Rippon College grounds was a very noticeable transition from the boisterous rough and tumble of the thoroughfare outside its walls marked by evidence of poverty and deprivation to the extraordinarily disciplined and beautifully preserved space of this elite school full of markers of cultural endowment and refinement. Reconnoitering the grounds an extraordinary image stood out, a very modern looking fighter plane (MiG-23?) installed like a piece of sculpture in front of the Indo-Saracenic style administration building—representative of the hybrid colonial-indigenous style of architecture that defines some of the most important buildings in India erected during British rule. Here the fighter jet, gift of the Indian military in acknowledgement that the school produces many of its elite military figures and symbol of soaring modernity, is integrated into a landscape full of props and signage underscoring the school's hallowed past. As sculpture, the modernity of the fighter jet is modulated and toned and recruited as a displayable museum piece, underscoring like the lions one finds on the crests, emblems and flags of these schools, the school's patina of distinctiveness and its long relief of achievement. In the assertion of worldly greatness the discursive work of the jetfighter-as-sculpture transforms this iconic modern symbol into a historical pillar and marker.
(Fieldnotes, Round Two Visit to Rippon College, India)

Vignette III

In the Round 1 fieldwork at Straits School in Singapore, our researchers were given a school tour that began in the old block where year 1-4 classrooms reside. It is also in the old block where some of the most rich and intense displays of colonial history of the school are embedded. We were brought to the administration office. On our way to a conference room we walked past a passageway where old photos of past principals were hung up on the walls. The photos of the principals were arranged in a linear and chronological manner, from colonial to a postcolonial moment. The postcolonial moment was apparent because it was when local Chinese² principals were appointed. During the colonial period, all the principals were British.

²The Chinese principal alluded to in this vignette was appointed after independence in the 1965. While there is historical evidence of movement of Chinese to Singapore Island as early as the tenth century, the majority of the migration of Chinese to the island state was in the 19th century, after the founding of Singapore as a free port and British colony in 1819. This influx was driven by heavy demand for unskilled and skilled labor as the new colony began to be built out under British colonial administration. The majority of these nineteenth century Chinese immigrants came from China's southern provinces of Kwangtung and Fukien and entered Singapore under British colonial rule. Ethnic Chinese now constitute the majority (75.9 percent) of Singapore's population (See Kwa & Kua, 2019; Mathews, 2018; Tong,

(Fieldnotes Round One Visit to Straits School, Singapore)

Each of these three vignettes highlights a depth of cultural retention of powerful symbolic objects, forms and practices associated with British public-school order that reside in the postcolonial settings of Old Cloisters, Straits School, and Rippon College. But the vignettes poignantly foreground, as well, active usage of these inheritances and new purposes and lines of direction associated with these schools, building out paths to globalization for their young. In the next section, I take up the issue of the theoretical significance of the present usage of this symbolic order of cultural retentions at these postcolonial elite schools and point to the practical cultural work of identity making in which this accumulation of symbolic capital is deeply invested.

Section Two: Understanding the Work of History as a Form of Ornamentalism

The social world is accumulated history (Bourdieu 1986, p. 241).
If there is no suitable past, it can always be invented (Hobsbawn, 1998, p. 5).

The vignettes foregrounded in the previous section help the author to underscore and build on the theoretical understanding of the work of history. I seek to expand this discussion further here in order to explore the particular work that our research schools are doing with their pasts in the present. This takes on sharpened significance given the profound enmeshment of our schools in the colonial order elaborated by the British imperial system. On this topic, the writing of David Cannadine is particularly helpful. In his theory of “ornamentalism” Cannadine (2001, p. 120) maintains that hegemonic orders are choreographed and that the maintenance and renewal of class and racial relations in such orders are accompanied by tremendous investment in symbolic capital and its organization and disposition. Cannadine points specifically to the hegemonic work of anthems, honors, plaques, titles, regalia, costumes, uniforms, emblems, and standards in creating a graded but unifying system of references that integrated all subjects in the periphery and the core alike into the British empire. As Cannadine notes: “the British honours system...tied together the dominions of settlement, the Indian

2018).

Empire, and the tropical colonies in one integrated, ordered, titular, transracial hierarchy that no other empire could rival” (2001, p. 90). In this graded order it could be argued not only that “all knew their place,” but many competed for elevation of status and value. The concept of ornamentalism echoes and builds on ideas developed in the work of postcolonial scholars such as Edward Said (1979, 1983, 1994, 1999) and Eric Williams (1950, 1966). These scholars argued that colonial rule was articulated in the elaboration of a stratified cultural order (not simply a political and economic one), pointing further to the transfer of capitalistic and competitive energies deep into the cultural sphere. In this sense, as Williams (1950) argued these schools are cauldrons of class making, building out from their rituals, their cultural patrimony, and their high stakes educational practices records of accomplishment that are second to none in their capacity to shore up social elite class formation in their respective societies.

Cannadine’s theory of ornamentalism is very helpful in our attempts to understand developments in postcolonial elite schools. But I seek here to provide further amplification and illustration. I give special attention to what is often ignored as ritual and routine and what is also often set aside as the dead and inert life of the object world of school. I argue instead that, counterintuitively, close evaluation of the usage of these inherited forms might help us better understand their dynamic and at times contradictory deployment in the present. Thanks to the work of scholars such as Harry Harootunian (*History’s Disquiet*), Walter Benjamin (*Theses on the Philosophy of History*), and others we have come to a better understanding of the living work of history repressed in both gleeful and ironic practices of class making being conducted in contemporary postcolonial institutions. We can speak to the plurality of presences as Stuart Hall calls the crush of contradictory cultural heritages that play through the visual domain of new world systems which our research schools represent. Cannadine (2001) echoes these understandings in his work on “ornamentalism” examining the cultural history of the usage of imperial emblems, iconography, regalia and other forms to create status value and distinction as well as loyalty to the imperial order. I seek to understand this development as a process of what might be called “burnished ornamentalism.” I understand such ornamentalism as a set of practices that is profoundly linked to the

constant recruiting of class subjects and the project of class making in the uncertain contemporary competitive environment in which globalization continues to place enormous pressure on these old institutions now having to vie for market share and cultural dominance more vigorously than they have had to in the past. Here, I call attention to the active work on history—on cultural inheritance and its constant revivification and consecration—conducted by our research schools. This is a process that involves three key practices: a) selective emphasis or active choice work, b) Janus-like modifications, and c) online branding. I elaborate on these below.

Selective Emphasis

First, there is the practice of “selective emphasis” in which traditions are subject to active choice work. This is the idea drawn from what Cannadine calls “the construction of affinities” (2001, p. xix) and that Edward Said suggests is a process of binding a culture “affiliatively” (Said, 1983, p. 25). Choice work involves processes of strategic refinement in which our research schools elect to retain aspects of the bequests of the “metropolitan model” (Jemmott, 2006, p. 28), while rejecting or abandoning other features of the same symbolic system. For example, while Old Cloisters, in the last two decades, has abandoned the old Oxford and Cambridge GCE (General Certificate of Examination used for matriculation into these elite universities in England) for local and regional examinations administered by the Caribbean Examination Council³, the school still holds firmly to the trove of inherited symbols, flags, bunting, crests that are borrowed from the heraldic traditions enshrined in the English public schools like Eton and universities such as Cambridge. On the other hand, Straits School in Singapore, has for several years requested that the Cambridge Examination Board create a special exam for Singapore A-level students that is reputed to be more difficult than Cambridge’s regular matriculation exam established for British

³ Kent Greene, principal of Ardent Arbors, rival school to Old Cloisters in Barbados, maintained in our interview with him that Old Cloisters was “dragged kicking screaming” into changing their examinations from the Oxford and Cambridge Examinations Boards to the Caribbean Examinations Council. Indeed, according to him, for the first few years the percentage of passes for Old Cloisters’ students in these regional/national exams slipped when compared to their extraordinary success in the Oxford and Cambridge GCE exams of previous years.

students. Straits School underscores its prowess every year by getting more students to matriculate into Oxford and Cambridge than do Eton and Harrow. The paradigmatic exercise of placing specific animals on emblems, crests, banners, and flags (as is noted in the Vignette I above featuring the cultural inheritances of Old Cloisters) is therefore ratified. The lion is chosen from nature and from the archive or list of all possible animals to represent the school's sense of ascendancy and competitive spirit—accenting the distinctive qualities of strength, perseverance and conquering will associated with the king of beasts. Our research schools are therefore able to assert two things at once: participation in popular efforts to re-conceptualize identity in the now more nationalistically assertive post-independence era in Barbados, Singapore and India while foregrounding an insistence on drilling down on the remarkable history of excellence and achievement linked to the metropolitan paradigm of elite schooling.

Janus-like Modifications

A second feature of the application of ornamentalism is the Janus work or double logic associated with the institutional use of these symbols whereby they help to organize and concentrate identities in the present by looking back to the past. Walter Benjamin had made this association with respect to Paul Klee's painting, the *Angelus Novus*, the "angel of history," who appears to move forward to the future even as he looks back buffeted by accumulation of tradition and the past (Benjamin 1968, p. 257). Schools such as Rippon College and Straits School are creatures of the past and of the present. Their identities are secured by drawing on their extraordinary vaults of history and symbolism.

We are reminded of this relationship as one enters the school campus at Straits. This complex is ultra modern in comparison with a school like Old Cloisters. Straits' architectural construction invokes late international style, emphasizing clear geometric lines, the use of lots of glass and concrete, and a deep sensitivity to the environment and landscaped surroundings. But coupled with this demonstration of modernization, Straits reverentially maintains an eternal shrine to its British colonial founder in the atrium at the entrance of the school's 1-4 complex. The patriarch's bust is surrounded by daily

fresh-cut flowers and is the most prominent object in a space where many of the school's past leaders and alumni have portraits on the wall—a living gallery of great achievers to remind the present students of the core values of excellence that define the school.

Online Environments

The third feature of the elite school's deployment of ornamentalism is linked to a rising use of dynamic online environments to represent the school brand. Each of these schools has, within the last decade or so, mounted its history, its stories of the past, its architectural distinctiveness, and its institutional face online. Videos on YouTube and TikTok, photographs on Instagram, flicker, Facebook, and official websites provide opportunities to extol past and present achievements and show off current activities and accomplishments. The effect is to create a blended environment in which the physical objects and tangible cultural practices of everyday life are conjoined with the online world and its capacity to amplify, pluralize, and circulate. Increasingly, too, it is in the online environment that the full archive of school accoutrement signals and beckons to the young seeking futures via these highly prized institutions. Here students, past and present, often give testimonials of the worlding taking place at their schools. In a Rippon College video, students give testimony to the cosmopolitan worldliness of their institutions and to their desires to remake their worlds as global citizens: "Today we say we are Indian Citizens. Tomorrow, we say we are citizens of the world."

The accumulated usage of iconography, the processes of sorting and sifting the past for sharpened embellishment of the future, the practice of choice work, Janus investments in tying the present to glorious pasts, and the full illumination and dexterity that digitalization and online environments for branding purposes allow, complete a circle of practices I am describing as burnished ornamentalism. They facilitate a revivification of institutions which from their past and present enclavism now boldly erect billboards to signal aggressively to potential class recruits. They seek in some ways to both affirm inscrutable heraldic pasts as well as to join them to the bright lights of attention and notice that is part of the portfolio-building culture that now dominates

the organization of knowledge and the transition points to tertiary education and professional futures for ambitious youngsters in the Global South as it is for youngsters in the Global North. Ornamentalism is therefore the bearer of contradictions. On this matter postcolonial scholars are very helpful in our analysis of this period of tumult and change.

Section Three: Postcolonial Discontinuities

The use of ornamentalism is not a singular or homogenous process then. There are contradictions and discontinuities despite the best efforts of coordination by the schools. Trying to understand this feature of the deployment of ornamentalism requires that one must recruit some of the insights of postcolonial theorists that foreground the ideological and cultural work of symbolism. Postcolonial scholars such as Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall call our attention to the play of tensions and excess of meaning within signifying processes associated with the use of history and tradition. History as heritage and borrowed and invented tradition is associated with Straits School, Rippon College and Old Cloisters, particularly in the production, marking and etching of gradations (what Homi Bhabha calls “discriminatory practices” [1994, p. 111]) that internally stratify these schools while at the same time marking off these institutions as zones of exception and as worlds apart from the rest of their societies.

In foregrounding the kind of unanticipated discontinuities that arise in the work of ornamentalism, Hall (1990) calls attention to heritage as postcolonial paradox in a venue outside of school but deeply relevant to our consideration of the work of history in these research settings. Hall discusses the politics of popular reception of the Jamaican coat of arms. One of the prominent features of this national emblem is that of an Amerindian figure holding up a shield displaying five pineapples. The image is supposed to represent the triumph of the indigenous over the colonial past. Hall points out that this image drawn from the past that is supposed to be a symbol of pride and resistance has been met with an ambivalent reception in contemporary Jamaica. Prominent in response to this national symbol of endurance of first people was its elite-school educated former prime minister, Edward Seaga (Harvard-trained lawyer). Seaga

fervently rejected the native figure as representing too deep a reminder of the “crushed Arawaks” vanquished and defeated by the European colonizer. He maintained the symbol was inappropriate for portraying “the soaring [national] spirit of Jamaicans” (Hall 1990, p. 235). This disjuncture of the native past and the postcolonial present is severe. Seaga’s elitist comments remind us of a colonialist attack. It is these discontinuities as Hall notes that effectively pluralize history, magnifying the links across groups and accenting the fissures within any given singular narrative of the past as inheritance—no matter what is articulated in espoused programs of knowledge and heritage triumphalism.

But these contradictions do not only exist at the point of reception where intended national audiences might reject officially espoused celebratory symbolism as in the case of the Jamaica coat of arms as Hall illustrates. They exist within postcolonial textual production and the cultural texts themselves that seek to navigate the past into the present and future. The striking example of another coat of arms in which such ambivalence thrives is that of Rippon College in our study. Rippon College’s coat of arms integrates heraldic elements culled from the banners of the various independent states of nineteenth century Central India. For example, this coat of arms uses the heraldic tenné suggestive of bhagwa color deployed in the Maratha standard. It also invokes in its design the wings and flames associated with the Pawars, the sun representing the Suryavanshis, and the moon of the Chandravanshis among other elements and symbolic references drawn from iconography used in Central India in the nineteenth century. These depictions were meant to cobble together a symbolic unity of cultural references generated from the imaginary universes of the different Central India states and native aristocratic representatives and drawing upon and martialing their collective indigenous energies into an enduring symbol of a triumphant and prosperous Rippon College. This is summarized in the Sanskrit words of the school’s motto, “Gyanameva Shakti” (knowledge is power), inscribed at the base of the coat of arms. What is buried and unsaid in the elevation of these symbols as emblematic in Rippon College’s constant tending and burnishing of its image is that these celebratory emblems and standards associated with Central India’s princely kingdoms were actually

assigned to these native constituencies by the British in 1877, a couple of decades after the famous Indian Mutiny in 1857.⁴ These symbolic markers of endogenous independence were also banners of complicity and political settlement facilitating an elaborate projection and spread of British colonial power into the subcontinent.

This attention to the cunning and ruse of history as it is played out in the periphery separates postcolonial theorists from most others writing on contemporary society. There is, then, a difference in thematic emphasis in the discussion of history by postcolonial scholars from that of the writing of mainstream thinkers who tend to foreground major figures as the coordinating forces in education and society. Postcolonial thinkers also separate themselves from the cultural Marxists who underscore class reproduction, the cultivation and elaboration of a cultural dominant and the making of historical formations within a national order. Instead, postcolonial theorists call attention to class making and the persistence of cultural imperialism and colonialism within the post-independence era and the ambivalent relationship of postcolonial subjects to historical objects and historical legacies. Together the various strands of postcolonial theory (Cannadine, Said, Hall and Williams) on the work of history as ornamentalism present us with important perspectives in our efforts to understand the ideological role of inherited cultural objects and forms in the practices of class making prosecuted by the elite schools in our international study.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have sought to introduce the subject of the vigorous manipulation of school history and heritages that now characterize postcolonial elite schools acting to navigate the new terms of neoliberal globalization that place them in strategic competition with IB and international schools that have emerged, more recently, within the past few decades (Codrington High School in Barbados, Mahindra International School and Greenwood International High School in India, Stamford

⁴ The Indian Mutiny was an uprising in 1857–58. Indian rebels launched a vigorous attack against the rule of the British East India Company, which functioned as a sovereign power on behalf of the British Crown. The rebellion is known by many names, including the Sepoy Mutiny, the Indian Mutiny, the Great Rebellion, the Revolt of 1857, the Indian Insurrection, and India's First War of Independence.

American International School in Singapore are leading examples). This frenetic work on school heritages, as demonstrated in the vignettes of burnished ornamentalism foregrounded at Old Cloisters, Straights School and Rippon College, in Barbados, Singapore and India respectively, make visible a thesis that Aihwa Ong propounds in her essay “Higher Learning in Global Space” (Ong, 2006). Ong argues that young people in the Global South are converting North American higher education institutions into a global marketplace, a grand bazaar, for their roiling ambitions and rational calculations. What I have tried to show here is some of the precursor conditions and responses to these developments which lie in the preparation of the young in the Global South elite schools with deep colonial heritages (Rizvi, 2016). Particularly, it is by considering the work now being done on active objects, forms, and ritual practices inherited from the cultural past that we may see more clearly through to the dynamic contradictions of the living present. In thinking about these matters of the manipulation of school heritage through the work of critical cultural theorists and historians such as Cannadine, Benjamin and Harootunian and postcolonial theorists such as Hall, Said, Bhabha and Williams, one is able to pry open the contents of a world often taken for granted as the “natural” cultural furniture of these postcolonial elite schools.

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