

Southeast Asian Natures



Defining Environmentalism and the Anthropocene in Southeast Asia
March 13, 2018 | UCR Palm Desert Center, Palm Desert CA

Over one hundred fifty years ago, naturalist Alfred Russell Wallace journeyed through the islands of Southeast Asia, drawing from the region's rich biodiversity to co-discover with Darwin the theory of natural selection. However, even at that time he noted how forests were quickly giving way to colonial clear cuts and species from one island were showing up in the markets on another. The Anthropocene, an era in which human activity has become a dominant shaping force in ecosystems, global climate and species histories, was already underway. Wallace's environmentalism was also deeply contingent upon imperial networks of travel and communication; the ensuing wars of empire and decolonization left many eco-cultures in tatters.

One hundred fifty years later, a critical challenge now faces policymakers, intellectuals, scientists and others to articulate new notions of environmentalism and climate change in complex intersections of ecology, history, and culture. As people and governments struggle to arrive at locally meaningful responses to Anthropocene problems, scholars, artists and activists will play important roles in identifying new ideas of nature, of ruin, of sustainability and health that resonate locally and inter-regionally. As literary critic Raymond Williams once noted, the word "nature" is one of the most complex in the English vocabulary. With that in mind, how do these ideas fare in translation?

"Southeast Asian Natures" asks participants to consider the complexities of nature and its changes in the many different languages and ecologies of Southeast Asia. The workshop is open to the public but has very limited space. Please contact David Biggs (dbiggs@ucr.edu) to reserve space by February 1, 2017. It is a pre-conference workshop to the 2018 Annual Meeting

of the American Society for Environmental History to be held at the [Riverside Convention Center, March 14-18, 2018](#).

Tuesday Workshop Program

UCR-Palm Desert, 75080 Frank Sinatra Dr, Palm Desert, CA 92211

~ **Arrival, opening comments (8:30-9:00 am)** ~

Representation and Ritual (9:00-10:30 am)

Prof. Hendrik Maier, UC Riverside, Moderator

Kathleen Baldanza, Penn State: *Miasmatic Mists of the Mountains: Disease and Medicine in the Vietnamese Highlands*

Michele Thompson, So. Connecticut State: *The Vietnamese Buddhist Monk Physician Tuệ Tĩnh and Manipulation of the Physical Environment of 14th Century Dai Viet*

Vu Tu Quyen, Vietnam Institute of Culture and Arts Studies, Hanoi: *Health, Ritual And Performance – A Folk Festival Of Laha People*

Faizah Zakaria, Yale: *Spiritual Anthropocene: Religious and Environmental change from the North Sumatran Uplands*

Joshua Lieto, UC Riverside: *The Botanist and the Batak: Linguistic Extinctions on Sumatra in the Anthropocene*

~ **Coffee break** ~

Space, Spatial Practice and Power (11:00-12:30 pm)

Prof. Christina Schwenkel, UC Riverside, Moderator

Victoria Reyes, UC Riverside: *Sovereignty, Accountability, and the Environment: The U.S. Military in the Philippines*

Amy Dao, Columbia: *Risk and Potentiality in the Anthropocene: Responses to Salinization in the Mekong Delta*

Sarah Grant, CSU Fullerton: *The Future is NPK: Vietnamese Coffee and the South-Central Highlands Environment*

Tuyen Le, UC Los Angeles: *“Toi Chon Ca/I Choose Fish”:* *Protests for a Cleaner Future*

~ **Box lunch for participants (12:30-1:30 pm)** ~

Histories, Ecologies and Flows (1:30-3:00 pm)

Prof. David Biggs, UC Riverside, Moderator

Mitch Aso, SUNY Albany: *Vietnamese Workscapes*

Anthony Medrano, Harvard: *History between the Tides: Ecology and Industry in the Straits of Melaka, 1880-1940*

Ruel V. Pagunsan, University of the Philippines – Diliman: *The Biogeography of a Nation: Nature, Colonialism and Nation-Building in the Twentieth-Century Philippines*

Jonathan E. Robins, Michigan Tech: *“Suited To Malaya”: Oil Palms, Forest Land, And Colonial Capitalism In Malaysia, 1910-1960*

Gerard Sasges, National University of Singapore: *Evangelist of the Anthropocene: Shoichi Kaneko and the conversion of the Vietnamese fishing fleet 1954-1975*

~ **Tea Break (3:00-3:30 pm)** ~

Animal Natures, Animal Lenses (3:30-5:00 pm)

Prof. Celia Lowe, U. of Washington, Moderator

Cheryl Swift and Jason Carbine, Whittier College: *Biodiversity and Religious Spaces in Contemporary Myanmar*

Co-Authors: Anders Blomso, Christina Mecklenburg, Marissa Ochoa, Rosemary Carbine

Pam McElwee, Rutgers: *Thinking through the Anthropocene in Southeast Asia: Animals, People, and Landscapes*

Juno Salazar Parreñas, Ohio State: *Between Epochs and Seconds of Orangutan Temporality: Recalibrating Time in the Anthropocene*

Ann Marie Thornburg, Notre Dame: *Human and Dog Relations in Bali, Indonesia: Shifting Natures*

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Organizers

David Biggs, Christina Schwenkel and Hendrik Maier