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## Introduction

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### Carlo Morelli

Economic Studies,  
University of Dundee,  
Perth Rd, Dundee, DD1 4HN, UK  
E-mail: c.j.morelli@dundee.ac.uk

### Valerie Wright

Economic and Social History,  
University of Glasgow,  
Lilybank House, Bute Gardens,  
Glasgow, G12 8RT, UK  
E-mail: Valerie.Wright.2@glasgow.ac.uk

**Biographical notes:** Carlo Morelli is a Senior Lecturer in Economic Studies at the University of Dundee, Scotland. Together with Valerie Wright and Jim Tomlinson he co-authored 'The Decline of Jute' the study of Dundee's jute industry since 1945. His research interests include 20th century economic history and contemporary social policy linked to poverty and inequality.

Valerie Wright's research interests focus on women's employment in post-war Scotland and women's organisations and feminism in interwar Scotland. Her recent publications include: co-authored with Carlo Morelli and Jim Tomlinson, *The Decline of Jute: Managing Industrial Change* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011), 'The Prevention of Rural Depopulation: housing and the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes, c. 1917–1939', *Twentieth Century British History*, 23(3) (2012) and co-authored with Esther Brietenbach, 'Women as Active Citizens: Glasgow and Edinburgh c.1918–1939', *Women's History Review*, published online 17 January 2014. She is currently Editorial Administrator for *Gender & History* based in Economic and Social History at the University of Glasgow.

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This special edition of the *International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy* has a focus upon the comparative analysis of the jute industry in the UK and India. Jute, a natural fibre, is a textile whose durability due to its strength, flexibility in its use and cheapness in production is interwoven within the economic and political history of the two economies.

Jute sacking was essential for the transportation of agricultural goods, jute bagging was essential for the production of sandbags during times of war and profits from the jute industry led to the development of new financial and managerial bodies, investment trusts in the UK and managing agencies in India, which proved crucial to the wider history of industrialisation and internationalisation. Thus jute is of central importance to the growth of agricultural trade in the 19th century, the two world wars of the 20th century and the

process of industrialisation in both the UK and Indian economies. As such jute has played a major role in the development of managerial expertise, organisational structure and industrial development.

However, unlike cotton our knowledge of jute's importance to industrial and management history is significantly under researched. As a result this special edition plays an important role in bringing together a series of papers which address this gap in our knowledge of the process of industrial development.

Jute is in many ways representative of the industries of the first industrial revolution in the UK. Along with cotton, coal and shipbuilding the jute industry both generated significant wealth, a wealth which funded further investment in industry, the finance sector and international industrialisation, but also faced early competition from producers outside Britain as they too underwent industrialisation

Within India too, jute played a central role in the early development of Indian manufacturing. Jute became synonymous with the rise of factory systems of production, the creation of the managing agency system and the creation of an independent indigenous industrial class. Thus jute both created the ability of Indian producers to compete internationally with producers from the United Kingdom and simultaneously created a desire for independence from colonial control over Indian industrial development.

The first paper in the edition is by Gordon Stewart and locates the role of jute within the wider production of goods in the 19th and 20th centuries. As Stewart highlights jute 'inserted itself into the ordinary lives of people' and became integral to the history of industrialisation for over 100 years until the second half of the 20th century. With the rise of paper bags as substitutes, artificial fibres from the expanding oil industry and later bulk transportation and containerisation the jute industry increasingly faced substitution. Yet most recently it has again faced a renaissance as environmental and sustainability concerns have become of world wide significance.

Jute also played an important social role in the development of a specific gendered form of working class. Women's participation in the jute industry was again typical of textile industries. These developments are explored in two papers by Valerie Wright and Samita Sen. However as both authors illustrate this gendering of labour was neither constant nor identical across the two economies. The jute industry was a highly gendered industry with women workers making up the majority of the workforce in the UK and as much as a third of the much larger workforce in the early Indian experience. Alongside these gender differences were also to be found gender differences in the approach to the formation of trade union organisations and class ideology.

The ability of the jute industry to adapt to crisis is a recurring theme within this special edition. The two papers, first by Swapnesh Masrani, Ryan Parks and Peter McKiernan and the second by Carlo Morelli examine the response of the Dundee manufacturers to the problems of competition and relative decline in the interwar and postwar periods. Both papers identify the attempts to gain government protection from competition and the development of cooperative arrangements by the firms themselves through cartels and price fixing arrangements. The firms are shown to be highly adept at responding to a declining world market share and increasing competition from Indian producers. In the later period Morelli shows how the dominant firms proved capable of not simply adapting to the changing environment but also transforming themselves out of jute all together through a process of diversification.

The papers by Jim Tomlinson and the second co-authored by Amiya Kumar Bagchi and Panchanan Das locate the decline of the jute industry in Dundee and Kolkata within the broader themes of globalisation and political economy. The two papers together again identify similar and contrasting comparative themes in our understanding of the jute industry's place in the world and in the history of industrial capitalism. Dundee's jute industry is in many ways an early form of globalisation and Tomlinson examines how the transition away from jute may be understood as a retreat from globalisation. Within the Indian context the decline of jute, a 'sunset industry', is identified by Bagchi and Das with the crisis of profitability due to the falling rate of profit within the industry.

Together the papers in this special edition seek to identify both commonalities and differences across the experience of the jute industry in the two economies. In doing so, we seek to encourage a wider range of researchers to take a closer look at this under-researched textile industry. And, in particular to continue to examine the industry from a comparative perspective.