



Culture and Commerce in Conrad's Asian Fiction

Andrew Francis

Andrew Francis's *Culture and Commerce in Conrad's Asian Fiction* is the first book-length critical study of commerce in Conrad's work. It reveals not only the complex connections between culture and commerce in Conrad's Asian fiction, but also how he employed commerce in characterization, moral contexts, and his depiction of relations at a point of advanced European imperialism. Conrad's treatment of commerce – Arab, Chinese, and Malay, as well as European – is explored within a historically specific context as being both intricate and resistant to traditional readings of commerce as simple and homogeneous. Through the analysis of both literary and non-literary sources, this book examines capitalism, colonialism, and globalization within the commercial, political, and social contexts of colonial Southeast Asia.

Andrew Francis received his PhD from the University of Cambridge in 2010. He has published in *The Conradian* and contributed to *The New Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad* and is currently working on a book on economics, politics, and society in Conrad's Asian fiction.

Cover image: Nicolaas Pieneman (1809–1860). *The submission of Djepo Negoro to Lieutenant-General Hendrik Merkus Baron de Kock, 28 March 1830, which ended the Java War (1825–30)*. 1835, oil on canvas. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

Cover design by David Levy

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS
www.cambridge.org

ISBN 978-1-107-09398-0



9 781107 093980 >

Francis

Culture and Commerce

in Conrad's Asian Fiction

DOGE

CULTURE AND COMMERCE IN CONRAD'S ASIAN FICTION

ANDREW FRANCIS



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107093980

© Andrew Francis 2015

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2015

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Francis, Andrew, 1950–

Culture and commerce in Conrad's Asian fiction / Andrew Francis.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Conrad, Joseph, 1857–1924 – Criticism and interpretation. 2. Commerce in literature. 3. Imperialism in literature. 4. Colonies in literature. 5. Orient – In literature. 6. Malaysia – In literature. I. Title.

PR6005.O4Z6336 2015

823'.912–dc23 2014043736

ISBN 978-1-107-09398-0 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-47584-7 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

CULTURE AND COMMERCE IN CONRAD'S ASIAN FICTION

Andrew Francis's *Culture and Commerce in Conrad's Asian Fiction* is the first book-length critical study of commerce in Conrad's work. It reveals not only the complex connections between culture and commerce in Conrad's Asian fiction, but also how he employed commerce in characterization, moral contexts, and his depiction of relations at a point of advanced European imperialism. Conrad's treatment of commerce – Arab, Chinese, and Malay, as well as European – is explored within a historically specific context as being both intricate and resistant to traditional readings of commerce as simple and homogeneous. Through the analysis of both literary and non-literary sources, this book examines capitalism, colonialism, and globalization within the commercial, political, and social contexts of colonial Southeast Asia.

ANDREW FRANCIS received his PhD from the University of Cambridge in 2010. He has published in *The Conradian* and contributed to *The New Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad* and is currently working on a book on economics, politics, and society in Conrad's Asian fiction.

For Ann

Acknowledgements

The scope for acknowledgements becomes greater with age. Dr Theo Redpath, one of my undergraduate Directors of Studies at Trinity College, Cambridge, originally encouraged me in 1972 to study for a PhD. Professor Catherine Belsey supervised some of my undergraduate studies and her teaching added much that has lasted to my love of literature. I am also grateful to her for her continuing advice. I look back and thank too certain wise bankers of circumspection and probity under whom I trained and who in their profession read their customers and who looked, listened, spoke, and wrote with care and enquiry.

My thanks are also due to staff at Cambridge University Library for their valued assistance, including in particular: Imaging Services; the Inter-Library Loans section, who obtained even works that sometimes seemed hopeless cases; the Official Publications department and Bill Noblett, Head of Official Publications, who alerted me to the Library's holdings of Foreign Office Confidential Prints; the Rare Books department; the Map Room and Anne Taylor, Head of Map Department; and the Royal Commonwealth Society Collection. Other institutions to which I am grateful for help are: the Ancient India and Iran Trust Library, Cambridge; the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Faculty Library, University of Cambridge; the British Library; the Cory Library, University Botanic Garden, Cambridge; the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague; the University of Malaya Library, Kuala Lumpur; the Marshall Economics Library, University of Cambridge; the Modern and Medieval Languages Faculty Library, University of Cambridge; the Muzium Negara, Kuala Lumpur; the Nationaal Archief, The Hague; the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library of the National Library Board, Singapore, and Senior Reference Librarians Mages Periasamy and Timothy Pwee; the Centre of South Asian Studies Library, University of Cambridge, and Rachel Rowe, Librarian; and Trinity College Library, Cambridge. Thanks are also due to Ian Bolton of AVMG (Anatomy Visual Media Group), Department of Physiology, Development and

Neuroscience, University of Cambridge, for tireless help with the illustrations.

Permission is very gratefully acknowledged from the following: the Syndics of Cambridge University Library to reproduce five illustrations; *The Conradian* to reproduce, in re-arranged and partly revised form, my essays 'Recovering the Ethics of Economic Botany in Conrad's Asian Fiction' and "'You always leave us – for your own ends": Marriage and Concubinage in Conrad's Asian Fiction'; and Texas Tech University Press to quote from Andrzej Braun in *Conradiana* in the epigraph to Chapter 3. Every effort has been made to secure necessary permissions to reproduce copyright material in this work. If any omissions are brought to our notice, we will be happy to include appropriate acknowledgements on reprinting.

Most of the writing of this book was completed in 2009 for my PhD at the University of Cambridge Faculty of English. I owe much to this faculty, where I studied for nine years in all, and to the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages where I studied for three years. I benefited greatly from my fellow PhD students from 2005–09 and from the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Seminars of the English Faculty, as from the South and Southeast Asian Studies Seminars at the Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge. To Elsa Strietman of the Department of German and Dutch, Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages, University of Cambridge, I owe thanks for her continued enthusiasm for, and help with, my growing interest in Dutch culture and colonialism, and to Erna Eagar of the same department for her teaching for the University's Certificate and Diploma in Dutch which opened a door to Dutch culture and thinking. I benefited too from four years of study of Indonesian, and thank Felicia Nayoan for her teaching. I must also thank The Joseph Conrad Society (UK), and in particular Robert Hampson, as well as Keith Carabine, Laurence Davies, Hugh Epstein, Douglas Kerr (once a fellow-undergraduate), Owen Knowles, Gene Moore, Allan Simmons, and John Stape. The Society's members welcomed me warmly in 2006 and I have had many valuable discussions with them. My thanks also go to Heather Glen, Adrian Poole, Jan-Melissa Schramm, and David Trotter at the English Faculty, University of Cambridge.

In particular I would like to thank my PhD supervisor, Dr Rod Mengham, whose guidance, encouragement, and promptings of my imagination were so much valued and enjoyed, and my advisor, Dr Mara Kalnins, whose influence began on the Master's course she directed; and to both of them for encouraging the undertaking of my PhD.

Finally, I thank my wife, Ann, who wholeheartedly supported my studies and research, and our children, Timothy, Madeleine, and Mary, who, like Ann, always thought they were the best thing I could be doing.

Cambridge, April 2014

Texts and Abbreviations

All quotations from Joseph Conrad's writings are from the Uniform Edition (London: Dent, 1923–28), with the exception of the following works from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad* (Cambridge University Press, 1990–) :

- Almayer's Folly*, ed. Floyd Eugene Eddleman and David Leon Higdon (1994)
Lord Jim, ed. J.H. Stape and Ernest W. Sullivan II (2012)
Notes on Life and Letters, ed. J.H. Stape (2002)
A Personal Record, ed. Zdzisław Najder and J.H. Stape (2008)
The Shadow-Line, ed. J.H. Stape and Allan H. Simmons (2013)
Tales of Unrest, ed. Allan H. Simmons and J.H. Stape (2012)
Twixt Land and Sea, ed. J.A. Berthoud, et al. (2008)
Within the Tides, ed. Alexandre Fachard (2012)
Youth, Heart of Darkness, The End of the Tether, ed. Owen Knowles (2010)

The following abbreviations are used:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| CEW | Norman Sherry, <i>Conrad's Eastern World</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966) |
| CEI | P. Boomgaard, et al., <i>Changing Economy in Indonesia: A Selection of Statistical Source Material from the Early 19th Century up to 1940</i> , ed. P. Boomgaard, et al., trans. J.W.F. Arriens, 17 vols (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, 1975–96) |
| FOCP | Great Britain, Foreign Office Confidential Print |
| KITLV | Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde [Royal Institute for Language, Geography and Ethnology] |
| KPM | Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij [Royal Packet Company] |
| Letters | Laurence Davies, et al., eds., <i>The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad</i> , 9 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–2007) |

When the work by Conrad to which reference is made is not evident, the following abbreviations are used:

<i>AF</i>	<i>Almayer's Folly</i>
<i>BoD</i>	'Because of the Dollars'
<i>EoT</i>	'The End of the Tether'
<i>F</i>	'Falk'
<i>Fr</i>	'Freya of the Seven Isles'
<i>LJ</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>
<i>MS</i>	<i>The Mirror of the Sea</i>
<i>NLL</i>	<i>Notes on Life and Letters</i>
<i>NoN</i>	<i>The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'</i>
<i>OI</i>	<i>An Outcast of the Islands</i>
<i>PR</i>	<i>A Personal Record</i>
<i>Re</i>	<i>The Rescue</i>
<i>SL</i>	<i>The Shadow-Line</i>
<i>V</i>	<i>Victory</i>

Orthography and Translation

Place names are spelled as generally in current usage, unless in a quotation. Consequently, Conrad's spellings of, for example, 'Aceh', 'Bankok', 'Makassar', and 'Surabaya' (and the Dutch spelling 'Soerabaia') are usually 'Acheen', 'Bangkok', 'Macassar', and 'Sourabaya'. However, current usage also sometimes includes alternatives, for example, 'Macassar'.

Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine. For the avoidance of doubt these are occasionally stated as such.

'The experiences of a life spent in mercantile adventures hardly seem to contain sufficient interest to warrant their being made the subject of a book.'¹

'Commerce is the agency by which the power of choice is obtained'.²

'Commerce [. . .] is an affair of money and management; of a thinking man in a dark office, computing the prices of guns or worsteds.'³

¹ Ludvig Werner Helms, *Pioneering in the Far East, and Journeys to California in 1849 and to the White Sea in 1878* (London: W.H. Allen, 1882), p. iii.

² John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, 11 vols (London: Smith Elder, 1871–80), II: *Munera Pulveris. Six Essays on the Elements of Political Economy* (1872), p. 95.

³ Walter Bagehot, *Economic Studies*, ed. Richard Holt Hutton (London: Longmans, Green, 1880), p. 53.

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	page viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>Texts and Abbreviations</i>	xiii
<i>Orthography and Translation</i>	xv
Introduction	I
1 Commerce and the Edge of Colonialism: <i>Almayer's Folly</i>	27
2 Competing for the Prizes of Commerce and Overlordship: <i>An Outcast of the Islands</i>	49
3 Standing Out against the Irresistibility of Progress: <i>The Rescue</i>	65
4 Negotiating the Nets of Commerce and Duty: <i>Lord Jim</i>	81
5 Imperialism, Commerce, and the Individual: Appetites and Responsibilities in 'Falk'	117
6 Testing the West, Testing the Individual: <i>The Shadow-Line</i>	130
7 The 'Irreducible Minimum': The Plantation and Comprehensive Commercialization in 'The End of the Tether'	147
8 The Rise of the Commodity: Mining, Pan-European Financing, and Commercial Imagination in <i>Victory</i>	161
Conclusion	187
<i>Bibliography</i>	195
<i>Index</i>	215

Illustrations

1	'View of a Coal Seam on the Island of Labuan'	<i>page 2</i>
2	Extracts from the company prospectus for The Northern Tjiliwoeng Plantations, Limited	3
3	Map of Conrad's South-east Asia c. 1888	11
4	'A brownie of that enchanted garden that men call Java'	97
5	Map of central and southern Surabaya	183
6	Map of northern Surabaya	184

Introduction

In the way of business.¹

In the lithograph 'View of a Coal Seam on the Island of Labuan' (1847) (Figure 1), the viewer is invited to witness possibly the first footprint of the colonizer in what for the newly arrived Europeans is an unknown territory. The landscape seems to overwhelm the two British men admiring a coal seam in the jungle. The figure towards the bottom right-hand corner wears the uniform of a Royal Navy officer, representing the military power by which colonial intrusion was underwritten. The other figure, in white, perhaps a civilian, is someone whose commercial imagination may, in his enthusiastic gesture, see the opportunity for gain in this remote spot, like the remote island coal-mine in *Victory*. However, it is also an image in which place, at the point in time in which the men are looking, aestheticizes entirely the commercial object, the coal seam a setting for a cascading waterfall. Our attention is drawn not to the coal seam – which, without the title to the lithograph, would not be identifiable as such – nor to the figures, but to the play of light, in which patches of light, together with the huge palm on the left, assert the primacy of view, not of utility.

In the commercial discourse on activity evident in the extracts from the company prospectus in *The Times* (1910) (Figure 2), the opportunity for commerce has become reality. The undisturbed jungle view of the lithograph here becomes fragmented into components of company promotion and commercial assessment of risk. What in the lithograph is view, is in the prospectus possession and measurement – 'tenure' and 'acreage'; land has

¹ This phrase, which occurs at least three times in the Asian fiction (*OI*, p. 16; *LJ*, p. 269; *Re*, p. 69), refers to a person's business, as opposed to their personal, activities. As such it signifies the possibilities of congruence or opposition between these activities, possibilities that are part of the relations explored in Conrad's Asian fiction.