



Organized Panel Session

Inter-area/Border Crossing


P017: The Political Economy of Water in Modern Asia: New Approaches with Meteorological Databases and Spatial Analyses

 Friday, March 26, 2021  3:00pm – 4:30pm EDT

Organizer(s)

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Chair(s)

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Water has critically influenced socioeconomics in Asia in the past and present. There are two reasons for this: monsoons and seasonal rainfall have a significant impact and many regions in Asia are surrounded by water systems such as seas, rivers, lakes, and marshes that are key parts of the hydrosphere. When the region was filled with primarily agricultural societies, a key task shared by government and other authorities was securing the supply of water as well as avoiding extremes like droughts and floods; this social repertoire of institutions, organizations, policies, and technologies varied among localities and with recent trends in urbanization. Focusing on China, Vietnam, and India from the 19th to the 20th centuries, this session comparatively explores the efforts to cope with a changing climate and changing hydrologies; and it collectively examines economies and social welfare from the perspective of water.

With collaboration among hydrologists, historians, and political scientists, this session challenges the methodological difficulties in understanding water and climate historically. When Asia became closely integrated with the global trade in addition to being colonized, meteorological officers and harbor masters started to regularly report weather and water levels under their jurisdictions. By constructing the database from the long-overlooked

contemporary observations and then applying hydrological models and spatial analyses, we are historically reconstructing the natural environment of the time against which socioeconomic activities can be examined. Therefore, another goal of this session is to propose new data sets and methods to study the interactions between natural and social landscapes.

Presentations:

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| ★ | Colonialism and the Politics of Elevation in the Greater Mekong Delta
David Biggs – University of California, Riverside |
| ★ | Watersheds, Markets, and Macroregions: Applications and Critiques of Skinner's Hierarchical Regional Space Model for Chinese Society
Mark Henderson – Mills College |
| ★ | Meteorological Change and the Water System of Yangtze River at Hankou: 1870-1900
Takeshi Hamashita – Oriental Library; Chang Liu – The University of Tokyo |
| ★ | Reconsideration of the Great Famine (1876-1878) in Western India from Meteorological and Hydrological Perspectives
Michihiro Ogawa – Kanazawa University; Seemanta Sharma Bhagabati – The University of Tokyo |