

Natural knowledge: data, objects, and persons in global knowledge networks

N.W. Posthumus Masterclass with Professor Kapil Raj, EHES

Hosted by the “Routes and Roots in Colonial and Global History” research network of the N.W. Posthumus Institute.

When: Tuesday, 23rd November 09:00 - 15:00

Where: Leiden Institute for History, exact location to be confirmed.

For: Members of N.W. Posthumus Institute, mainly (Res)MA/M.Phil. students and PhD candidates.

How do we as humans relate to nature, and how did our understanding develop over time? How does our writing of history reflect our interactions with the natural environment? Nature itself has been an obsession of humans from ancient times to the present, discussed in various iterations and genres of knowledge including agriculture, astronomy, botany, geography, medicine, meteorology, or zoology, to name but a few. Marxist historians, especially, have been instrumental in highlighting the role of the natural environment in determining the choices made by individuals and societies. Nature can be studied through many aspects, including textual descriptions, objects, visual representations, or quantitative data. These aspects have historically involved cooperation and competition between multiple individuals while also reflecting the interventions of historical contingencies. This fundamental interaction between the natural environment and human experience can be studied across various fields of history today.

This masterclass will be led by Professor Kapil Raj, Research Professor at École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. Professor Raj is an historian who writes on intercultural interactions and the making of scientific knowledge and the global dimensions of local knowledge production. His publications include *Relocating modern science: circulation and the construction of knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650-1900* (2007), “Mapping knowledge go-betweens in Calcutta, 1770-1820” (2009), and “Thinking Without the Scientific Revolution: Global Interactions and the Construction of Knowledge” (2017).

The masterclass is intended to generate discussions about the natural environment among researchers working on different aspects of history. Participants are invited to reflect on how their research may be related to nature, the processes of knowledge production or global networks of knowledge exchange. This masterclass welcomes engagement from researchers whose projects may not specifically be on the topic of nature. It would present an opportunity for participants to reflect on the topic of their research or the datasets they are working with, and to receive feedback from the invited expert as well as fellow participants on their research project, methods, and/or interpretations.

Requirements: Participation is limited to a maximum of 12 participants. Prospective applicants are invited to submit a 300-word abstract of their research, as well as a piece of data relevant to the theme of the masterclass. This piece of data should fit on one page of a PowerPoint slide and can be in the form of a text, object, image, an archival page, or a snapshot of a dataset. As part of the masterclass, each participant would be given a maximum of 5 minutes to share more about their piece of data or the context of their research.

Please send your abstracts and data to Neilabh Sinha (n.sinha@hum.leidenuniv.nl) and Melinda Susanto (m.susanto@hum.leidenuniv.nl) with the subject “Masterclass Natural Knowledge <last name>” by **Monday 8th November 2021** at the latest.