

**Title: The passing of ‘geography’s empire’ and question of geography in decolonization, 1945-1980**

Daniel W. Clayton

School of Geography and Sustainable Development

University of St Andrews

**Abstract:**

Critical engagement with the relations between geography and empire has become integral to the view that geography is a power-laden venture rather than an impartial or self-contained discipline. However, the literature on this imbroglio focuses either on the imperial past or on present-day colonialisms and pays scant attention to the post-war era of decolonization (1945-1980). Why is this so? What happened when the empires that geography had helped to shape came to an end after World War II? What impact did decolonization have on the discipline? It is claimed that decolonization had a marginal place in post-war geography, but can still be discerned, in buried forms, and that some geographers wrote about it with perspicacity. This contention is pursued with reference to the writing of Western (mainly American, British and French), and some African and Asian, geographers and probes how decolonization was differently positioned within different geographical traditions and debates, and how geographical knowledge both advanced and challenged understanding of this process. The essay promotes a comparative approach to the two facets of the title, and delineates both differences and commonalities in geographers's views and experiences. Two key findings are: first, that geographers were much more interested in the everyday geographical violence of decolonization than in its high politics or the writings of revolutionaries; and second, that this concern prompted some to observe that questions of decolonization were subordinated too easily to ones of development.

*Keywords: Decolonization, empire, post-war geography*

## Introduction

It is now roughly thirty years since a critical concern with the relations between geography and empire emerged within geography, spawning a large literature that grew in tandem with postcolonial studies (Clayton 2011). This concern was signalled, notably, by Felix Driver's 1992 essay "Geography's empire," which recalled how empire both activated and was activated by geographical knowledge, and how the late nineteenth-century climax of empire was implicated in the promulgation of geography as an academic discipline. Some of geography's most distinguishable attributes -- its fascination with adventure and the exotic; expeditionary traditions of navigation and discovery; practices of mapping and surveying; projects of classification and display; and creeds of environmental determinism and geopolitics -- had a Eurocentric, and in places racist, cast and worked as tools of empire. Geography's empire was resisted and had varying meanings and intensities in different imperial projects and colonial regions. It was never simply about the projection of Western power. However, Driver (1992, 26) maintained that there was an undisclosed potency to it, and that the absence of disciplinary reflection on the matter was "a sign of the strong hold that the colonial frame of mind has upon the subject. It is as if the writings of our predecessors were so saturated with colonial and imperial themes that to problematise their role is to challenge the status of the modern discipline." A troubling facet of geography's history and identity lay unresolved in its present, gnawing away at its academic respectability and warping its public image.

Driver's neologism became a disquieting moniker for the view that geography is a power-laden venture rather than an impartial discipline with either an innate character or self-contained history, and it continues to trail concern about how geographers relate to and represent 'other' peoples and places. Even so, David Stoddart's (2000, 243) terse comment,

made in 2000, that “those who write on colonialism and imperialism today scrupulously avoid any mention of those [post-war geographers] who wrote on these topics when the issues were still alive” continues to provide much on which to chew. More recently, Ruth Craggs (2016, 39) has observed that the geographical literature on empire largely “overlooks” the era of post-war decolonization (1945 -- c. 1980) -- beginning in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, and then stretching across Africa, Oceania and the Caribbean (see Figure 1) -- “in favour of studies of high imperialism and ongoing contemporary colonialism.”

Post-war decolonization encompasses three phenomena: first, attempts by Western powers to defend and reform their colonial empires and deal with a rising tide of anti-colonial sentiment (dubbed late colonialism); second, the sometimes peaceful and quick but often violent and protracted means by which independence was attained (and with nationalist movements and independence struggles often stretching much farther back in time); and third, the ensuing affairs of post-colonial nations and question of whether independence heralded a complete break with the colonial past. This process and project remains a little studied aspect of how the issues of disciplinary memory and culpability raised by Driver (and many others since) might be construed, and a wider literature likewise submits that postcolonial theory has curbed interest in this period and dynamic, from which some of its founding questions about the legacies of colonialism arose, and projected inquiry into a longer colonial past (Young 2015).

The term decolonization has a faint presence in geography textbooks and surveys of geographic thought, including ones on radical and dissident geographies, and in recent re-readings of the discipline’s post-war history in this journal that grapple with issues of militarism, racism and anti-imperialism (Blunt and Wills 2000; Barnes and Farish 2006; Bowd and Clayton 2013; Kobayashi 2014; Springer 2016; Barnes and Sheppard 2019). It also has a curiously low profile in the way the idea of a postcolonial geography has been

pitched. To date, it has chiefly been deployed within geography in three ways. First, in connection with indigenous rights and struggles in the Americas and Oceania (the ongoing need to decolonize geographies there); second, and sometimes concomitantly, as a concept metaphor for the quest to expose and challenge usurping, domineering and exclusionary (i.e. colonizing) ideas and practices (the decolonizing of curricula, disciplines, identities, imaginaries, institutions and methodologies); and third as a project of ‘de-linking’ from an enduring capitalist-cum-colonialist condition -- an “inextricable combination of the rhetoric of modernity (progress, development, growth) and the logic of coloniality (poverty, misery, inequality)” (Bhambra 2014, 119) -- and an insurgent quest for a pure ‘decolonial’ voice or position (see Shaw, Herman and Dodds 2006; de Leeuw and Hunt 2018). The latter two formulations have recently solicited a good deal of critical attention, and with some warning that they herald a “drift” towards a “low cost decolonization” which strips its history of its political urgency, serves metropolitan post-imperial anxiety, and problematically attempts to harbour an un-culpable decolonial agency or sovereign indigeneity (Jazeel 2017; Boubina 2018, 2).

As vital as these three initiatives have been in debating the meaning of a critical human geography, remarkably little historical attention has been paid to geographers’ entanglements with post-war decolonization.<sup>1</sup> What happened when the empires that geography had helped to shape came to an end? Is it possible to talk of the passing of geography’s empire after 1945? If so, how did this passing manifest itself to geographers: as a death, journey, abrupt end, new start, or false dawn? Was it celebrated or lamented? Did Western geographers recognize their complicity in empire and grasp the need to break from it? How were geographers from decolonizing regions involved? Was geography any more or less potent as a vehicle of decolonization than it was as a tool of empire? To rephrase Driver,

is it possible to find a 'decolonial' frame of mind in geographers's work? In short, how might the question of 'geography in decolonisation' be posed?

### **Framing geography and decolonization**

The following foray into these questions is selective and illustrative. The focus will be on a medley of work by Western geographers (mainly from American, British and French backgrounds), and some African and Asian geographers, between the 1940s and 1970s. Virtually all of those concerned were male, reflecting the stark the gender imbalance within the discipline at university level at this time.<sup>2</sup> Many of them were field researchers, although some observed decolonization from afar. And many of the African and Asian geographers involved either trained in the West or worked in their home universities with expatriate Western geographers.

Geographical work that pursued questions of empire and dissidence elsewhere during this era -- in relation to communist China and Eastern Europe; state dictatorships in Central and South America; and the domestic and overseas tentacles of U.S. imperialism -- lays beyond the purview of this paper. A different historical study might also be undertaken of how questions of decolonization appear in geographers's work on post-colonial immigration, racial discrimination and ethnic segregation within Western countries and cities (e.g. Peach 1968; Rose 1970). However, post-war decolonization pivoted on Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, and it is there that the bulk of geographical research on the phenomenon was located. Furthermore, while this paper does not dwell on the matter, most of this decolonizing world lay in the tropical belt, and, accordingly, much geographical work on it was badged as tropical geography.

Geographers working in or on the decolonizing world often stressed the distinctiveness of their disciplinary remit and did not stray far from it. But they also operated in increasingly internationalized and multidisciplinary networks of inquiry and expertise, as advisors to governments and non-governmental organizations. They were cognisant too of the potent politics of time that shaped this era, with questions of freedom and liberation posed as temporal problems of rupture (the promise of leaving the colonial past behind), velocity (the longing and demand for rapid change), and belatedness (the spectre of new nations coming into modernity ‘after’ and ‘in the shadow of’ the West) (see Chakrabarty 2000). However, geographers grasped that decolonization revolved around a politics of space as well as time. They understood that colonial powers found it more difficult to retreat from their settler colonies than from their more numerous colonies of exploitation (where colonizers were vastly outnumbered by the indigenous population), and insisted that questions of land use and ownership, geographical and environmental change, spatial organization and regional restructuring, and the decentring and re-acquisition of power, locality, and identity were key to independence. Much more can and should be made of this broader spatiality than this paper can muster. Suffice it to note that disclosure of this spatiality (and not just as geographers elucidated it) is important because the theoretical literature on decolonization has tended to prioritise questions of time over ones of space.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first section delineates the subsidiary status of decolonization in post-war geographical research and how this can be partly attributed to semantic difficulties surrounding the term. The second section alights on a range of materials (many of them little noticed and forgotten) that provide some vivid and indicative glimpses of how the passing of geography’s empire was situated in different research traditions and locations within the discipline. The third section considers two common motifs in how the question of geography in decolonization might be interpreted:

objectivity and violence. An overall evaluation of the post-war fate of geography's empire is provided at the end, along with some brief reflections on why it might still be important to revisit the kinds of places, texts, and problems traversed in the paper.

Each of the sections connects geographers's work to broader currents of anti-colonial and postcolonial thought, and the story is framed by two conceptual claims about post-war decolonization that animate a recent resurgence of interest in the subject. The first is that this phenomenon exceeds dominant ways of thinking about it, then and since, which has chiefly been through the idea of development and with the nation-state seen as the archetype of advancement. In this and other ways, understanding of geography's liaison with post-war decolonization has been hampered by what Frederick Cooper (2014, 466), in a wider register, flags as "the limitations of doing history backwards... [of restricting] the possibilities of studying conjunctures when different futures were in play." A second, related, claim is that the passage from empire to independence is best studied in comparative terms -- here through different imperial and disciplinary histories and geographies (e.g. Buettner 2016). This approach enriches understanding of the relative durability or mutability of colonialist practices, and relative permanence or transience of decolonizing agendas and effects. A historiographical artifice is deployed to expedite this second claim. In each of the sections, discussion proceeds from a selection of geographical writing from the early 1970s. This moment is treated as a pole around which the contextual and comparative contours of geography and decolonization might be gleaned. The choice of years is of course subjective (as is the choice of texts). However, by then geographers were musing about decolonization in *media res*: that is, from inside a story that had a history but still had a future, and with geographers working and writing with different shades of conviction and doubt, and hope and cynicism.



## **Finding geography in decolonization**

Looking for geography in decolonization may not seem like an auspicious undertaking, at least at the outset. Between 1945 and 1980 the term appears only a handful of times in the titles of papers in leading Western geography journals and is not conceptualized when it does.<sup>3</sup> Nor is it one of the twenty-six categories in the index of articles for the first ten years (1969-1979) of the radical geography journal *Antipode*. The British geographer Harold Brookfield (1984) reflected that his discipline deemed decolonization an “outside” (distant and marginal) issue.<sup>4</sup> Revolution, he implored, had come to post-war geography in two waves, namely as through the so-called ‘quantitative revolution’ of the 1960s and ‘radical revolution’ of the 1970s, and both had mostly been confined to Western campuses. On this sort of evidence, what many historians regard as the most revolutionary rearrangement of identity and power of the twentieth century, generating a sea change in opinion across the world about matters of freedom and equality, had a negligible impact on the discipline of geography.

I do not necessarily demur from this overall assessment. Yet there is much more to this story than meets the eye. Decolonization can be discerned in the annals of post-war geography, but in scattered, selective and surreptitious forms. It can be found in the margins and folds of other debates and concerns, by other names, and in an assortment of material -- addresses, advisory reports, book reviews, conference notes, correspondence, interviews, memoirs and obituaries – that did not headline the discipline. It was refracted through the disciplinary tussle between the ‘new’ geography (spatial science) and its forerunner and foil, regional geography, and became subsumed within geographical debates about development, the nation-state, and what the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (1980) termed “the devil’s totality” (the global sway and colonizing logic of capital).

Such difficulties in locating decolonization within the discipline stem in part from the murkiness of the term. It did not start to gain traction until the 1950s, and then as a “pallid” British and French administrative expression deployed to make imperial retreat appear anodyne and orderly, Jan Jensen and Jürgen Osterhammel (2017, vii) observe, and subsequently as one infused with a “plethora of meanings, ambiguities, conflicting memories, and competing narratives”. The British geographer Charles Fisher (1968, 4) deemed it a “French import” (which he associated with the work of Frantz Fanon) and noted that it was not readily used in post-war political and regional geography texts that dealt with the changing map of Asia and Africa (e.g. East and Spate 1950). Recent scholarship highlights the elasticity and European provenance of the idea and word. It denotes a constitutional-legal event, the formal transfer of power, principally through the creation of a plethora of new nation-states, which, in the memorable words of France’s top colonial administrator, Robert Delavignette (cited Betts 2012, 23), “shot up like volcanic lava”. But as John Darwin (2006, 4) relates, it also yielded “a constitutional hotch-potch of independent, semi-independent and dependent countries, held together not by formal allegiance to a mother-country but by economic, strategic, political and cultural links that varied greatly in strength and character”.

Such abstruseness perhaps helps to explain why post-war geographers rarely used the term. In 1970 the American radical geographer James Blaut (1970, 66) observed that “imperialism,” “neo-colonialism,” “underdevelopment,” and “Third World” were more ubiquitously used expressions in his area of the discipline; and another pioneer in this area, Ben Wisner (1977, 47-49), reflected that the “profound” economic and political crises of the early 1970s trained geographers’s attentions on Western problems of urban, industrial and regional decline and restructuring, socio-economic inequality, environmental blight, and student and worker radicalization, and deflected them away from the decolonizing world.

Nevertheless, many more geographers observed and wrote about issues of decolonization than has been recognised, if often in little known ways and places. For a start, the American geographer Edwin Munger's eight-hundred-page *African Field Reports, 1952-1961* bears witness to the momentous and mottled decolonization of Africa: bloody independence struggles in French Madagascar, the Belgian Congo, and British Kenya; the painful birth of democracy in Ghana and the Ivory Coast; the problems facing small states and minorities populations across the continent; how the British "prescription for the ills of underdeveloped Africa... [was] off an entirely different shelf from the British Socialist prescriptions which have been the chief post-war medicine"; "American [Cold War] pressure in Central Africa"; and Apartheid in South Africa (Munger 1961, 287, 311, 409). Munger marvelled at how decolonization galvanised Africans to engage in political debate for the first time, but also lamented the emergence of strong-arm African regimes and murderous secessionist struggles. Blaut (1970, 65) judged that "imperialism has not been cured by emancipation, by decolonization, or by economic development (which suffers from the same disease)"; rather, a "deadly pattern" – the return of power and enmity -- had materialized. This claim, along with Munger's (1961, 243) prophetic observation that geographical knowledge both served and thwarted the mantra that "independence was a panacea for every ill", begs questions about how geographers from different countries and parts of the discipline saw decolonization.

### **Situating the passing of 'geography's empire'**

#### ***Revolution***

An important place to start the discussion is with Hildebert Isnard's 1971 *Géographie de la décolonisation*, which is still the only book-length study by a geographer to deal explicitly with the idea. Decolonization was not a major theme in French geography, but it had a significant impact on French and *indigène* geographers who either hailed from or worked on regions riven by it: Isnard (Algeria); Gilles Sautter (Congo); Guy Lasserre (Gabon and Guadeloupe); Jacques Richard-Molard (Guinea and Tunisia); Pierre Gourou (Indochina, Rwanda, Tunisia); Jean Dresch and Yves Lacoste (Morocco); Paul Pélissier and Assane Seck (Sénégal). In keeping with France's history, and by the 1970s spanning a complex -- liberal, communist, anti-colonial, and Gaullist -- politico-intellectual field, 'revolution' and 'reform' were leitmotifs of French geographers's outlook and were folded into intense debates about whether the science of geography and politics of decolonization should be kept apart (Dresch 1979).

Anticipating elements of Cooper's argument, Isnard noted that in 1945 a range of ideas about empire and independence were in the air. Writing chiefly about Algeria (independent since 1962) and echoing leading francophone anti-colonial thinkers such as Fanon (1961) and Aimé Césaire (1955), Isnard (1971, 50 and *passim*) characterised decolonization as a revolutionary "rupture in geographic space" and desire for a new "psychology of dwelling and belonging." The most immediate task facing newly independent states, Isnard (1971, 55) implored, was "the invention of an entirely new geography that can respond to the needs and requirements of an emerging nation's authenticity."

However, he observed that this new geography could not simply be geared to the recovery of a pre-colonial space or identity because colonialism had torn the very idea of return asunder. He probed what theorists such as David Lloyd (2003, 217) have subsequently identified as the "melancholia" of the postcolonial condition: how state-centric nationalisms

sought to heal the wounds of loss and division wrought by colonization with a medicine of tradition and ancient belonging, but in so doing reaffirmed the schism in colonial modernity between opposing forward-looking (modern-Western) and backward-looking (native-traditionalist) camps. In Algeria and other parts decolonising world that were rich in natural resources and agricultural staples, such melancholia was felt particularly acutely in attempts to marry political independence to economic autonomy. Isnard saw Algeria's vineyards as a trouble spot in this regard, and its untapped desert oil reserves as a source of potential relief. Vineyards were a highly lucrative element of the French colonial economy, but post-independence they became a scornful symbol of Algeria's export dependency on France and a blot on the landscape of an emerging Islamic nation. While oil extraction was an inherently Western capitalist undertaking, it could also be argued that it was in keeping with Algeria's desert-nomadic heritage and thus a means of securing economic autonomy on its terms.

Yet he, other French geographers, and anti-colonial thinkers such as Césaire, also entertained the idea that decolonization need not entail complete rupture with the mother country (see Wilder 2015). For example, the geographer Jean Gottmann and sociologist Jean de la Roche (1945) submitted that the most judicious future for France's colonial peoples as they pushed to exit empire lay in their federal attachment to France. It would be immoral, they argued, for France to leave its colonial subjects to a future of internal strife, foreign manipulation, and economic backwardness. Indeed, the attempt to distinguish, in this paternalistic way, between "good" and "bad" forms of colonization had a longer history within French geography, and even inflects the work of the anarchist and ostensibly anti-colonialist geographer Elisée Reclus (Baudouin 2003). British and Dutch geographers similarly evaluated the merits of federalism (e.g. East and Spate 1951).

At the other end of the spectrum, the Australian Antarctic explorer-cum-Cambridge geographer Frank Debenham (1955, 213), reflecting on a survey of Nyasaland he had

undertaken for the British Colonial Office, articulated what others, one senses, dared not say: “There is a school of thought today which seems to hold that wherever Britain has assumed protection in Africa it has been for the purpose of exploiting the Africans. It is one of the penalties we have to pay for free speech that all sorts of people can get up and impute such motives, and if they do it skilfully enough they will persuade some people that their perversions of the truth are battle-cries for freedom.”

More will be said about French geographers later; but it is to the different and mixed reactions to the passing of empire in British and American geography that the paper now turns.

### ***Retreat and relegation***

In his 1970 Presidential Address to the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), Rear-Admiral Sir Edmund Irving (1971, 277), Hydrographer to the British Navy with a mountain and island named after him, remarked on the continuing importance of “exploration” in the Society’s remit yet how it was having to discourage expeditions to “politically or socially sensitive regions” because they “cause embarrassment to all concerned, and can, and do, arouse hostility.” Meanwhile, Martin Kaatz (1971, 7), a U.S. Army war veteran, began his 1970 Presidential Address to the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers by asking: “Who among us has not felt almost inundated with the press of issues raised by student unrest, minority problems, Southeast Asia, the population explosion, and environmental quality?”

Both addresses circle around decolonization, if from different angles. The Rear-Admiral was worried that the expeditionary sands upon which the RGS, a staunch promoter of empire, had long operated were being blown in a different direction. The “modern pattern of exploration and research” now necessitated “delicate” negotiations with independent

nations, he advised (Irving 1971, 278). On the other hand, Kaatz did not quite know what to do with the striking statement with which he began. He simply lamented that since 1945 American geography students had become increasingly estranged from the global problems “behind the news” (Katz 1971, 7). These snippets capture British and American geography’s connections with decolonization: as a matter of uncomfortable retreat in the British case, and as one of frustration and bafflement to American geographers.

In the aftermath of World War II, two British geographers, Sidney Wooldridge and Ronald Harrison Church, implored colleagues to take the study of colonial geography more seriously. Wooldridge (1947, 202) ventured that “it appears to me to throw a strong light on the position of Geography in this country that we are so calamitously and shamefully ignorant of our Colonial Empire”. And Harrison Church (1951, 116-17) sought to make amends with a primer entitled *Modern Colonization*, noting that Africa was “ripe for rearrangement” (albeit colonial reform more than independence). As Britain’s sprawling empire shrank, the type of geographical study and imagery associated with it became less acceptable and feasible, and Alastair Bonnett (2003) asserts that geography soon abandoned its bequest as a “world discipline” and geographers sought to make their discipline ‘useful’ again by focusing on pressing domestic problems. Yet geography was not taught at many of the new universities established across the United Kingdom in the post-war decades, in part because politicians continued to view the subject as having “a somewhat ‘dated’ look about it”, as Ron Johnston (2003, 69) puts it. Indeed, the ‘conquest’ of Everest by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay in June 1953, coinciding with the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, was arguably the crowning glory of 1950s British geography and points to the post-war extension rather than liquidation of geography’s empire. The RGS was a proud sponsor of the Everest Expedition, and through to the 1970s its learned organ, *The Geographical Journal*, kept a

populist foot in the imperial past by publishing excerpts “from the journal a hundred years ago”, most of which were manly tales of expeditionary derring-do.

Change was afoot. When the RGS hosted the Twentieth International Geographical Union (IGU) meeting in London in 1964 (a jamboree with over two thousand delegates), it was British modernity at home that the organising committee -- chaired by the redoubtable Dudley Stamp (who had been pivotal to the establishment of geography departments in Briain’s colonial dominions) -- sought to accentuate (Heffernan 2016). In her report on the event, the long-time editor of *The Geographical Review*, Wilma Fairchild (1964), noted that conference-goers were ushered to the foot of the capital’s newly-built Post Office Tower and dined at the glitzy Shell Centre nearby. She passed over the fact that nine of the conference papers (a very small proportion admittedly) were on topics that were later grouped together and published in a political geography volume as “cases studies in decolonization” (Fisher 1968, Part II).

The tug of empire had not been completely slackened, however. In a lecture to the British Geographical Association in the year of the Everest milestone, the venerable Osbert Howarth (1954, 7), who had co-edited *The Oxford Survey of the British Empire* (Herbertson and Howarth 1914), declared “We Victorians soaked the Empire in through our skins”, but then pondered: What now? He answered that while empire was no longer “an object of taste and fashion,” geography students and teachers knew surprisingly little about what was taking its place, which for him was a no less noble British Commonwealth “of which he or she is a citizen” (Howarth 1954, 7). This shift did not portend wholesale change. In a review of *Geographers and the Tropics* (edited by Robert Steel and Mansell Prothero) the doyen of French tropical geography, Pierre Gourou (1965), noted how British geographers’s preoccupation with trade was outliving empire. In turn, Steel (1962, 176-77) pointed to French geographers’s obsession with rural peasant life and rural conditions, and went on: as



“Prime Minister Macmillan’s winds of change has stirred up a whole continent of emerging nations... it is vital that there should be an informed opinion of African affairs”, and which to his mind should stem from “basic” and “relevant” research on “background” geographical conditions and “applied” questions of transport, trade and urban development.

American geography’s concern about relevance came with a different imperial twist. In a 1948 address to the RGS the politically well-connected Isaiah Bowman (1948, 130) argued that “geography changes as rapidly as ideas and technologies change, that is, [as] the meaning of geographical conditions change”, and hoped that geographers’s important wartime service at home and abroad had demonstrated the subject’s importance to “the great international experiment” being woven around the United States and arrangements of Bretton Woods. But if (as Kaatz worried) American geography had shirked Bowman’s (1948, 130) call for a “resurvey of world geography, region by region and indeed point by point”, it was not for want of curiosity about the world beyond. Rather, and as Neil Smith (2003, 257) testifies, it was because “Geography fared badly in the scramble for disciplinary turf in the U.S. academy.”

This shirking was not lost on some American geographers. Norton Ginsburg (1973, 1-4), for instance, noted that American geographers’s interest “the transition of much of the world’s population from a colonial status to that of political independence... has been considerably less than might have been anticipated”. Elliott Child and Trevor Barnes (2018) have since demonstrated that a central reason for this was that American geography was largely shut out of the amply funded post-war area studies programmes which framed the way the American social and behavioural sciences connected with this ‘transition’: as scenarios to be modelled and monitored – as it happened, ‘region by region’ and ‘point by point’ -- through the generation and shifting of vast amounts of data.

This exclusion left plenty of room for young American geographers to train their energies on the creation of an abstract geography and see (the little they saw of) the decolonizing world through its prism. “Concepts must come first”, Peter Gould (1972, 138) proclaimed; “bare and abstract, they can give a seemingly disparate set of facts coherence, pattern, and order”, and will supplant an older regional geography which “provides no hint of intellectual challenge”. He flexed his spatial science muscles on newly-independent Ghana and Tanzania (Gould 1960; 1970). Advocacy of a ‘nomothetic’ geographical approach towards the modernization of Africa and Asia was not confined to American geography, but it was pronounced there, and the Californian geographer Joseph Spencer decried its imperial swagger. If the days when “the itinerant geographer fretting over the level of his [sic] level of insight into life in a far-away land could relax and wander through the backcountry village market in sheer enjoyment” were now over, he lamented with his extensive fieldwork in East Asia in mind, it had as much to do with the intrusion of spatial models into the field as it did with new political realities (Spencer 1970, 446).

Edward Taaffe, Richard Morrill and Gould’s 1963 model of “Transport Development in Underdeveloped Countries” was deemed to be one of the biggest interlopers in this regard. The British “port geographers” (which is how they described themselves, with reference to quays rather than vineyards), Brian Hoyle and David Hilling (1970, 4), were scathing about how this model placed Africa before a spatial juggernaut that was as patronizing and divisive as older colonial models of development. Brookfield (1973, 2) added that this spatial model was sculpted from the same modernization clay as W.W. Rostow’s ‘stages of growth’ and John Friedman’s ‘centre-periphery’ scenarios, treating the Third World as a testing ground for the ambitions of American social science. Edward Soja (1968, 2-3, 113) used all three models in his pioneering dissertation *The Geography of Modernization in Kenya*.

The decolonizing world thus got caught up in the disciplinary cross-fire between an older, field-based, and new, model-based (and theoretically plush) geography. The imposing Communist Party figurehead of French geography, Jean Dresch (1979, 15-38, 227-31), observed that American geography oozed American self-confidence but passed roughshod over the actuality and diversity of the geographies in its orbit. He surmised that a unique combination of factors within American culture and politics -- an umbilical objection to colonialism; McCarthyism (anti-communism, which got him barred from the 1952 IGU meeting in Washington DC); a blind faith in American 'soft power' (the purportedly universal attractiveness of its consumer lifestyle, managerial know-how, and rhetoric of liberty); and the troubling spectre of race -- precluded American geographers from understanding anti-colonialism fully or studying decolonization closely.

However, American geographers were not completely excluded from area studies, and these programmes were never simply puppets of the U.S. state. Soja was recruited to Northwestern University's Africa Studies Program and took questions of African autonomy seriously. Ginsburg oversaw the production of Yale's Southeast Asia handbooks, the forerunner of the CIA's Fact Books. And in 1972, and with the Watergate scandal about to break, the Southeast Asia Studies Program at Cornell published a paper by the Maddison geographer Daniel Doeppers (a specialist on late colonial Manila) on the 1958 (army and civilian) Permesta Rebellion in Indonesia in which he exposed the clandestine role played by the Pentagon and CIA in putting down the insurgency. But it was American geographers working on the fringes of area studies, or outside the loop of spatial science and then Marxist radicalism, who produced some of the most perceptive writing about decolonization. Munger was one of them, and one further example at this juncture will need to suffice.

In a 1958 report on newly-independent Malaya commissioned by a leading Indian think tank on decolonization, Spencer reflected that if this young country, still reeling from a

protracted guerrilla war, was “to make things over so that the British imprint will recede and a new imprint will take its place”, it would need to tackle a host of “emotional and psychological” issues, and undertake a “blending of aims, desires, symbols, devices, machinery, and people” in a new national space. The “submergence and sublimation of many separate nationalisms into one new composite product requires more than a constitutional conference, an election, an independence ceremony”, he continued, and required attention to a “group of terms... namely Malaya, Malay, Malaysia, Malayan, Malayanization, Asian, ‘Local’ and ‘Expatriate’” that were involved in “the effort to create a synthesis of people, land, and region in a zone in which no such feature has ever existed before.” In a style reminiscent of later postcolonial writing about the plural and contested contours of space and subjectivity, Spencer suggested that national unity could not simply be invented by a geographical apparatus of governance -- the census office, survey department, army and border police, and system of district administration -- but would need to tackle the fraught braiding of colonial and nationalist meanings of Malaya, and the troubled histories of place, race and immigration they brought in their train.

That such enquiries received limited disciplinary recognition peeved some. In a sardonic letter to The Geographical Association in 1963, ostensibly to counter an attack by New Zealand geographer Keith Buchanan on Western geography’s “sedulous avoidance” of anything beyond the end of its own metropolitan nose, and the “sterile and outmoded” hue of regional geographies, the British geographer Oskar Spate, a World War II (Burma and India) veteran, noted: “We all know that there are geographical Little Englanders, and Americans who never take their eyes off Middletown’s CBD”, but plenty of geographers had nonetheless produced fastidious and innovative work on foreign regions (Buchanan cited Spate 1963, 60; Spate 1963, 60). But such neglect did not worry all. When asked later in life about his politically charged fieldwork in 1960s Vietnam, Robert McColl prided himself on having

floated around the U.S. college system without attracting the attention of the CIA (Willhite 2003). And Munger, who first travelled to Africa with his wartime U.S. Army poker winnings, revelled in the interpretative licence given to him by the American Universities Field Service, which supported his fieldwork (Weiner 2010).

### ***Relocation***

A 1971 paper on educational reform by the Ugandan anti-colonial writer and geographer Jackayo Ocitti, a 1970 monograph, *Dakar, métropole africaine*, by the first professional Sénégalais geographer, Assane Seck (who soon went into politics), and a 1971 textbook *India: A Regional Geography*, edited by Ram Singh, the long-standing Head of the Geography Department at Banaras Hindu University in India, open up a further essential yet barely explored dimension of how decolonization was comprehended and advanced, namely by geographers from the decolonizing world.

Ocitti (1971, 4) saw the substitution of a new “East Africa” geography syllabus for the old Cambridge Overseas School Certificate for Geography “formulated under the umbrella of colonialism” as a vital part of “the non-violent revolution which has been taking place in East Africa since Independence.” The connection between geography and empire needed to be severed, he insisted, and instruction in the subject needed to be re-gearred to the “aspirations... attitudes and behaviours” of East Africans, which, for him, involved challenging the whiteness of the profession and its roots in a colonial saviour mentality (Ocitti 1971, 5). However, geographers elsewhere in the decolonizing world -- for example, Seck (1970), Akin Mabogunje (1980) in Nigeria and Vernon Mulchansingh (1970, 23) in Trinidad - sought to qualify this type of message by suggesting that a decolonized geography curriculum needed to combine Western and African/Asian knowledge, theory and methods,

and eschew the idea that categories came in neatly delineated and oppositional ‘colonial’ and ‘post-colonial’, or ‘white’ and ‘black’, forms. To discard Western ways of doing geography just because they were Western, they implored, was to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Seeking to explain the rapid urbanization of Africa since the end of the colonial era, Mabogunje and Seck thought that worrying over what constituted a ‘pure’ decolonized geography was an unhelpful distraction.

Singh (1971, 4-11, 23) also urged that Indian geographers needed to question the history of “British exploitation” in the sub-continent in order nurture “national sentiment”, but his way doing this was with “the regional approach”, which, he acknowledged, had been brought to India by the British and was part and parcel of the colonial abuse he was striving to cast off. His acerbic introduction about the damaging impact of British geographical education on India is followed by twenty-eight regional chapters (many of them by him) that stick to this factual-descriptive-regional drill. This irritated some. In a scathing report about the state of geographical research and education for The Indian Council of Social Science Research, Moonis Raza (1972, xvii-xxi) bemoaned that Indian geographers had shown little interest in theoretical discussion within the discipline, and, worse, had “‘imported’ and uncritically accepted a complete system of ideas without participating in the making of it”, making Indian geography a “dinosaur, with a huge body, a long tail and a tiny little head.”

Yet to suggest either that Singh’s project was obsolete, as some Western reviewers at the time (e.g. Wise 1969, 477) also did (with the missive that Indian geographers needed “help” to master the latest geographical ideas and methods), or that his stance was contradictory, would be to miss a vital point: that he was President of the Geography and Geology Section of the Indian Scientific Congress, and his project was geared to convincing the Indian Government that geography should be central to its educational agenda (Singh 2016). As Sanjay Seth (2007) explains, following independence the rote system of learning

brought by the British, chiefly to train Indians for the civil service, became a vital means of bridging modern-scientific and archaic-sacred ways of knowing, and thus of nation-building. Singh's regional-gazetteer style of inquiry had nationalist as well as colonial moorings, and the project of rote learning at the heart of his textbook was a felicitous way of showing how geography could be a means of material advancement and social mobility in India.

Seth's luminous postcolonial history might be called upon to think more widely about how texts like Singh's sought to make geography modern *but* Indian -- or Kenyan, Malayan, Nigerian, Senegalese, or Trinidadian. The range of examples used in this sub-section chime with Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2000, 16) important postcolonial formulation that Western thought is "at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping... [to] think through the experiences of political modernity [and decolonization] in non-Western nations".

### **General problems of decolonization in geography**

The discussion to this point suggests that it is hard discern a well-defined or uniform geographic theory, research focus, or political sensibility regarding decolonization. However, it has also been implied that geography's liaison with this momentous process was permeated by some connecting and recurring issues that crossed different national, imperial and disciplinary histories. Objectivity and violence are two such issues.

#### ***Objectivity***

In a review of the development of geography in post-independence Africa that was published in the same year as Driver's essay, the Ghanaian (Maddison-trained) geographer Michael Barkoh (1992) observed that more still needed to be done to allay African public

perception that geography was a purely Western academic subject with little bearing on Africans's material well-being. However, the subject had long been extolled within the West as an objective survey science that was uniquely placed to address a lack of basic research on a host of questions and challenges in colonial and post-colonial settings: land use and soil quality; resource endowment and extraction; food provisioning and water supply; land holding and territorial governance; disease and public health; population pressure and migration; environmental and social calamity (especially famine and drought); rural and urban development; and ethnic and boundary conflicts. "Grasping the significance of geography better," Delavignette (1972, 281) mused, was vital to deterring both colonial and post-colonial leaders from looking for "easy solutions that often adopt the mask of force." These observations from Barkoh and Delavignette bring questions of objectivity into more general and comparative relief.

Dresch (1979, 1-17) was one of the first Western geographers (in the late 1940s) to point out that while geographical knowledge might prove central to the fate of post-colonial nations, it smacked of white man supremacy and could no longer be assumed to be ascendant or impartial. What he described as geographers'ss "*devoir de reserve*" (duty to detachment) became increasingly strained after World War II, and following independence some Western geographers found their access to research sites and data curtailed, and their work censored. Spate (1959, 101) noted that when it came to "so serious and controversial a subject" as decolonization it was impossible for the geographer to be a "moral and intellectual eunuch". Sides sometimes had to be taken, and suspicions sometimes ran high. Western geographers worked largely as observers and rarely as activists, and the expertise they offered was not always welcomed. Many of them grasped the great pressure that African and Asian leaders were under to deliver rapid change through large-scale development projects, but their warnings about the deleterious environmental and social effects of such ventures were not



well received. Dresch encountered African animosity while participating in “Mission Lucas”, a multidisciplinary team put together by the French colonial ministry in 1945 to ascertain the causes of labour unrest in Côte d'Ivoire. To take a later example, Wisner lived in a Tanzanian *ujamaa* (socialist village) in the late 1960s and while admiring of this pillar of President Julius Nyerere’s nationalist collectivism, he also observed its pitfalls and upon later taking this critical wisdom to Mozambique “was nearly thrown out of the country... for criticising top-down imposition of plans for communal villages in a one-size-fits-all manner” by the country’s ruling one-party state (Wisner 2015, 56).

Dresch’s *devoir de reserve* was also compromised in different ways at different scales of inquiry (also see Gibson-Graham 2004). On the one hand, Spate (1956, 472) noted that when writing about vast areas -- as Gourou (1971b), Spencer (1954), Stamp (1953), Kimble (1960) and others, including him (Spate 1954), all did, in hefty tomes on Asia and Africa -- they wielded “loose and emotive generalizations”, about “tropical backwardness”, “coloured races”, and “the white man’s burden”, for instance (it is ironic that Spate did not see this in his own work). For example, the U.S.-based British geographer George Kimble opened his six-hundred-page *Tropical Africa* (produced at the behest of the New York think-tank the Twentieth Century Fund) by proclaiming that “the darkest thing about Africa has always been our ignorance of it” but went on to suggest that as Africa entered independence much of the “economic navigating” would still need to be done “by remote control” from the West (Kimble 1960 I, 2, 450). Such platitudes provoked anti-colonial ire. Césaire (1955, 12-14), for example, denounced Gourou’s widely read and revered 1947 primer *Les pays tropicaux* as “an impure and worldly geography”: a purportedly objective survey that placed a “geographical curse” over the tropics that was “no less effective... than the biological curse of the racists.” Gourou (1947, 2) had opened his account with the claim that “the tropics suffer from a certain number of inferiorities.”

However, when working at smaller scales, and immersed in specific localities, geographers produced some nuanced observations about social and environmental change and cultivated strong and often sentimental attachments to the rural regions and peasant populations they studied. The French critical theorist of colonialism, Georges Balandier (1966, 39), thought that such sophistication was rooted in the geographer's laudable interest in "adjustment to place" and concern over the way governments mistreated minority populations. In *Les paysans du Sénégal*, for instance, Paul Pélissier (1966, ix-xii, 3-7, 124-26) (one of Gourou's students) insisted that geographical knowledge needed to serve people and communities, rather than the state or academia, first, and argued that the idea of development skewed the decolonization agenda towards the imperatives of the modern economy, and a centralizing nation-state that demanded ethnic and political conformism, constituting a form of "aggression", chiefly against traditional "encadrements" (the long-evolved landscape organizing techniques of rural peoples).

This orientation can be found in American and British geography too, and it brought a hitherto little examined bias in its train. The likes of Pélissier - and Brookfield, Gourou, Spate and Spencer - did not deny change, denounce progress, or admonish the West and modern state *tout court* so much as respond to decolonization through a utopian aesthetic that Frederic Jameson (2016, 9-11) thinks had a much wider purchase within the social sciences at this time (and with the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss a leading light): a "thinking and reimagining of societies without power, particularly in the form of societies before power" – a concern with "elementary" societies 'before' modernity. This outlook can be found, for example, in Spate's (1959, 9) *The Fijian People*, a report about the future of this British colony commissioned by its Governor-General, where he writes of the need to redress the "disintegrating" force of "modernity" on the islands by supporting "the Old Tikina area": the

“common centre” of the Fijians “where the old dignity which the *koro* is so rapidly losing might be recaptured.”

## **Violence**

Questions of objectivity were thus bound up with ones of violence and the different forms violence took -- in language and the imagination, as well as in material and corporeal terms. In contrast to geographers’s current captivation with violent, unsettled and disabling geographies, many geographers working in the decolonizing world did not study war, conflict or tyranny directly. Recoil from the violence of decolonization applied especially to geographers who had served in World War II. Having experienced the brutality, devastation, privations and sorrow of war, their overriding hope was that geographical inquiry might be used to avert hatred and aggression and foster lasting peace and toleration. Fisher (1979, 89), for example, began his memoir of his gruelling years as a Japanese prisoner of war in Burma with epigraphs from Pope (“Hope springs eternal in the human breast”) and Proverbs (“Hope deferred maketh the heart sick”).

McColl (1969, 613) was one of the few geographers to study the violence of decolonization, examining how guerrilla warfare in Cuba, Indonesia, Malaya, Vietnam and elsewhere was the *modus operandi* of anti-colonial struggles and civil wars in newly-independent states, and why it was only proved successful when it produced a space in which it could be said “we have arrived”, a space that had been constituted aggressively, and heroically in the minds of insurgents. And the American geographer David Lowenthal was one of the very few geographers to pay close attention to Fanon, the anti-colonial theorist who saw violence as a significant, if transitory, step towards liberation. Lowenthal asked why, given their linked histories of slavery and racial oppression, the vehemence of the black power movement in late-1960s America had not reached the Caribbean. Pursuing Fanon’s

ideas about the mental and emotional brutality and scars of colonization, Lowenthal put this down to a collective “psychology of black self-denigration... [and] colonial emulation” and surmised that new national elites in the Caribbean were prolonging this “syndrome” by cosyng up to their former colonial masters and continuing to “treat the masses as recalcitrant or ignorant children” (Lowenthal 1972, 116-24).

However, and as Gourou (1968) related at the height of the radicalism of 1968, many geographers were much less concerned with the political vehemence and global-revolutionary impetus of decolonization than with a creeping and everyday geographical violence: with how the spatial fundamentals of life (food, shelter, land, community, custom and identity) were being torn asunder by capital, developers, militia and the state. They were concerned with what Michael Watts (1983), writing at the end of the period studied here, termed a “silent violence”. Geographers’s experience of war both prompted them to seek order and amity in human landscapes and sensitised them to the fragility of such concord. Many geographers with this experience were more concerned with these everyday struggles than with the blood and thunder of war and insurgency or the high politics of decolonization and nation-building.

Catherine Fournier-Guérin (2011, 50-51) argues that French geographers “were seduced by exotic landscapes and populations they deemed authentic”, saw the rapid urbanization of Africa as an aberration, and associated it with despair (corruption, disease, inequality, insecurity, and squalor). It was from this slant, she argues, that they transposed to a rapidly urbanizing Africa older stereotypes about the continent -- a “phantom” Africa. Yet more might be made of how Jameson encourages one to read the geographers working in this vein: as not simply conjuring with the decolonizing world through the distorting prisms of paternalism and primitivism, but also as producing credible and even subversive responses to the violent percussion of history and post-war development. They yearned for order and

symbolism in human landscapes and found them in what they saw as the serene, but fragile, links between environment and society. Their work brushed against the grain of both a putatively avuncular development geography and a politically ambitious radical geography, and against both capitalist and socialist, and colonial and nationalist, projects of modernization. They deemed such geographies and projects as too tightly geared to the categories and agendas of capital and the state, and to Western ideas of progress, and as too detached from everyday life and what decolonization meant at a local scale. French geographers (e.g. Pélissier 1966; Gourou 1971b) bemoaned how the juggernauts of development and decolonization denied peasants, migrants and ethnic minorities a stake in the future, and Wisner (1978, 86) later lamented how radical geography folded “environmental relations” too axiomatically into “spatial relations” through a set of “transformative functions” that reproduced the binaries of “bourgeois geography” by pitching a revolutionary urban proletariat (albeit one often deemed to be suffering from “false consciousness”) against a backward rural peasantry.

While remarkably few geographers read Fanon (1965, 128), some imbibed his message that the colonized had great misgivings about the “medicines” of colonialism, nationalism and development, and that “the gnawing away of the existence of the colonized [with these medicines] tends to make of life something resembling an incomplete death.” Gourou, Spate and Spencer argued that these prescriptions tore apart customary ways of dealing with change, that they were “tragedies of environmental and cultural miscomprehension”, as Gourou (1955, 111) pronounced in a paper on agricultural modernization and peasant resettlement programmes in late colonial Africa. In a paper on the Mau-Mau (Kikuyu) Uprising against the British in Kenya, Gourou (1954, 339) added that colonial regimes and post-colonial successor states sloughed off “the repressed fury of the colonized” at their peril. Similarly, in his widely used textbook *Asia East by South*, Spencer

(1954, 161) told American geography students: “one must be sympathetic to the wish of the holder of an ancient culture to retain that culture as they choose... [but] many in the Orient have wished for, and worked for, too full and too rapid an acceptance of the modern world.... [breaking up] a confederation of self-sufficient economies”. He also lamented how American geography continued to judge the world with “Occidental” models and norms (Spencer 1960, 35-36).

Such views chime with Fanon’s (1965, 128) claim that independence should not have been heralded “as the flowering or a development of an essential productiveness, but [seen] as a permanent struggle against an omnipresent death.” Gourou (1971b, 69) wrote of peasant populations and minorities being crushed (“*écrasé*”) between a vanishing traditional past and an alien modern future -- as suffering a kind of incomplete geographical death -- and opined that “the disappearance of the western powers did not augur an era of tranquillity and amity” but a disorienting, fractured and sometimes oppressive “*autarkie*” (national self-sufficiency).

Finally, importantly, and as a further means of connecting these problems of objectivity and violence, it is important to recall Mona Domosh’s (1991) feminist critique of Stoddart’s own telling of geography’s history in his 1986 book *On Geography and its History*, which revels in the forms of masculinism (detachment, entitlement, and heroism) that imbued geography’s modalities of exploration, classification and model-building. Spate’s ‘eunuch’ image might be used to bring this issue into the era of decolonization. Post-war geographers studied the gender dynamics of peasant households and agrarian structures, but mostly ignored the vital role that women played in independence struggles (an elision by no means unique to geography). And while largely avoiding bellicose imperial language that sexualized and racialized exotic colonial lands either as supine realms ripe for Western insemination or as failed and dangerous spaces of miscegenation, one of the very few female geographers working in late colonial (French and Portuguese) Africa, Suzanne Daveau (see

Sarmento 2018) reflects that this generation of male geographers (including her husband, Orlando Ribeiro, Portugal's leading tropical geographer) barely noticed, let alone queried, the forms of masculinity at work in the passage from empire to independence. They barely acknowledged or unpacked either the colonialist's reliance "on a paternalist masculinity to legitimate their rule (i.e., our dependencies require our rule the way a child requires a father)", or the anti-colonialist's response "with a resistance masculinity (i.e., 'colonialism is emasculating;' 'decolonization is necessary for a return of masculine dignity')", as Vrushali Patil (2008, 196) widens and sharpens the point.

## **Conclusion**

Returning to Driver's (1992, 26) formulation, it can be concluded that while post-war decolonization made geographers more aware of the "colonial and imperial themes" that "saturated" their discipline, the passing of geography's empire might be characterised as an uneven and tentative journey rather than an abrupt or decisive demise. Geography's empire did not die with decolonization, but nor could it remain the same. Geographers from different backgrounds and places within the discipline were receptive to change, but imperial thinking was not relinquished fully or quickly. Geographers saw decolonization as both a field of dreams and a zone of disillusionment. If a decolonial outlook can be found in their work, it was an ambivalent outlook, with some excited and others cynical about what was taking empire's place.

The paper has sought to explain why geographers wrote about many aspects decolonization while seldom using the expression. It has also been shown that Western geographers did not see empire or decolonization in identical ways, and that their engagement with the decolonizing world, and that of geographers from this world, was permeated by a more general disciplinary tussle between a 'concepts first' and 'adjustment to place'

geography (to use Gould's and Balandier's evocative terms), and with the former by no means prevailing over the latter. Furthermore, African, Asian and Caribbean geographers forged a geography 'after empire' without always or necessarily imbibing the revolutionary impetus of anti-colonialism or seeking to jettison Western geographical ideas and methods.

Most Western geographers were sanguine about a future without empire and sensitive to the sins of colonialism yet did not necessarily embrace the promethean post-war ideology of development, its incarnation in the nation-state, and its affiliations with the 'new geography' of the 1950s and 60s. For a small but significant group -- Brookfield, Gourou, Isnard, Mabogunje, Lowenthal, Munger, Pélissier, Seck, Spate and Spencer, to name just the most prominent individuals in the above story -- decolonization was not the same as development, and the nation-state was neither its ideal nor innocent vehicle. Decolonization was more precarious, convoluted, agonising and infinite than development, and each of these individuals had their own personal and professional stories, stakes in, and travels through this variegated process (and others, with different stories, might be brought into the frame).

Geography's empire persisted in the form of a dissimulated Eurocentrism: through exoticism and paternalism, and their inflections in localism and sometimes primitivism. Geographers sometimes wrote about the decolonizing world in conceited ways, "reduc[ing] the most human problems to comfortable, hollow notions", as Césaire (1955, 35) opined with reference to Gourou. Yet some also expressed a prescient concern with the ability of political elites, revolutionaries and modernizers to magic more egalitarian arrangements and a higher standard of living quickly into place, identified a basic misalignment between the interests of the general populace and the agendas of power-brokers (the state, militia, bureaucrats and specialists, and including academic experts), and rued what historians see as a widespread upshot of decolonization: "an unprecedented escalation of state intervention into the lives of rural people, their use of land, and the environments they inhabited" (Ross 2017, 352).



Revisiting the problems and vistas with which these geographers grappled is itself a way of asking about geography in decolonization. It is a way of asking about from where in the discipline, and in what circumstances, a colonial frame of mind lingered and a decolonial one might be discerned. It has been shown that post-war geography's entanglement with decolonization encompassed radicalism, reform, conservatism, change, opportunity and uncertainty, and that these scenarios and fissures did not come in neatly defined packages. Recalling the situations of decolonization within which geographers worked is also a means of articulating the idea that a decolonial agenda in geography will be diminished if it becomes disconnected from the history of decolonization and its everyday geographies (including geographers's lives) and convened in a more rarefied or theoretically cloistered politics of knowledge. These everyday matters, drawn here from a relatively unexplored facet of geography's past, are what remain after postcolonial and decolonial modes of criticism have done their work on the categories, conventions, logic and precepts of coloniality. They are what is left, what there is still to know, and what might still be mobilized to probe and challenge the legacies of colonialism, the vestiges of geography's empire, and the unfinished work of decolonization.

While the post-war geographical material assembled in this paper -- much of it fringe material -- does not come from the same time and place as a latter-day postcolonial geography or current decolonial thinking within the discipline, and some of it may now seem dated, it does not simply amount to a pre-critical back story to more sophisticated theoretical ventures to come. Post-war geography jostled in some interesting ways with decolonization, and geographers posed questions that have subsequently been taken up in postcolonial and decolonial debates. Such connections between the past and present should not be forced. But the historical concern expressed in this paper might be given a firmer berth in the longer and wider arc of geography's empire, and not least as a reminder that, as Seloua Boulbina (2018,

3-7) observes, “the stakes and issues of decolonization are always plural, entangled, interlocked.” The geographical texts and voices reconnoitred above reveal that post-war geographers did not see decolonization as either a neatly clipped event or an easily quantifiable transformation, but as a fluid, emotive, fraught and infinite passage. This recognition underscores the wider postcolonial claim (now well made across the discipline) that “it is impossible to draw a clear or straight line between a geography that was once complicit in empire and one that is now not” (Clayton 2011, 50). Vigilance regarding the colonizing sway and subterfuges of academic knowledge and study, and the meaning of and ambiguities surrounding decolonization and the decolonial within and beyond geography, is needed on multiple fronts and horizons.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am very grateful to Nik Heynen, the anonymous referees, audiences in Glasgow, London, and St Andrews, and colleagues from around the world -- Trevor Barnes (as ever), Gavin Bowd (also for help with the French translations), Paul Claval, Felix Driver, Katherine Gibson, Yves Lacoste, and João Sarmiento -- for their valuable input. Any infelicities should be laid at my door.

## References

Balandier, G. 1966. The colonial situation: A theoretical approach. In *Social change: The colonial situation*, ed. by I. Wallerstein, 34-61. Orig. pub. 1951. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Barnes, T.J., and M. Farish. 2006. Between regions: Science, militarism, and American geography from World War to Cold War. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96 (4): 807-826.

Barnes, T.J., and E. Sheppard, eds. 2019. *Spatial histories of radical geography : North America and beyond*. Hoboken NJ : Wiley.

Bataillon, C. 2006. Six géographes en quête d'engagement: du communisme à l'aménagement du territoire [Six geographers and their committed research: from communism to spatial planning]. *Cybergeo: European Journal of Geography* 341. <http://cybergeo.revues.org> (accessed July 22, 2010).

Baudouin, A. 2003. Reclus, a colonialist? *Cybergeo: European Journal of Geography* 239. <http://cybergeo.revues.org> (accessed July 22, 2010).

Betts, R. 2012. Decolonization: A brief history of the word. In *Beyond empire and nation: The decolonization of African and Asian societies, 1930s-1970s* ed. by E. Bogaerts and R. Raben, 23-38. Lieden: KITLV Press.

Bhambra, G. 2014. Postcolonial and decolonial dialogues. *Postcolonial Studies* 17 (2): 115-121.

Blaut, J.M. 1970. Geographic models of imperialism. *Antipode* 2 (1): 65-85.

Blunt, A., and J. Wills. 2000. *Dissident geographies: An introduction to radical ideas and practice*. London: Prentice Hall.

Bonnett, A. 2003. Geography as the world discipline: Connecting popular and academic geographical imaginations. *Area* 35 (1): 55-63.

Boulbina, S.L. 2018. Decolonization. *Political concepts: A critical lexicon*, Issue 5 <https://www.politicalconcepts.org/decolonization-seloua-luste-boulbina/> (accessed January 3, 2019)

Bowd, G., and D. Clayton. 2013. Geographical warfare in the tropics: Yves Lacoste and the Vietnam War. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 103 (4): 627-646.

Bowman, I. 1948. The geographical situation of the United States in relation to world policies. *Geographical Journal* 112 (4): 129-142.

Brookfield, H. 1973. On one geography and a third world. *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* 58 (1):1–20.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1984. Experiences of an outside man. In *Recollections of a revolution: Geography as spatial science*, ed. by M. Billinge, D. Gregory and R. Martin, 27-38. London: Macmillan

Buettner, E. 2016. *Europe after empire: Decolonization, society, and culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Butlin, R. 2009. *Geographies of empire: European empires and colonies c.1880–1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Césaire, A. 1955. *Discours sur le colonialisme [Discourse on colonialism]*. Paris: Presence Africaine.

Chakrabarty, D. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Child, E. C., and T.J. Barnes. 2018. American imperial expansion and area studies without geography. *Journal of Historical Geography*. [doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2018.08.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2018.08.001) (accessed December 20, 2018)

Clayton, D. 2011 Colonizing, settling and the origins of academic geography. In *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to human geography*, ed. by J. Agnew and J. Duncan, 50-70. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Cooper, F. 2014. French Africa, 1947-48: Reform, violence, and uncertainty in a colonial situation. *Critical Inquiry* 40 (4): 466-478.

Craggs, R. 2014. Postcolonial geographies, decolonization, and the performance of geopolitics at Commonwealth conferences. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 35(1): 39-55.

Darkoh, M.B.K. 1992. Geography, research and development in eastern and southern Africa: The challenge. *Journal of Eastern African Research & Development* 22 (1): 1-10.

Darwin, J. 2006. *The end of the British Empire: The historical debate*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Debenham, F. 1955. *Nyasaland: The land of the lake*. London: HMSO.

Delavignette, R. 1972. "L'Afrique de Pierre Gourou et le point de vue de l'administrateur [Pierre Gourou's *L'Afrique* from the point of view of the administrator]. In *Etudes de géographie tropicale offertes à Pierre Gourou*, 279-286. Paris: EHESS.

Doeppers, D.F. 1972. An incident in the PRRI/Permesta of 1958, *Indonesia* 14: 182-195.

Domosh, M. 1991. Toward a feminist historiography of geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16 (1): 95-104. doi/org/10.2307/622908

Dresch, J. 1979. *Un Géographe au déclin des empires* [*A geographer in the decline of empires*] Paris: Maspero.

Driver, F. 1992. Geography's empire: Histories of geographical knowledge. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10(1): 23-40.

East, W.G., O.H.K. and Spate eds. 1950. *The changing map of Asia: A political geography*. London: Methuen.

Fairchild, W.B. 1965. The Twentieth International Geographical Congress, London, 1964. *Geographical Review* 55 (1): 91-97.

Fanon, F. 1961. *Les damnés de la terre* [*The wretched of the earth*]. Paris: Maspero.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1965. *Studies in a dying colonialism*. Trans. by H. Chevalier. London: Monthly Review Press.

Fisher, C.A. 1968. Introduction. In *Essays in political geography*, ed. by C. Fisher, 1-17. London: Methuen.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1979. *Three times a guest: Recollections of Japan and the Japanese, 1942-1969*. London: Cassell.



Fournier-Guérin, C. 2011. Les villes d'Afrique subsaharienne dans le champ de géographie française et de la production documentaire: une géographie de villes 'fantômes'? [Sub-Saharan Africa cities in the fields of French geography and documentary production: a geography of 'ghost' cities?]. *L'Information géographique* 75 (2): 49-67.

Gibson-Graham, J.K. 2004. Area studies after poststructuralism. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 36 (3): 405-419.

Ginsburg, N. 1973. From colonialism to national development: Geographical perspectives on patterns and policies. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 63 (1): 1-21.

Gould, P.R. 1960. *The development of the transportation pattern of Ghana*.

Evanston: Northwestern University, Studies in Geography, No. 5.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1970. Tanzania 1920-63: The spatial impress of the modernization process. *World Politics* 22 (2): 149-170.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1972. Review of *The spatial organization of society*. *Geographical Review* 62(1):138-139.

Gourou, P. 1947. *Les pays tropicaux* [The tropical world]. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1954. Les Kikuyu et la crise Mau-Mau [The Kikuyu and the Mau-Mau crisis]. *Les Cahiers d'Outre-mer* 7 (28): 317-341.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1955. Le 'plan des arachides': Une expérience d'agriculture mécanisée en Afrique orientale [The 'groundnut scheme': A mechanized agricultural experiment in East Africa]. *Les Cahiers d'Outre-Mer* 8 (30): 105-118.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1965. Review of *Geographers and the tropics*. *Annales de Géographie* no. 403: 326-330.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1968. Les paysans du Sénégal [The peasants of Senegal]. *Annales de Géographie* no.419: 100-117.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1971a *Leçons de géographie tropicale: leçons données au Collège de France de 1947 à 1970* [Lectures in tropical geography: Lectures given at the Collège de France 1947-1970] Paris : Mouton.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1971b *L'Afrique* [Africa]. Paris: Hachette.

Harrison Church, R.J. 1951. *Modern colonization*. London: Hutchinson's University Library.

Heffernan, M. 2016. Geography and decolonisation at the 1964 IGU. RGS-IBG Annual Conference, London. Paper presentation.

Hildebert, I. 1971. *Géographie de la décolonisation* [Geography of decolonisation]. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Hilling, D., and B.S. Hoyle 1970. Introduction. In *Seaports and development in tropical Africa*, ed. by B.S. Hoyle and D. Hilling, 1-12. London: Macmillan.

Howarth, O.J.R. 1954. The Commonwealth in the geography syllabus. *Geography* 39 (1): 5-13.

Howarth, O.J.R., and A. Herbertson, A. 1914. *The Oxford Survey of the British Empire*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Irving, E. 1971. Presidential Address. *Geographical Journal* 137 (3): 277-280.

Isnard, H. 1971. *Géographie de la décolonisation*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Jameson, F. 2016. *An American utopia: Dual power and the universal army*. London: Verso.

Jansen, J.C., and J. Osterhammel. *Decolonization: A short history*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jazeel, T. 2017. Mainstreaming geography's decolonial imperative. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geography* 42: 334-337.

Johnston, R. 2012. The institutionalisation of geography as an academic discipline. In *A century of British geography*, ed. by R. Johnston and M. Williams, 45-90. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kaatz, M.R. 1971. The geography behind the news. *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 33: 7-18.

Kimble, G.H.T. 1960. *Tropical Africa* 2 vols. New York: Twentieth Century Fund.

Kobayashi, A. 2014. The dialectic of race and the discipline of geography. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104(6): 1101-1115.

La Roche, J. and Gottmann, J. 1945. *La federation française* [*The French Federation*].  
Montreal: Éditions de l'Arbe.

de Leeuw, S., and S. Hunt. 2018. Unsettling decolonizing geographies. *Geography Compass*.  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/gec3.12376> (accessed January 4, 2019)

Lloyd, D. 2003. The memory of hunger. In *Loss*, ed. by D. Eng and D. Kazanjian, 205-228.  
Berkeley: University of Los Angeles Press.

Lowenthal, D. 1972. Black power in the Caribbean context. *Economic Geography* 48 (1):  
116-134.

Mabogunje, A.L. 1980. *The development process: A spatial perspective*. London:  
Hutchinson.

McCull, R.W. 1969. The insurgent state: Territorial bases of revolution. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 59 (4): 613-631.

Mulchansingh, V.C. 1970. A model approach to the understanding of the transportation network of Trinidad. *Caribbean Quarterly* 16 (3): 23-51.

Munger, E.S. 1961. *African field reports 1952-1961*. Cape Town: C. Struik.

Ocitti, J.P. 1971. A revolutionary school geography syllabus in East Africa. *East African Geographical Review* 9 (1): 3-10.

Patil, V. 2009. Contending masculinities: the gendered (re)negotiation of colonial hierarchy in the United Nations debates on decolonization. *Theory and Society* 38 (2):195-215.

Peach, C. (1968) *West Indian migrations to Britain: A social geography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pélissier, P. 1966. *Les paysans du Sénégal [The peasants of Senegal]*. Saint-Kreix: Hachette.

Raza, M. 1972. *A survey of research in geography*. Bombay: The Indian Council of Social Science Research.

Rose, H. M. 1970. The development of an urban subsystem: The case of the Negro ghetto. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 60 (1):1-17.

Ross, C. 2017. *Ecology and power in the age of empire: Europe and the transformation of the tropical world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Santos, M. 1980. The devil's totality. *Antipode* 12 (3): 41-46.

Sarmiento, J. 2018. Portuguese tropical geography and decolonization in Africa: the case of Mozambique. *Journal of Historical Geography*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2018.11.002> (accessed December 20, 2018)

Seck, A. 1971. *Dakar, métropole africaine* [Dakar, African metropolis]. Dakar: IFAN.

Seth, S. 2007. *Subject lessons: The western education of colonial India*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Shaw, W.S., R.D.K. Herman, and G.R. Dobbs. 2006. Encountering indigeneity: Re-imagining and decolonizing geography. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 88 (3): 267-276.

Shipway, M. 2015. Commanders with or without machine-guns: Robert Delavignette and the future of the French West African 'imperial nation state', 1956-58. In *The ends of European colonial empires: Cases and comparisons* ed. by M. Jerónimo and A. Pinto, 81-100. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Singh, R.L. ed. 1971. *India: A regional geography*. New Delhi: National Geography Society of India.

Singh, R. P. B. 2016. Banaras Hindu University, Department of Geography: Legacy and Vision. *Prajna* 61 (2): 269-297.

Smith, N. 2003. *American empire: Roosevelt's geographer and the prelude to globalization*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Soja, E. 1968. *The geography of modernization in Kenya: A spatial analysis of social, economic and political change*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Spate, O.H.K. 1954. *India and Pakistan: A general regional geography*. London: Methuen.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1956. The resurgence of Asia. In *The changing world: Studies in political geography* ed. by W.G. East and A.E. Moodie, 452-475. London: Harrap.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1959. *The Fijian people*. Legislative Council of Fiji Paper no. 13. Suva: Government Printing Office.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1963. Correspondence. *Geography* 48 (2): 206.

Spencer, J.E. 1954. *Asia east by south: A cultural geography*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1958. Independent Malaya: The problems of Malayanization. *Foreign Affairs Reports* 7 (5): 53-63.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1960. The cultural factor in 'underdevelopment': The case of Malaya. In *Essays on geography and economic development*, ed. by N. Ginsburg, 35-48. Chicago: Department of Geography, University of Chicago Research Paper No. 62.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1970. Review of *Pacific market-places*. *Geographical Review* 60 (3): 446-447.

Stamp, D. 1953. *Our undeveloped world*. London: Faber and Faber.

Steel, R. 1962. Tropical Africa: Land in rebirth. *Economic Geography* 38 (2): 176-80.

Stoddart, D. 1986. *On geography*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2000. Becoming -- and being -- Peter Gould. *Geographical Review* 90 (2): 238-247.

Taafe, E.J., R.L. Morrill, and P.R. Gould. 1963. Transport development in underdeveloped countries: A comparative analysis. *Geographical Review* 53 (4): 503-29.

Weiner, J. 2010. Obituary – Edwin Munger, 88. *Caltech* online.

<http://www.caltech.edu/news/edwin-s-munger-88-1627> (accessed July 4, 2016)

Watts, M. J. 1983. *Silent violence. Food, famine and peasantry in northern Nigeria*.

Berkeley: University of Los Angeles Press.

Wilder, G. 2015. *Freedom time: Negritude, decolonization, and the future of the world*.

Durham: Duke University Press.



Willhite, J. 2003. An interview with Robert McColl, Oral History Project, University of Kansas.

<http://www.kuonlinedirectory.org/endacott/data/OralHistoryTranscripts/Robert%20McColl.pdf> (accessed July 4, 2016).

Wise, M. 1969. The record: The 21<sup>st</sup> International Congress, New Delhi, 1968. *Geographical Journal* 135 (3): 476-477.

Wisner, B. 1977. *Viva os continuadores*: Child welfare as human ecological tool in national planning. In *Geography, social welfare and underdevelopment*, ed. by N. Smith, M. Forbes, and M. Kershaw, 47-72. Journal of St Andrews Geographers, Special Publication No. 2.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1978. Does radical geography lack an approach to environmental relations? *Antipode* 10 (1): 84-95.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2015. Speaking truth to power: A personal account of activist political ecology. In *The Routledge handbook of political ecology*, ed. by T. Perreault, G. Bridge, and J. McCarthy, 55-67. Abingdon: Routledge.

Wooldridge, S.W. 1947. Geographical science in education. *Geographical Journal* 109 (4-6): 198-207.

## Author Biography

Dan Clayton is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Geography and Sustainable Development at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, UK KY16 9AL. E-mail: dwc3@st-andrews.ac.uk. His research interests are in the area of colonial and postcolonial geographies, and include recent funded projects on twentieth-century tropicality, and the Vietnam War.

## Figure Caption

Figure 1. Post-war decolonization, 1945-1981.

---

<sup>1</sup> The few geographers who have considered post-war decolonization as part of a wider treatment of empire (e.g. Butlin 2009, 577-610) largely ignore geographers's work on the question.

<sup>2</sup> Only fleeting reference is made to Belgian, Dutch and Portuguese geography. Germany's colonial empire was confiscated in 1919 and post-war German geography was preoccupied with denazification rather than imperial decline.

<sup>3</sup> Just once in the title of essays in this journal (1973) and the *Geographical Journal* (1965); and twice in the *Annales de Géographie* (1969 and 1972) -- in essays on Libya, Kenya, Tunisia, and Morocco, respectively; and not at all in either the *Geographical Review* or *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers*.

<sup>4</sup> Geographers will be identified by their nationality rather than university affiliation (which, in many cases, shifted during their careers), research specialism or area of regional expertise (which, in some cases, likewise changed).

---