



THE UNCOMFORTABLE OXFORD PODCAST
A VERY BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Episode 2 - Thursday, April 23rd, 2020

THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

With Paula Larsson (P), Olivia Durand (O) and Waqas Mirza (W)

Edited Transcript

P:

Hello and welcome to the podcast *A Very Brief Introduction to the British Empire*. This is podcast is run by *Uncomfortable Oxford*, which is a student-led social enterprise which runs walking tour in this city of Oxford.

O:

Our goal is to raise awareness about uncomfortable histories from the past, and how they impact the modern world in Oxford and beyond.

W:

If you're interested in learning more about our various activities feel free to visit our website www.uncomfortableoxford.com

P:

My name's Paula Larsson, and I'm one of the co-founders and co-directors of *Uncomfortable Oxford*, currently studying My PhD in history at Oxford. I look at the history of colonial medicine in Canada.

O:

My name is Olivia Durand, and I'm also co-founder and director of *Uncomfortable Oxford*. My doctoral degree at the University of Oxford is in Global and Imperial History, and hopefully I am nearing the end of it! My own research centres on continental expansionism and settlement in the 19th century, especially in North America and in the Russian Empire.



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W:

My name is Waqas Mirza and I'm the executive secretary of Uncomfortable Oxford. I'm also a doctoral candidate at the university, and I work on 20th century French and English literature. My research more specifically focuses on the representation of the mind in the arts, bilingualism, poetry as well as hip hop lyrics.

P:

Now the British Empire is a vast subject and expands many centuries and multiple continents. Unfortunately therefore, we're not going to be able to cover all of it and hence the title A very short introduction. But we will be running monthly and releasing our lectures as we go so that you can hear about the history of British empire from the beginning of the Tudor reign to the middle of the 19th century, more or less.

Let's jump into the first lecture. So today's topic is going to be the Atlantic Ocean. So before we jump into it, I'm just gonna give Waqas and Olivia a little bit of a test. How well do you know the British Empire?

How many countries could you list right now that were at some point in time, part of the British Empire?

O:

Oh, that's a difficult one, because the boundaries have changed quite a lot over time. So to start in North America there's the U. S., Canada quite a few Caribbean Islands such as Jamaica Barbados, Trinidad.

W:

Well, I'm from Pakistan, So I'm guessing quite a few countries around there are probably also countries which were controlled by the British Empire, India, for instance.

O:

Many countries on the African continent - about 30% of the territory?

P:

Yes definitely. Do you want to hazard a guess at how many modern countries today, Britain has included in their Empire?



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W:

30? 40?

O:

I'll say in the sixties.

P:

Yeah, that's 63 modern day countries and that doesn't include the current fourteen overseas territories that still exist as part of Britain. Just also that doesn't include the countries that were never formally part of the empire but had been invaded by so of all of the member states today in the United Nations there are only 22 that have never been invaded by the British. So there's a lot of the world that Britain has gone over and laid claim to in its time.

And the British Empire is also not a very static united entity and so we talk about it as if it's the Empire but many territories at one point are kind of gained and lost and regained and retained over a long period of time and each of them have different legal status within the British Empire, and they often change between the gain and loss of locations.

We often hear something called the peak of the Empire, and that is considered to be in the 1920s, actually, because Britain gained numerous territories from the first World War conflict itself.

I want to review before we jump into the Atlantic Ocean, the different names for imperial territories so that it's kind of what we're talking about. So you have colonies, these are places of permanent settlement where the Crown has absolute sovereignty and they have English Common Law as part of the colony. Generally, they were later granted responsible Government of some sorts, so Canada is a really example. So also, for instance, Jamaica, Bermuda.

There are protectorates, a territory which is not formally annexed by Britain, but Britain has control over is called a protectorate because it gains British protection in return for control of his foreign affairs. Yet internally, it will maintain its own control over internal affairs. So the example of this would Malta for instance and Cyprus. They were protected from other usually other European nations or other empires by the British but internally had control of their own domestic affairs.

Then we have dominions, which is usually the status of a colony after it's been granted, you know, in semi-independence and so far of specifically responsible government, Canada is a dominion, for instance, so is Australia and New Zealand. Newfoundland before joining Canada was a dominion as well.



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Mandates. This is the legal status for one country when it's transferred to the control of another by, specifically the League of Nations after the first World War. So in theory these territories were governed on behalf of the League of Nations for the benefit of the inhabitants, for example, Togoland and Palestine and Mesopotamia, historically modern day Iraq. Those were mandates and they were given over to the British for protection or for governance on behalf of their inhabitants.

O:

And just to think about the terminology, there were not just British mandates but also several French mandates at the end of the first World War. So Britain and France to some extent, got to divide and control many modern day countries across former parts of the Ottoman Empire, right?

P:

Definitely, so I think a lot of these terms, although we use them to talk of the concept Empire, they're not exclusive to the British Empire. There are many European countries creating Empires Worldwide and there's one specific term British Raj which you probably have heard thrown about, which refers to specifically the British control of the Indian Peninsula, which is modern day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

So Age of Exploration. That's what we're beginning with. But is it really the Age of Exploration for the Europeans? For the Europeans, absolutely, they're going out to explore places they've never been, but for the rest of the world which lived in those places, which had already been living space for a long time. They were not exploring anything.

So what is a better name for this time period? One that's less European focused and more representative of what actually happened during this time period?

W:

The Age of Colonization?

O:

Age of conquest?. Not all countries were colonized, but in the case of China, the forced interaction with European powers from the middle of the nineteenth century is referred to as the Century of Humiliation. That could be a different perspective on the idea of age of exploration.



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P:

When we wave this lecture we had 'Age of Exploitation' as well, because one of the main tasks of Empire was to exploit the resources you could find worldwide. But what we call the Age of Exploration but this is a really a European centric view because for Europeans they're out there exploring discovering new things in the world and for the rest the world you have foreigners coming in and invading your country, forcing you to give up your resources to change your way of life and to be part of their Empire. So it was a very different view, just want to problematise that, Andi said. You know, we think that the Age of Exploration is quite problematic.

So just give you a timeline generally about what we're looking at here. We're gonna start in 1536 and talk about the colonization of Ireland because most people don't think about colonization beginning within the British Isles himself. This begins in the Tudor era under Henry VIIIth, although there was presence there, of course, much earlier, English presence. But then it's especially solidified under Elizabeth, his daughter, and then we're going to move forward to talk about the colonisation of the Americas, the Caribbean and working our way more or less to the 16th and 17th hundreds.

1517 is the beginning of the Reformation, and this is a huge change in British foreign policy. The Reformation really took hold across Europe and the unification of Europe under one religion, catholicism, which, historically, it had always been. This is suddenly over. England also breaks with Catholicism's in 1533. They left the church Henry VIIIth established the Anglican Church with himself as its new leader. Seizing incredible amounts of church land and wealth all over England. And this makes a big difference to what England is able to do because it now suddenly has a ton of wealth.

But also, you have a bit of a concern, because now England is no longer Catholic yet it's surrounded by Catholics, and Henry is concerned about how much power the Catholic Church has around him. So, he says, to look westward to Ireland. He decides to invade the country to bring it under the full control of England because it was it was very Catholic, and partly because the Earls in charge had been working with the Catholic French.

There was a fear that Ireland could be used to launch attacks against England from these rival powers. And also, of course, Henry just wanted more land and wealth, so he looked towards Ireland.

Now Ireland at the time was Gaelic with a bit of splash of Norman English presence. It was dominantly Catholic, and had Christianized very early, of course, you've heard of Saint Patrick's Day, which is the big celebration of the Irish Catholic tradition. It had strong ties itself to the Pope. It had its own Parliament and a charter of rights, much like the Magna Carta. But it was not a unified whole, rather, it was a question of clans and families who shared power at the time.



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So Henry begins by subduing the family with the most power, which is called the Fitzgerald Dynasty. In theory, they were supposed to be the caretakers of English power in Ireland but the Fitzgeralds had previously organized a few rebellions against Henry and once he had put down that rebellion, he went about securing his power. Henry was smart about it, and he recognized the titles and lands of the Native Lords as long as they submitted to him as King and this is a key mechanism of power creation. If you can give the ruling elite that was there first the power and recognition as long as they submit to you as King. Then you have less resistance more or less, because it's not like they're losing as much as they had if you completely stripped them of their titles.

But that doesn't mean you're not going to *threaten* to strip them of their titles. And so what happens is he starts a policy called *Surrender and Regrant*, meaning they will surrender first, and then he will regrant them all their power.

So he appoints a Lord Deputy and a Privy Council to oversee this area, and this creates a lot of problems. He gains power, but you can see a lot of lasting legacies from this. There is a Catholic Protestant divide, which took the form of especially the Troubles more recently.

There is the beginning of English absolute power, which again shaped that divide within the island of Ireland and then there's this pattern that begins of first rebellion and then internal conflict.

O:

And wasn't Ireland Britain's first settlement colony as well, with many English and then Scottish settlers going to live in Ireland. And that's one of the reasons why there is such an antagonistic divide between Catholics and Protestants - between native populations and settlers.

P:

Yeah, definitely. I mean the English being Anglican and then the Catholics being the local population, that does start those early divides. Since this is what you study, do you want to explain what settler colonialism is?

O:



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So settler colonialism is a particular type of colonialism, it is also sometimes referred to as creating “white dominions”, because it entails a mass migration of families from Europe into colonized lands. It is different from other forms of colonization that were mostly for trade purposes. In these colonies - India for example - there was only a very small number of foreigners, mostly working in trade and administrative jobs, and there was no demographic displacement of the native population.

In settler colonies, individuals and later whole families undertook a long one way voyage with the goal of settling in the land, and then becoming the new ‘native’ populations of the colonies, with several generations of settlers being born, growing up, and remaining in those dominions. So the United States or the earlier British thirteen colonies in North America were settler colonies.

Canada was a settler colony, so were Australia and New Zealand, and to some extent but in more complicated ways, South Africa falls in this category. Although most of these colonies are independent countries today, there is still a lot of tensions because it's impossible to really decolonize a settler colony. Since a lot of the generations of European settlers now consider the land to be the land of their forefathers, there is a double standard of belonging and nativity. And it erases the histories, voices, and presence of indigenous populations.

P:

There's a really big difference, because it creates this long term presence that really what leads to real control over any country. So that's a big problem in Canada right now of course, are Indigenous populations. That or taking off the land through a treaty process where they signed treaties, but those treaty promises were never properly honored, and the things that were promised for never properly given, but they were still able to push Indigenous peoples off their lands into these reserves we created. And that is so that settlers from Europe could come in and settle and that means that now people today think ‘this is mine, I was on that land. My parents were on that land’.

But they're forgetting that that land before their grandparents, before their great grandparents, was a land that was used by indigenous population and so land itself and the concept of ownership is really intrinsic to this colonization process.

So that's the beginning of the brief overview of Ireland.

Now, Of course, there is a more modern history that goes hand in hand with this. We're just talking about the beginning of the Empire here and one of the first steps for Empire was Ireland.

W:



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So what was happening in North America before they actually arrived there?

P:

So before the Europeans arrived, North America was a thriving continent. It had about seven million people. And that estimate is quite contentious, because lots of people say it is 20 million, or even more than that. And it's really difficult for us to have a modern day estimate of how many people actually resided in North America because of the huge decline in population over time, But it's generally accepted at least seven million people were already there.

There were 10 major ethnic regions and thousands of unique tribal cultures that existed. But after Henry dies, and his daughter Elizabeth later takes over, you have the beginning of colonization of North America.

That English at this moment, were currently in conflict with the Spanish. The Spanish had already conquered territories in Meso in South America, especially those were gold rich territories. They had conquered the Inca, the Aztec, the Mayan people.

They had subjugated them for general slave extraction. And they used them to mine different materials, and there was horrific death rates in the Spanish slave areas. But the English, then began to harass and loot Spanish boats that have been transporting these valuable gold rich resources back from South America. The English thought, okay, this is very wealthy. Clearly, there's lots of good stuff to get in the Americas. We need to have a piece as well. So under Elizabeth men like John Cabot, John Smith, Walter Raleigh began expeditions for finding territories that the English could then claim as their own.

British ships arrived and they started establishing some fishing colonies in what is modern day Newfoundland on the east coast of Canada, and they began a process of colonization, these permanent settlement colonies on the east coast of North America, starting in the early 1600s.

So, quiz: What are the original 13 colonies of the United States of America?

O:

Virginia, Pennsylvania. State of New York, Massachusetts.

W:

New Jersey.

O:

New Hampshire



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P:

Doing well guys!

O:

The Carolinas?

P:

Yes, later divided.

O:

Georgia.

W:

Connecticut.

O:

Maryland perhaps?

P:

You got Maryland. It still exists !

O:

Rhode Island.

W:

I mean, I feel like this is very unfair towards other people who are not historians of settler colonialism!

O:



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Well I don't study this bit in detail!

P:

Well, you do study America, to be fair, Okay, okay. Yes. Basically the first 13 colonies, you did really well, much for that group of people at the pub did too, because I think they got like five. But also I'll give you the pass on the original names too of course.

So all the East Coast basically, and those were not just the only colonies because Canada was part of the settlement too. Well, we think of it as the United States of America. Actually, this was just British America: we have Canada East, Canada West, Newfoundland and Acadia.

O:

Yes, but there was not just British America, there was also a strong French presence as well in the Canadian parts at that point, in 1762.

P:

Exactly so there was definitely a French presence, especially in Northern North America, which is modern day Canada which is why Canada today speaks of course, English and French - because the French were there as well. Especially in fur trade.

O:

Yes, all the fur trappers.

W:

So this is very different from the whole 'Christopher Columbus discovers the Americas' narrative

P:

Yes. So the traditional jingle for that is: "in 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue." And that's the jingle of yeah, America being created. But ultimately, firstly he was never in the United States, at least the modern territories of it. And the story is not a wonderful Europeans go and they create colonies abroad.

It's a story of the seven million people who are already there, it is a story of especially smallpox. Not just smallpox but the typhus, measles, influenza, bubonic plague, cholera, malaria, yellow fever, pertussis, all those diseases in fact. There is an incredible devastation when the British arrive.



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So in 1986, Alfred Kaze came up with the idea of the Virgin soil thesis, and it's seeking to answer the question: Why did so many indigenous people die from the arrival of the Europeans? Not just from, you know, warfare and later subjugation, but especially from disease, especially smallpox.

And the idea is that Europeans living in Europe have had a number of endemic diseases - diseases, which basically you get in childhood that were not so intense, that you would usually survive through, such as chicken pox. We'll have chicken pox here presumably, you all had chickenpox?

O:

I think so.

P:

So it's not that bad of a disease. If you get chicken pox because we all get it at childhood, and when a child gets that, he gets like a mild version of it. And then it goes to basically very few people because most people already had it and so they're immune.

What happens when you have the Europeans arrive, smallpox, which was not as devastating previously in the past. It was there, it was definitely affecting populations, and there were cases of epidemics, but there were milder pox-like diseases that existed as these were childhood diseases.

But suddenly they reach a population which has never had the immunity ever present in them. And when that means it's able to spread well, it may start off as this very mild disease, but suddenly it's not stopped by the immunity of the community.

O:

So basically it spreads to an adult population that has never had those diseases in childhood. It is the same as when you have someone today who has never had chickenpox as a child, it is very dangerous for them to get it as an adult.

P:

Yeah, exactly. And not only that, but the longer disease can spread, the more it evolves into a more deadly disease, the more millions it has, and that leads to this huge devastation of the indigenous community. So North America, which has about seven million people, through this process, the population declines to barely 200,000 people. A huge decline in population.



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W:

That is huge.

O:

In how many years, how fast does the decline go?

P:

It's about the course of the first century, so it's not like right away. But as the Europeans arrived, the disease spreads a lot faster than the people do, so that actually tends to be one of the reasons why we have trouble with figuring out how many people were there first, because if the disease came to a community, then people would see the presence of disease and they would flee to other areas.

And then that disease would travel with them. The Europeans while they settled on the East Coast never saw the devastation happening in land. They all knew that this was a really big problem. There's definitely cases of English generals, specifically, you know, giving a smallpox blanket or at least ordering smallpox to be given to indigenous communities during that, like the tensions that happened.

They were well aware of what they were bringing and then the virulence of smallpox increases because of this new population in the ability for just spreading become more deadly. And then it starts to reinfect Europeans who should have previously been immune to it, too. So smallpox as a disease gets far more deadly because of this process.

But it is not the only thing that affects the population decline. We also have slavery. The first forms of slavery were called indentured servitude, meaning that an individual was indentured, so enslaved or less for seven years. Now this form of slavery was one of the original types that existed in North America, especially for the indigenous and some African people brought over by the Europeans, but also some of those Irish people that were especially political prisoners from the colonization of Ireland.

O:



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Also some English people decided to become indentured servants, because the contract they signed also included the transportation fee across the Atlantic, as well as some amount of food, clothing, and shelter.

P:

Yeah, Absolutely. So this is the original form that has existed in the 1600s - early 1600s. The type of slavery that we often think of when we think about slavery developed as time went on, so the enslavement based specifically on race. So John Punch is the very first black slave that existed in America in Jamestown in the 1660s.

And, of course, the British were not the only Europeans that we're creating systems of slavery.

O:

Yes, slavery was present from very early on in the Spanish and Portuguese Empire, although initially Central and South America had a much much larger indigenous population than North America. So at first, they enslaved massively indigenous Americans. But because of the rapid spread of epidemics, these populations were also on the decline.

There was also an ideological shift when this very famous controversy happened in Spain amongst members of the Catholic Church in 1550-51 - the Valladolid debate.

It was a moral and theological debate about the conquest of the Americas, its justification for the conversion to Catholicism, and more specifically about the relations between the European settlers and the natives of the New World. One of the debaters, bishop Bartolomé de las Casas, tried to prove that indigenous people had a soul - if it was proven that they had a soul, that would make it very much more problematic to enslave them because they were free men.

At the end of the debate, both sides claimed to have won - but ultimately, the treatment of Native Americans was improved, and conversion to Christianity ensured that some of their rights would be respected, although their populations were already on the decline. However, it had the consequence to accelerate the trade of slaves across the Atlantic from the African continent to Central and South America, and then later to North America.

P:

So this is really the beginning of enslavement based on race.

W:



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But I was wondering coming back to the population decline. Does religion have anything to do with it as well?

P:

Absolutely, as Olivia just mentioned here. The idea that you had to Christianize or you could Christianize an indigenous his population was a really big part of how Europeans gained control across a lot of these territories. So indigenous cultures were usually evacuated from their traditional lands because there was a recognition that those were traditional lands in anyway.

They were often put into what were reforms of Christian Colony communities, so they were indentured in those communities, where they would work the land. They would be part of a mission Society of some sort kind of like a self contained community that would create its own food and work on Christianizing but also in later terms that extended to the development of schools that were supposed to be christianizing them and the idea was that it was a moral, a moral imperative of Europeans.

That they had a moral duty to Christianize as well as civilize these communities, and that meant to get rid of the cultures that were already there to stamp out what were considered Heathen cultures. And the loss of traditional lifeways was a big part of that.

O:

And I guess there was a big imperative, also in terms of conversion when you get the wider picture of different European empires competing in North and Central America because you have Spain that's mostly Catholic and Britain that has recently become Anglican.

So in addition to the territorial tensions between the two Empires - the British and Spanish empires - in terms of land grab, they tried to use conversion as well as a way to get the allegiance or the loyalty of different native American nations.

P:

Yeah, definitely. So I mean the missions, the missionaries themselves were a really big part of the political tensions between European powers but then also creating alliances with different especially Iroquois cultures with the French and English.

W:



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I've heard a lot of the label 'British West Indies' what was happening around that time over there?

P:

So we've covered Ireland, covered North America generally, so let's jump into the Caribbean, British West Indies, historically.

Most people tend to think of British colonisation of the Americas in terms of the large continents that exist so modern day the United States and Canada. But actually the largest early settlements were not in those areas, but were set on the island nations, which make up the territories of the former British West Indies.

O:

Why are they called West Indies?

P:

That is because, of course, they were not the East Indies that existed where India was in the East. The original justification for exploration westward was to find a new route to China that be shorter because they thought, well, there was nothing there and then they found that they were in North America when they landed, and that's why Native People were called Indians and British West Indies are called the West Indies, so this belief that they were actually in India before they realized what that this large piece of land existed.

The territories that make up the former British West Indies would be including Bermuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, British Honduras, British Guiana, part of modern day Nicaragua, as well as numerous smaller islands, some of which today are still held as foreign territories of the United Kingdom's such as the Leeward and Windward Islands.

Settlement in the Caribbean began in 1625 and by 1650 there were over 44,000 English settlers in the region. So compare this to only 12,000 in Virginia. So a much higher amount of community had settled in the Caribbean. And many of those we originally transported as indentured servants. They would be indentured for seven years, as Olivia said to pay their fee and then they would get their freedom and be rewarded with land to establish their own plantation.

So this is an interesting change, here. So indentured servitude meant there was an end to it. You were indentured, but for a certain amount of time, usually seven years. This is not the case when it comes to other forms of slavery.



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W:

So what happens on these plantations?

P:

So plantations are cash crop, production house. Basically one crop that requires a large amount of land to be harvested. It's very labor intensive. And cash crops often are tobacco, cotton, sugar, indigo, the color of the dye itself, originally those were all kind of cash crops and sugar had originally been the mainstay for the Caribbean plantation by style. In fact, sugar really transformed the Island nations.

O:

So you mean that our present day sweet tooth comes from a story of plantation and enslaved labour and basically exploitation?

P:

By 1660 the population of white Europeans was about equal to the population of the African slaves that were imported for this labor. The importation came from Africa and this is a really important point to talk about what the slave trade did to Africa in a very generalized term, because it was quite often said. So when we have a talk, people say, 'Oh, but slavery existed first in Africa. You know the Europeans didn't invent slavery'.

That's true they didn't invent slavery which has been around for a very long time as a practice even the Romans, of course, took slaves. But what they did was they invented racialized slavery, and that is the beginning of modern racism, the way we have it today, which is based on the skin color and the idea that there was a difference between indentured servitude and the slave does an indentured servant could become free after seven years. But if you were black and a slave, you could not.

That's a really big difference and in Africa, which was a continent of very diverse peoples living in large populations all over you had slavery that existed as part of, you know, intercity warfare. Different tribes could go to war and then as a byproduct of conflict, they could take slaves with them.

But now with the Europeans coming to the ports in West Africa there is not just a demand for slaves, but there is an incredible pressure to get more and more slaves and to sell them to the Europeans. So you have a transformation in Africa, where communities which have slavery as a byproduct of war, and now are going to war to take slaves.



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That means there's greater defenses built to protect. And the guns and other types of weapons that the Europeans are bringing in to trade become really important because it protects your city from being raided for slaves.

And then you have this transformation of across many different communities that had previously always been different, but had to consistently go to war to take more and more slaves to feed this never ending hunger for slaves that the Europeans brought to Africa.

And then they would take the slaves on ships across the Atlantic Ocean to work on the sugar plantations. And then the sugar, which will be taken from North Americas from the Caribbean will be brought into Europe, especially England and then manufactured goods would go down to Africa and it creates this triangular trade which is often referred to as the Columbian Exchange.

O:

In the 16th century, Britain also got the Asiento, which is the monopoly on the slave trade in the Atlantic ocean, or at least the monopoly on the slave trade towards the numerous Spanish colonies. Britain kept the Asiento from 1713 to the 1740s, and in just 30 years they shipped about half a million slaves across the Atlantic.

P:

Yeah, actually, Britain is often remembered as the great abolitionist nation because they were the first to abolish slave trade, but no one ever mentions that of all European nations Britain was one of the countries that transported the most slaves across the Atlantic, second only to Portugal, and that is a fact that is often forgotten in these conversations.

So the population in the Caribbean was 44,000 English settlers by 1650. There was a bit of a decline as some of the originally settled settlers moved northwards. The indentured servants were given freedom then they moved northwards to get their own plantations. And the population of Europeans in 1660 was about equal with African slaves (26'000-27'000). But within 40 years, the number of slaves through this trade was far greater. So you have only 15,000 white Europeans to 50,000 African slaves.

And that tells you that this is a huge trade that's going on on as Olivia said, Britain is not just selling slaves into its own colonies, it is also selling slaves into all the other European ports, especially Spanish, where they have a monopoly on the slave trade.

So this type of trade itself is based on the system of mercantilism, which is an economic system that brought great wealth to England and later to Britain. So mercantilism is where most of the trade occurs, of course, over the oceans and the trading from port to ports, and this led to a



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huge economic gain, not just Britain because once the money comes in, and people could gain from this system without actually being slave traders.

The money from slavery went over into the colonies. And then the goods from the colonies came into England and into other locations and that wealth generated this huge income which today, you can see in the building of many of our beautiful buildings across the UK special Oxford here from just wealth that was generated from this type of trade.

And the fact that we think of it as isolated is actually just incorrect. A lot of this wealth and the wealth we still enjoy today came from the trade of people that happened across the Atlantic Ocean.

So that's the end of this early introduction. We only went up to the years 1700 and again a very basic introduction to the British Empire. This Empire itself is such a vast subject and spans so much of history and many continents, but this is a hopefully good introduction to the first steps towards the Empire.

W:

Yeah, and I guess this kind of leaves us with a number of questions to reflect upon: the benefits that Britain gained from having these colonies, the impact that it had on different indigenous people, and also the impact it had on other parts of the world for instance Africa.

O:

Yes, a concluding question is also what impact this very early colonization has on Britain or Western Europe today, how can we see legacies of this past in the buildings, in the things we eat, and the things that we're used to see in our daily lives in the twenty first century.

P:

And just the modern conflicts that are currently happening and the tensions we feel today. I mean in Canada, there's tonnes of tensions over the lack of honoring treaty promises to indigenous populations. The current intergenerational trauma of that Christianization and "Civilization", I say with quotations, process that damaged and brought many people into these consistent cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement and, you know, just general misery.

O:

And still in the Caribbean. We can see an uneasy relationship between Britain and different Caribbean islands and how people coming to Britain from Jamaica or from other Caribbean



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islands that were formerly controlled or are still controlled by Britain - how they are treated today.

P:

Yeah and of course, I mean the legacy of slavery itself, too. I mean, Britain began in America, and it's stuck around even after America became independent so that has led to of course, racial tensions that you still see today as well.

O:

In the next podcast, we will be looking at early British colonisation in the Indian Ocean. For these talks, we decided to go along oceanic units to try to show how those processes were happening in a very connected way, and were involving loads of different populations and were more than just one way routes from Britain into specific locations.

W:

For those listeners who want to learn a bit more is there a reading list somewhere?

P:

Absolutely. We'll put it on our website so you can come check us out.

W:

For those who want to attend the lecture as well, you're welcome to join us. They take place on the first Thursday of every month, in different locations across Oxford and are all listed on our website. Of course, due to the coronavirus restrictions, we have postponed lectures for the time being.

P:

Our website is www.uncomfortableoxford.com. And if you want to join us for these conversations, you can also come on one of our Uncomfortable Tours where we walk around Oxford and we show you the different buildings, statues and memorials that are in place as legacies of the Empire. So we have many different tours that run weekly. We hope to see you there!



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This podcast was made possible through support from TORCH, The Oxford Research Center in the Humanities. The music you heard is 'Wishful Thinking' by Dan Leibowitz.

We hope to see you on our future podcasts which should be released every month.