

## **2023 Graduate Student Paper Prize**

Kristen Thomas-McGill (UC Santa Barbara, advised by Erika Rappaport)  
“Deciphering Professional Interpersonal Relationships and Archival Practices through an Imperial Scandal.”

Kristen Thomas-McGill's conference paper on an imperial sexual abuse scandal in early-twentieth-century Ceylon, delivered at the PCCBS meeting in Riverside, is a model of compelling story-telling and careful archival reflection. Her insights into the colonial governor's handling of a scandal about the commanding British general in Ceylon begin with thoughtful imagining and exploration of the personal, professional, and imperial stakes of the matter for the governor, followed by careful analysis of the paper trail he left behind. Through this study, she sheds light on how the professional relationships so critical to the empire's functioning worked. Her careful consideration of the governor's consciousness of his self-portrayal in correspondence that he knew would form part of an official archive allows her to make sense of his writerly choices, while other archival sources allow her to reconstruct in real-time his dawning knowledge of the scandal and the steps he began to take. The paper offers substantive and important reflections on the making of the imperial archive, the functioning of imperial bureaucracy, the history of pederasty, and the nature of imperial violence.