Asian Borderlands: Cross-Border Exchange and Extraction in Modern History

International Conference
University of Bern, September 2-3, 2024

Day 1. Monday: September 2

9:00-9:10 Welcome and Introduction, Moritz von Brescuius (Bern)

9:10-10:45 Keynote Lecture, Andrew Sartori (NYU)
Moderator: Stefan Leins (Bern)

10:45-11:00 Coffee Break

11:00-12:30 Panel I: Trade and Extraction in Northeast India

Arupjoti Saikia (Guwahati): Trading Nature at Empire's Edge: Marwari Merchants in Colonial Northeast India [c.1820s-1920]

Moritz von Brescuius (Bern): Never Within Borders: Assam Rubber Extraction and and the Quest for Sovereignty

Commentary: Debjani Bhattacharyya (Zurich)

12:30-14:00: Lunch at La Vita, Neubrückstrasse 70, 3012 Bern
Day I, Monday: September 2, continued

14:00-15:30 Panel II: Commodities and (Post-) Imperial Ambitions

David Bell (Berlin): A dangerous monopoly?: German merchants in the export of Bengal hides and leathers until the First World War, 1870-1914

Erika Rappaport (UC, Santa Barbara): All that Glitters...is Gold: Mining, Decolonization, and the Culture of Public Relations in Ghana during the 1950s and 1960s

Commentary: Ping-hsiu Alice Lin (Harvard)

15:30-15:45 Coffee Break

15:45-17:00 Panel III: Asian Environments and the more-than-human World

Corey Ross (Basel): Aquatic Émigrés: Fish Transfers and Inland Waters in colonial Asia

David Arnold (Warwick): The Migrant Cow: India and the Bovine Diaspora

Commentary: Christian Rohr (Bern)

17:10 Mid-Conference Commentary
Roland Wenzlhuemer (LMU)

18:30 Conference Dinner for all participants listed in the program at the Schweizerhof Sky Terrace
Day 2. Tuesday, September 3

9:00-10:30 Panel IV: Anti-Imperial Mobilities

Zaib un Nisa Aziz (Tampa Florida): Red Star Over Asia: China, India and the Revolutionary Promise of the National Movements

Harald Fischer-Tiné (ETH): Border-Crossing as a Political Strategy: Indian Globetrotting and ‘Touristic Anti-Imperialism’ in the Late Colonial Era (c. 1910-1940)

Commentary: Brigitte Studer (Bern)

10:30-10:45 Coffee Break

10:45-12:15 Panel V: The Political Economy of Empire

Valeria Giacomini (Bocconi): Southeast Asian Plantation Economy in the Late Colonial Era: Investment Overview and Environmental Impact (1890-1930)

Sanghamitra Misra (Delhi): The Long Conquest: Imperial Violence and Anthropological Knowledge in the Garo Hills

Commentary: Christof Dejung (Bern)

12:15-13:45 Lunch at Taj Restaurant, Länggassstrasse 43, 3012 Bern
Day 2. Tuesday, September 3, continued


Jayeeta Sharma (Toronto): Mountains of Empire: Extractive Pasts and Decolonizing Futures

Aniket De (San Diego): Chronicles of the Toiling Shiva: Labor, Performance, and the Making of the Bengal Borderland

Commentary: Tom Simpson (Warwick)

15:15-15:30 Coffee Break

15:30-17:00 Panel VII: Borderland Worlds

Bodhisattva Kar (Cape Town): Can the Headhunters Vote?: Deficit, Domicile and Other Questions of Representation in the Hills of Assam, 1919–35

Willem van Schendel (Amsterdam): A Hole in the British Empire: The “Free Hills” between India and Burma

Commentary: Kapil Raj (EHESS)

17:00 Concluding Roundtable and Discussion

Jayita Sarkar (Glasgow)

Ben Hopkins (Washington DC)

19:00 End of Conference Dinner at Restaurant Kirchenfeld, Thunstrasse 5, 3005 Bern

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