



CWEH Report 2017-2018

The Centre for World Environmental History (CWEH) was launched in May 2002 under the aegis of the School of African and Asian Studies at the University of Sussex. It was funded for an initial three year period by the Research and Development Fund of the University. CWEH has now raised funds from the Leverhulme Trust, the AHRC, the British Academy, The Canadian Social Science Research Council and the Norwegian Research Council for independent projects.

www.sussex.ac.uk/cweh

The creation of CWEH initiative was a response to specialist courses and research conducted by Sussex faculty for over nine years in tropical and 'Southern' environmental history at, what was then, AFRAS and elsewhere in the University and within the Institute of Development Studies. Sussex University has a long research tradition focussed on environment and development problems in the tropics as well as a close relationship with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), located on the Sussex campus, which is Britain's leading organisation carrying out research on social and economic processes and problems. Sussex University also has a solid tradition in radical history and the history of material culture and peasant society in the Global South, exemplified in the work of Professor Ranajit Guha and the Subaltern Studies School. Currently the Centre is located across History and Geography.

The Centre has a Director, Research Director, Faculty Associates, Visiting Research Fellows and Associates and Doctoral Associates. It has a close collaborative relationship involving frequent staff exchanges with the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India and the CNRS French Institute in the Union Territory of Pondicherry, India. The Centre is currently collaborating with Kew Gardens, The Botanical Survey of India, and JNU on a project on Joseph Hooker and India and with the British Library and the U.K. Met office on a project on historical records and climate change. It is also collaborating on other projects titled- Human environment interactions in the Indian Ocean World, 1500-1900 with the University of McGill, Canada, with IDS on uncertainty and livelihoods in India funded by the Norwegian Research council and with JNU on *Adivasi* colonial and post-colonial worlds.

The centre runs five networks:

1. Botanical and meteorological history of the Indian Ocean 1600-1900
2. Mines, water and energy network
3. Academia and Activism network
4. Historical climatology
5. Climate change and the humanities

CWEH's interdisciplinary perspective on complex issues is exemplified by its doctoral associates. It provides an intellectual home for both Sussex graduates and visiting graduates who are integral to contributing to CWEH's ever expanding areas of research. The multidisciplinary nature of CWEH research faculty means that doctoral students have access to a range of expertise as well as to contribute to it. They also form an active social community, organising workshops and networks. Visiting doctoral associates are also welcomed. The centre successfully bid for a Chancellor award and currently has a new PhD student Preeti x and also for Dr Sangeeta Das Gupta's visiting Asa Briggs fellowship from JNU, India.

Recent Funding

1. **2017-2018** Canadian Social Science research grant for a project on Human environment interaction in the Indian Ocean world with McGill university
2. **2017-2018** Norwegian Social Science research grant for a project on climate and uncertainty in India with IDS, Sussex,
3. **2017** Asa Briggs visiting fellowship
4. **2018** S.R. Peters visiting fellowship fund

New Funding

2018-2025 Canadian social science partnership grant with University of McGill (approximately 500,000 Canadian Dollars)

News

2017 Sussex collaboration with British Library and Met Office as part of the MOU signed to understand environmental change in the Indian Ocean continues with Rob Allan of the Met office and Dr Moon of the BL working closely with CWEH with regard to publications and grants.

2017 CWEH/ Kew sponsored exhibition on the Botanical heritage of the Indian Ocean travels from Kolkata to Delhi to the prestigious Indian International Centre in October

2017-2018 The Kolkata School project to bring school children to the Kolkata botanic garden is continued by the Botanical Survey of India for one year and continues to be very popular with school students, teachers and BSI scientists

2017-2018 As a result of the CWEH network meetings, the Natural History Museum raises funds to digitise over 100,000 Indian plant specimens as part of a digital repatriation exercise.

2017-2018 Following recent meetings convened by Centre for Environmental History, attended by Dr Paramjit Singh, Director of the Botanical Survey of India, who was also welcomed by the Asia Scotland Trust at a reception in the Botanic Cottage in the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in May 2017 there is a major funding initiative to conserve Roxburgh House and herbarium in Kolkata.

Recent publications

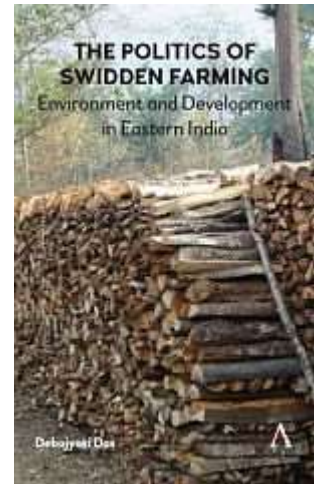
2018

The Politics of Swidden farming. Environment and Development in Eastern India

Debojyoti Das

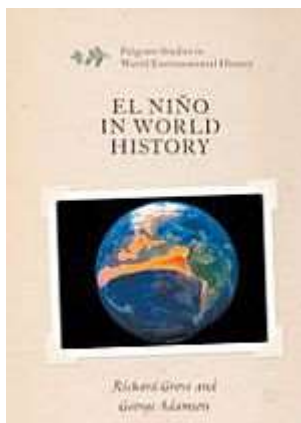
Anthem Press, September 2018

'The Politics of Swidden farming' is an ethnography of swidden farming practised – a characteristically remote, inaccessible and under-researched region of South Asia. The research ties on both archival-historical and contemporary ethnographic discourses on swidden farming and agrarian development among the eastern Naga community inhabiting the northeastern borderland state of Nagaland.



'The Politics of Swidden farming' offers a new explanation for the changes taking place in slash-and-burn (jhum or swidden) farming in the highlands of eastern India through an ethnographic case study. Today market-led agriculture is transforming land and labour relations. Jhum cultivators are beneficiaries of state schemes, including internationally funded, community-driven development or biodiversity conservation programmes.

The book traces the story of agroecological change and state intervention to colonial times (including post Indian independence) when Nagaland was seen as the frontier of state and civilization. Contemporary agrarian change can be understood by contextualizing farming not just in terms of the science and technology of agriculture or conservation/biodiversity but also in terms of technologies of rule. For the colonial administrators of the Naga Hills – who saw their role partially in terms of rescue and record ethnography – jhum practices were part of backward Naga customs and traditions. Improving farming practices was bound up with indirect rule as a distinct process of governance involving forms of knowledge and intervention. It was political expediency rather than imperial science that changed local agroecologies and pressurized shifting cultivation. Crucially, neighbouring Naga terrace rice cultivators were promoted as offering a more civilized – yet local – alternative.



El Niño in World History

Richard Grove, George Adamson

Palgrave Macmillan, 2018

This book examines the role of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) in society. Throughout human history, large or recurrent El Niños could cause significant disruption to societies and in some cases even contribute to political change. Yet it is only now that we are coming to appreciate the significance of the phenomenon. In this

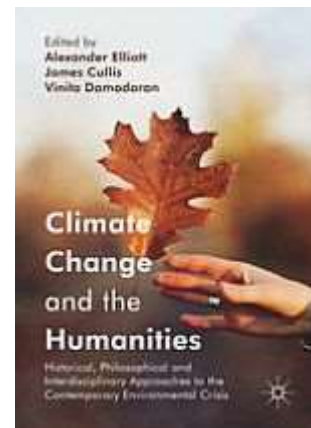
volume, Richard Grove and George Adamson chart the dual history of El Niño: as a global phenomenon capable of devastating weather extremes and, since the 18th century, as a developing idea in science and society. The chapters trace El Niño's position in world history from its role in the revolution in Australian Aboriginal Culture at 5,000 BP to the 2015-16 'Godzilla' event. It ends with a discussion of El Niño in the current media, which is as much a product of the public imagination as it is a natural process.

2017

Climate Change and the Humanities

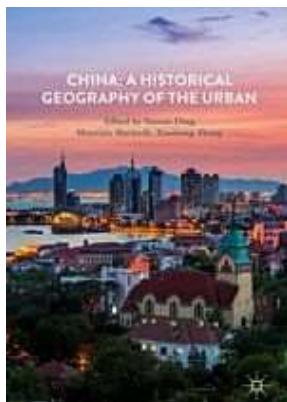
Alexander Elliott, James Cullis, Vinita Damodaran (Eds.)
Palgrave Macmillan, 2017

This volume of essays fills a lacunae in the current climate change debate by bringing new perspectives on the role of humanities scholars within this debate. The humanities have historically played an important role in the various debates on environment, climate and society. The past two decades especially have seen a resurfacing of these environmental concerns across humanities disciplines in the wake of what has been termed climate change. This book argues that these disciplines should be more confident and vocal in responding to climate change while questioning the way in which the climate change debate is currently being conducted in academic, political and social arenas. Addressing climate change through the varied approaches of the humanities means re-thinking and re-evaluating its fundamental assumptions and responses to perceived crisis through the lens of history, philosophy and literature. The volume aims thus to be a catalyst for emerging scholarship in this field and to appeal to an academic and popular readership.



China: A Historical Geography of the Urban

Yannan Ding, Maurizio Marinelli, Xiaohong Zhang (Eds.)
Palgrave Macmillan, 2017



This book offers a unique contribution to the burgeoning field of Chinese historical geography. Urban transformation in China constitutes both a domestic revolution and a world-historical event. Through the exploration of nine urban sites of momentous change, over an extended period of time, this book connects the past with the present, and provides much-needed literature on city growth and how they became complex laboratories of prosperity. The first part of this book puts Chinese urban changes into historical perspective, and probes the relationship between nation and city,

focusing on Shanghai, Beijing and Changchun. Part two deals with the relationship between history and modernity, concentrating on Tunxi, a traditional trade center of tea, New Villages in Shanghai and street names in Taipei and Shanghai. Part three showcases the complexities of urban regeneration vis-à-vis heritage preservation in cities such as Datong, Tianjin and Qingdao.

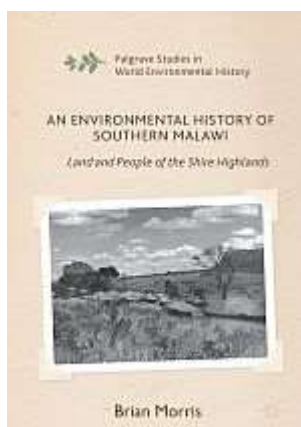
This book offers an innovative interdisciplinary and international perspective, which will be of interest to students and scholars of Chinese urban studies, as well Chinese politics and society.

Palgrave Studies in World Environmental History

The widespread perception of a global environmental crisis has stimulated the burgeoning interest in environmental studies. This has encouraged a wide range of scholars, including historians, to place the environment at the heart of their analytical and conceptual explorations. As a result, the understanding of the history of human interactions with all parts of the cultivated and non-cultivated surface of the earth and with living organisms and other physical phenomena is increasingly seen as an essential aspect both of historical scholarship and in adjacent fields, such as the history of science, anthropology, geography and sociology. Environmental history can be of considerable assistance in efforts to comprehend the traumatic environmental difficulties facing us today, while making us reconsider the bounds of possibility open to humans over time and space in their interaction with different environments. This new series explores these interactions in studies that together touch on all parts of the globe and all manner of environments including the built environment. Books in the series will come from a wide range of fields of scholarship, from the sciences, social sciences and humanities. The series particularly encourages interdisciplinary projects that emphasize historical engagement with science and other fields of study.

View all titles in the series on the Palgrave website

2016



An Environmental History of Southern Malawi - Land and People of the Shire Highlands

Brian Morris
Palgrave, 2016

This book is a pioneering and comprehensive study of the environmental history of Southern Malawi. With over fifty years of experience, anthropologist and social ecologist Brian Morris draws on a wide range of data – literary, ethnographic and archival – in this interdisciplinary volume.

Specifically focussing on the complex and dialectical relationship between the people of

Southern Malawi, both Africans and Europeans, and the Shire Highlands landscape, this study spans the nineteenth century until the end of the colonial period. It includes detailed accounts of the early history of the peoples of Northern Zambezia; the development of the plantation economy and history of the tea estates in the Thyolo and Mulanje districts; the Chilembwe rebellion of 1915; and the complex tensions between colonial interests in conserving natural resources and the concerns of the Africans of the Shire Highlands in maintaining their livelihoods.

A landmark work, Morris's study constitutes a major contribution to the environmental history of Southern Africa. It will appeal not only to scholars, but to students in anthropology, economics, history and the environmental sciences, as well as to anyone interested in learning more about the history of Malawi, and ecological issues relating to southern Africa.

Indian Forester, Scottish Laird / The Cleghorn Collection [PDF 568.44KB]

H.J. Noltie

Hugh Francis Clarke Cleghorn (1820–1895) was one of the many remarkable Scottish surgeons who worked for the East India Company, but who used an official posting as a base for research upon India's rich flora, and recording it visually in drawings made by Indian artists. His particular interest was in useful plants, which led to the major work in the field of forest conservancy for which he is best remembered. In 1851 he read a pioneering report on tropical deforestation to the British Association for the Advancement of Science; in 1856 he was appointed the Madras Presidency's first Conservator of Forests; and in the 1860s, with Dietrich Brandis, Cleghorn played a major role in setting up a structure for forest management in British India that, while providing timber for burgeoning commercial demand (especially railways), allowed an element of forest preservation for the protection of watersheds and climatic amelioration.



Toward integrated historical climate research: the example of Atmospheric Circulation Reconstructions over the Earth

Rob Allan, Georgina Endfield, Vinita Damodaran, George Adamson, Matthew Hannaford, Fiona Carroll, Neil Macdonald, Nick Groom, Julie Jones, Fiona Williamson, Erica Hendy, Paul Holper, J. Pablo Arroyo-Mora, Lorna Hughes, Robert Bickers and Ana-Maria Bliuc. Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change January 2016.

Climate change has become a key environmental narrative of the 21st century. However, emphasis on the science of climate change has overshadowed studies focusing on human

interpretations of climate history, of adaptation and resilience, and of explorations of the institutions and cultural coping strategies that may have helped people adapt to climate changes in the past. Moreover, although the idea of climate change has been subject to considerable scrutiny by the physical sciences, recent climate scholarship has highlighted the need for a re-examination of the cultural and spatial dimensions of climate, with contributions from the humanities and social sciences. Establishing a multidisciplinary dialogue and approach to climate research past, present, and future has arguably never been more important. This article outlines developments in historical climatology research and considers examples of integrated multidisciplinary approaches to climate, climatic variability, and climate change research, conducted across the physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the arts. We highlight the international Atmospheric Circulation Reconstructions over the Earth (ACRE) initiative as one example of such an integrated approach. Initially, ACRE began as a response from climate science to the needs of the agricultural sector in Queensland, Australia for a longer, more spatially, and temporally-complete database of the weather. ACRE has now evolved to embrace an international group of researchers working together across disciplines to integrate their efforts into a four-dimensional (4D) dynamical global historical climate-quality reanalysis (reconstruction).

Introduction: Human-nature Interactions through a Multispecies Lens

Alex Aisher, Vinita Damodaran
Conservation & Society, 2016

This introduction brings together a group of papers focusing on conservation theory and practice, and argues strongly for a new place-based conservation through a multispecies lens. Honouring the work of Brian Morris, a scholar who has consistently forged a persuasive set of conceptual connections between science and society, and building on his insights into environmental history and human-nature interactions, we outline a vision of conservation that incorporates new narratives – at the intersection between the ecological and the social – to reimagine the world in the Anthropocene. This includes challenging the persistence of fortress, neoprotectionist and other top-down forms of conservation, through a recognition that conservation is deeply rooted in (human, nonhuman and more-than-human) senses of place. The introduction urges scholars to focus on landscapes as units of analysis: 'multispecies assemblages' that are easily overlooked at other spatial and historical scales. It calls for increased attention to the contact zones where the lives of humans and other species biologically, culturally and politically intersect, as a counterpoint to the dominant planetary perspective of earth systems and conservation science. It underlines the importance of deep relational analyses of human interactions with other life forms, through renewed attention to multispecies histories, locality, and forms of knowledge rooted in place. It is at this level, through historically nuanced accounts founded on a more place-based conception of ourselves as a species, that new narratives and answers to our current predicament will emerge.

Recent seminars and workshops organised

27th September, 2018, University of Sussex Vedanta's Billions: Regulatory Failure, Environment and Human Rights

26th July 2018 Multiple worlds of the Adivasi panel at European association of south Asian studies

27th July, 2018 Conflict over Land and Resources in India's Adivasi (Tribal) Heartland: Workshop and Book Launch Maison Suger, 16 rue Suger, 75006 Paris

24 May, 2018 , University of Sussex

Book launch El Niño in World History By Richard Grove and George Adamson

20th March, 2018 Book Launch Climate Change and the Humanities, Alexander Elliot, James Cullis and Vinita Damodaran, eds

13 June 2017

Environmental histories of India and the Indian Ocean world [PDF 16.66MB]

Workshop and festschrift launch

10 May 2017

India and the Settler Colonies - Environmental Networks [PDF 413.87KB]

Dr Ruth Morgan (Monash), Prof Alan Lester (Sussex) and Prof Deepak Kumar (Nehru)

30 March 2017

International Seminar on Forests, Sacred Groves and the Environmental heritage of India

Ashutosh Centenary Hall, Indian Museum, Kolkata

3 February 2017

Etchings in Time: Nature, Climate and Geography

A conference in honour of A.T. (Dick) Grove

13 January 2017

Workshop on **Tribal India**

International Visitors to CWEH - 2017-2018

Dr Sangeeta Das Gupta (JNU)

James Simpson (Asia Scotland Trust)

Antonia Moon (British Library)

Ravi Rajan (University of Santa Cruz)

Alex McGuinness (University of McGill)

Raymond Ruhaak (University of Liverpool)

Rob Allan (Met office)Shanshan Ye (Tsingua University China)

Felix Padel (JNU)

Media coverage for CWEH exhibitions

<https://thewire.in/74911/janaki-ammal-magnolia-kobus/>

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/Kolkata-celebrates-botany-legend-Janaki-Ammal/article16073012.ece>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uVKx2gSLt8>

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/scholar-rues-leadership-crisis-in-subaltern-polity/articleshow/57831930>.

Media coverage for work on Janaki Ammal March, 2018,

<http://www.thehindu.com/society/the-first-indian-woman-botanist-e-k-janaki-ammal-ought-to-be-more-widely-known-for-her-huge-contributions-to-science-but-she-remains-unknown-within-the-country-and-outside-academic-circles-and-even-our-textbooks-have-failed-to-teach/article23001501.ece>

Current Partners

See www.sussex.ac.uk/cweh

