

Report on

Environmental History and Politics of South Asia

A One day workshop for Postgraduate Students

University of Sussex, 10th May 2016, Fulton 201, Brighton

Introduction

I organized a one day workshop on “Environmental History and Politics of South Asia” on 10th May 2016, under the auspices of Centre for World Environmental History (CWEH), University of Sussex for doctoral researchers and early career researchers, studying at this university. It was mainly supported by Doctoral School’s Researcher-Led Initiative (RLI) Fund, along with this funding was also provided by HAHP Research Fund, University of Sussex, and Sussex Asia Centre.

The progress of a society is determined by the intellectual strength of a society. Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities and its related disciplines like History can strengthen a society by integrating it and making it productive through societal changes in their behaviour and world-view. Thus, benefits of studying History are often intangible yet inevitable for a nation. History is normally not time-bound for determination of its benefits to a country. Quality research benefits a country in intellectual growth. Environmental History research is part of this endeavour.

Objectives and Goals of the workshop

This interdisciplinary workshop linked to the Centre for World Environmental History at Sussex addressed the environmental history and politics of South Asia from the early modern period to-date. Environmental History has been described as the study of species both other and our own in terms of the interactions with the world around them. The study of long term histories of environmental change and responses to these have important implications for policy in this age of climate change and in the context of what has been termed the Anthropocene. By seeking to engage with an interdisciplinary group of scholars with specialism in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh this training workshop achieved the following objectives:

- 1- Updated early career researchers on developments in Environmental History, Historical Climatology and Environmental politics;
- 2- Built links with policy and environmental justice activism;
- 3- Helped early career scholars to develop professional career pathways and provide indispensable training for a world that is rapidly being transformed by climate and environmental change.

Proceedings

Workshop was attended by eminent scholars from the UK and India, and the students from University of Sussex.

Overall 14 papers were presented at this workshop in different themed sessions. The list of the scholars who presented their papers includes (also attached program of workshop):

- (1) Dr Vinita Damodaran, CWEH, University of Sussex,
- (2) Antonia Moon and Penny Brook, archivists of natural history collections of the British Library London,
- (3) Prof Rob Allan, a leading historical climatologist specialising in Atmospheric reconstruction Analysis from Met office UK. He gave his presentation through Skype.
- (4) Dr. Felix Padel, a leading Environmental Activists and Malvika Gupta from JNU Delhi India,
- (5) Roger Moody, an environmental activist from London,
- (6) Prof Ravi Raman, an Economic historian from India,
- (7) Peter Satyanand Samuels (Stanford),
- (8) Dr. Shapan Adnan from Bangladesh,
- (9) Dr. Daniel Haines from Bristol University,
- (10) Dr. Stuart Peters from Queen Mary University of London,
- (11) Zahid Ali Khalid Dphil History student Sussex,
- (12) Fakhar Bilal, PhD student from Royal Holloway University of London,
- (13) Fazilda Nabeel, DPhil student from Global Studies Sussex,
- (14) Maira Hayat, PhD student from University of Chicago US

The list of faculty and students who attended this workshop includes:

- (1) ██████████, Sussex, (2) ██████████, Goldsmiths, (3) ██████████, Independent researcher & Activist Brighton, (4) ██████████, MSc Climate Change & Policy
- (5) ██████████ DPhil Social and Political Thought (6) ██████████, DPhil Biology, School of Life Sciences (7) ██████████, DPhil Anthropology student, Global Studies Sussex, (8) ██████████ DPhil Geography student Sussex, (9) ██████████, Post Doctoral Researcher Resource Politics and Health & Nutrition Clusters, IDS Sussex, (10) ██████████, Undergraduate student, International Development, Sussex (11) ██████████, History Undergraduate student Sussex.

Learning Experience/ Outcome

As the aim of this workshop was the training for the research students so as it was hoped that after attending this workshop they are able to learn which kind of material they have and which

type of methodology they should apply to utilise that material in their research projects. This workshop disseminated the understanding and learning of young and early career researchers including doctoral candidate of diversified field of environmental history and politics of South Asia. As an organiser, I learnt the academic event management in a tight time compartment and managing themes and scholars. This exposure proved a turning point for my own academic career. Also it is hoped that the workshop provided a good opportunity to foster networking for the participants to share and exchange their new research in unique fields. This workshop contributed to cutting-edge areas of research in Climate Change History. It draws on a wide range of research and engaged directly across the Researcher Development Framework, particularly engagement, influence and impact as well as knowledge and intellectual abilities and personal effectiveness. As I anticipate that this will be a tremendously successful and stimulating interdisciplinary workshop on 'Climate Change History' and it is proved with the valuable feedback of the participants which is included at the end of this report.



Workshop on Environmental History and Politics of South Asia
Workshop Programme

May 10th 2016, Fulton 201, 9.30 AM to 5:30 PM

Organizer: **Zahid Ali Khalid**, PhD History Student

Sponsor: Workshop is sponsored by the Doctoral School's Researcher-Led Initiative (RLI) Fund, HAHP Research Fund, University of Sussex, and Sussex Asia Centre, University of Sussex



Satyanand Samuels, Stanford

Rethinking Structure and Agency through Institutional History: Social Conflict, Environmental Change, and the Law in Modern India

Shapan Adnan,

Floods, Flood Control and Resistance in the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna Delta of Bangladesh: Brief Notes on Methods and Research Design

Fakhr Bilal, Royal Holloway

Islam and Environment: Making of Colonial Multan and Bahawalpur

Discussion

Lunch 13.00 – 14:00

Panel 3, 14:00 – 15:45

Water, Energy and Environmental History

Daniel Haines, Bristol

Water as a Political Prism

Zahid Khalid, Sussex

Sutlej Valley Project: Headworks and Canal Building; an Act of Folly or Wisdom?

Fazilda Nabeel, Sussex

Groundwater Apathy: An Optic to Explain Groundwater (Non) Governance in the Indus Basin of Pakistan

Maira Hayat, Chicago University

It's not really about the water! Irrigation water theft, markets and the state in Pakistan's Punjab

Stuart Peters, Queen Mary

Energy and Environment in India

Discussion

Tea break, 15:45 - 16:00

Panel 4, 16:00 – 17:30

Environmental Politics and Activism

Roger Moody, London

Mines, communities and Finance

Felix Padel, JNU, and **Malvika Gupta**, Delhi University

Ecology, Education, and the Continuity of Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Zuky Serper, CWEH

To be confirmed

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Workshop on Environmental History and Politics of South Asia

Tuesday 10th May 2016, Fulton 201, 9.30 AM to 5:30 PM



This interdisciplinary workshop linked to the Centre for World Environmental History at Sussex addresses the environmental history and politics of South Asia from the early modern period. Environmental History has been described as the study of species both other and our own in terms of the interactions with the world around them. The study of long term histories of environmental change and responses to these have important implications for policy in this age of climate change and in the context of what has been termed the Anthropocene. By seeking to engage with an interdisciplinary group of scholars with specialisms in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh this training workshop will update early career researchers on developments in Environmental History, Historical Climatology and Environmental politics and build links with policy and environmental justice activism. It will help early career scholars to develop professional career pathways and provide indispensable training for a world that is rapidly being transformed by climate and environmental change.

Participants: Prof Rob Allan (Met office), Dr Antonia Moon and Dr Penny Brook (British Library), Vinita Damodaran (CWEH), Dr Felix Padel (JNU), Roger Moody (London), Prof. Ravi Raman (Teenmurti), Dr. Shapan Adnan, Daniel Haines (Bristol), Satyanand Samuels (Stanford), Dr. Stuart Peters (QMU), Zuky Serper, (CWEH), Zahid Khalid (Sussex), Fazilda Nabeel (Sussex), Fakhar Bilal (Royal Holloway), Maira Hayat (Chicago), Malvika Gupta (Delhi)

All Welcome: To register please contact: [REDACTED]

*Workshop is Supported by the Doctoral School's **Researcher-Led Initiative (RLI) Fund, HAHP Research Fund, University of Sussex, and Sussex Asia Centre, University of Sussex***

Feedback from some participating scholars (including emails)

(1)

From: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Sent: 13 May 2016 08:33

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Thanks for the participation in workshop on Environmental History

Dear **Zahid**,

I very much enjoyed the workshop and thought that you created a most varied and interesting programme. I learned a lot from the speakers, who were all excellent. I liked the fact that they came from a variety of backgrounds (arts, engineering, etc.) – this made it better than the usual academic gathering. We also had just the right number of people for an interesting discussion.

Thank you very much for inviting me.

With kind regards,

Antonia

(2)

From: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Sent: 13 May 2016 08:57

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Thanks

Dear [REDACTED]

Many thanks for inviting me and [REDACTED] Antonia. We both found it very interesting. We find workshops at Sussex particularly interesting because of the way they bring together people from such different disciplines. It is very helpful to us to hear about the different ways in which the sources are being used and new approaches to research.

Best wishes

[REDACTED]

(3)

From: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Sent: 17 May 2016 20:17

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Thanks for your participation in workshop on Environmental History of South Asia

Many thanks [REDACTED] for your email.

We will certainly meet again sooner or later. Please see my feedback below.

It was indeed a pleasure and privilege to present a paper at the Environmental History and Politics of South Asia workshop, on 10th May 2016, at the Centre for World Environmental History, University of Sussex.

I found the participants with their diverse intellectual backgrounds quite engaging. The doctoral/postdoctoral students were highly inquisitive and interactive. The workshop was well organised and [REDACTED] deserves acknowledgment for the same. I would suggest that it is highly desirable to undertake such programmes by the CWEH as part of widening their activities.

Warmly

[REDACTED]

(4)

From: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Sent: 10 May 2016 20:27

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Workshop

Dear [REDACTED],

Congratulations on organising an excellent workshop. I thoroughly enjoyed all the presentations and was very sorry to miss the last few. Thank you for inviting me.

Best wishes

[REDACTED]

(5)

From: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Sent: 12 May 2016 12:28

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Gratitude and Appreciation

Dear [REDACTED]

I hope this email finds you in good health and relaxing moment after organising such a wonderful and successful workshop on Environmental and South Asian History and Politics.

It was a well organised workshop with variety of scholars and researchers participation from different disciplines, universities and countries. I learned new things and some new ideas for future research too. I hope you will carry on with these type of activities, once you are done with your own PhD project.

Many Many CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU AND YOUR SUPERVISOR, PROF.

[REDACTED] FOR SUCCESSFUL EVENT.

