

INAUGURAL SESSION

Storying Climes of the Himalaya, Andes, and Arctic

Anthropogenic water bodies, multispecies vulnerability, and sustainable living

9 October 2021 | 17:45-19:45
(Nepal Standard Time, UTC+05:45) | Online via MS Teams

ALEX TREADWAY

As part of the inaugural session of the workshop, [Storying Climes of The Himalaya, Andes, and Arctic: Anthropogenic water bodies, multispecies vulnerability, and sustainable living](#), the keynote speakers – Sunil Amrith, Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen, and Karsten Paerregaard – will be speaking on their research on climate and water in the Himalaya, Andes, and Arctic, respectively.

This keynote session is open to the public. If you are interested in attending the lecture, please register [here](#).

About the workshop

Geographically apart from one another, the Himalaya, the Andes, and the Arctic/tundra play a critical role in the hydrological cycle of the earth with their water and in shaping multispecies habitats and cultural heritages within the biospheres fed by the waters. They are comparably experiencing risks and degradations from global climate change, such as melting ice, species extinction, and radical transformations of ecosystems and livelihoods. As a global outreach effort of the Himalayan University Consortium (HUC) for comparative studies of climate change in the earth's altitudinal and latitudinal highlands, this workshop will engage social and natural scientists, humanities scholars, graduate students, and development specialists to share their interdisciplinarily documentations and discussions of historical and contemporary narratives of climate knowledge in habitat-specific life communities in these three world regions.

The conceptual arc of this workshop is “clime” – a place-specific manifestation of climate patterns and changes, which implies the mutual embodiment of climate and place. It intends to minimize the unnecessary separation of the abstractly constructed climate system from the lived earth as a multispecies planet and emphasizes diverse sensory experiences of climate dynamics and changes over time, contextualized in specific life communities, as weather, seasons, shifting snowlines, the fluctuating height of glaciers, the changing courses of rivers, earthquakes, floods, droughts, and the migrations of humans and nonhumans. The idea of clime resonates with many existing place-based conceptual perspectives on the water-climate nexus emerging from the Himalayan, the Andean, and the Arctic contexts, such as “wet theory”, “terrestrial ocean”, “fluvial world”, “water as a sentient being”, “water commons”, “water facilitated commerce”, “water war”, “pluriverse”, “the New Arctic”, and “the cryo-historical moment”. While all these perspectives call for multifaceted meanings of being human as a relational species in concrete historical, ecological, social, and affective terms, they also prompt this workshop to build horizontal connections between them and explore more integral approaches to the understanding of the diverse local manifestations of global climate change. As clime in this workshop particularly refers to places with high water content that are known for their roles in shaping the global hydrological cycle and local ecosystems and livelihoods, its watery character compels our watery inquiries.

Keynote profiles

“THE ‘THIRD POLE’ AND MONSOON ASIA: HISTORIES, NARRATIVES, FUTURES”



Sunil Amrith

Renu and Anand Dhawan
Professor of History
Department of History, Yale
University

Sunil Amrith is the Renu and
Anand Dhawan Professor of

History, and current chair of the South Asian Studies Council. His research focuses on the movements of people and the ecological processes that have connected South and Southeast Asia. Amrith's areas of interest include environmental history, the history of migration, and the history of public health. He is a 2017 MacArthur Fellow, and recipient of the 2016 Infosys Prize in Humanities. Amrith's most recent book, *Unruly Waters* (Basic Books and Penguin UK, 2018), was shortlisted for the 2019 Cundill Prize, and was reviewed in *Nature*, *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Review of Books*. His previous book, *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants* (Harvard University Press, 2013) was awarded the American Historical Association's John F. Richards Prize in South Asian History in 2014, and was selected as an Editor's Choice title by the New York Times Book Review. He is also the author of *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), and *Decolonizing International Health: South and Southeast Asia, 1930-1965* (Palgrave, 2006), as well as articles in journals including the *American Historical Review*, *Past and Present*, *The Lancet* and *Economic and Political Weekly*. Amrith serves on the editorial boards of the *American Historical Review* and *Modern Asian Studies*, and he is one of the series editors of the Princeton University Press book series, *Histories of Economic Life*.

Abstract

My talk will examine the history of how the Himalayan region came to feature centrally in understandings of global climate, and particularly of the Asian monsoon. I argue that we can only understand this story by bridging the history of science with histories of empire and geopolitics. My talk will examine the erasure of local concerns and expertise as the Himalayan region became an object of technocratic management on a regional and global scale, bound up with territorial conflicts between nation states. The workshop organizers' rich conceptual notion of "climes" offers us a way to understand global climate change in a different way, anchored in the multiplicity of narratives, imaginaries, and ways of living that have characterized local societies' relationship with water. I conclude with an open question: how can we "jump scales," to use Willem van Schendel's evocative phrase, between "climes" and "climate" in a less reductive way?

“PLURIVERSAL TUNDRA: STORYING MORE THAN HUMAN ECOLOGIES ACROSS DEEP, ACCELERATED, AND TROUBLED TIMES”



Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen

Associate Professor of Techno-
Anthropology, Aalborg
University, Denmark.

Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen
is the Associate Professor
of techno-anthropology at

Aalborg University. Her research centers on human-environment relations and how to make anthropological perspectives matter in interdisciplinary research on ecosystems, environmental relations, and climatic crises, as well as in public life. Her research is based on detailed and critical ethnography, and she has extensive fieldwork experience in Peru and Greenland. She has published on themes such as water politics, wildlife and environmental management, technologies and controversies, and multispecies relations. She is a co-editor of the book *Anthropology Inside Out. Fieldworkers taking note* (Sean Kingston Publishing 2020) and the forthcoming anthology *Rubber Boots Methods for the Anthropocene: Curiosity, Collaboration, and Critical Description in the Study of Multispecies Worlds* (University of Minnesota Press, 2022). Since 2018, Astrid is chairing the board of *Antropologforeningen i Danmark*, the Danish Anthropology Association. Anderson holds a PhD in social anthropology from the University of Copenhagen.

Abstract

The polar tundra around Kangerlussuaq in West Greenland stretches 25 km to the East and ends at the Greenland Ice sheet. To the west it stretches almost 200 km before it meets the sea. Resting on continuous permafrost, hosting rivers fed by meltwater from the inland ice and glaciers, and dotted by small freshwater lakes, the tundra can be seen (and storied) as one large and dynamic water body, composed by various interconnected streams, rhythmized by geological epochs and by seasons – freeze, thaw, flow - and feeding into social and natural ecologies.

This keynote attends to the tundra and its bodies of water by walking and ethnographically storying tundra climes with different actors and their perspectives: Hunters and hunting officers who show us the landscape as one of more than human sociality; geologists who reveal deep time of the tundra and show us ruptures in water-ice dynamics; and entrepreneurs and policy makers who dream of converting climate change into a source of innovation and profit, as they work to turn the accelerated melting of ice into new water products.

Resulting from these perspectives is a pluriversal tundra, where ways of making sense of the changing water bodies are conflicting, embedded in contrasting ways of knowing and living climes. This storying of the pluriversal tundra leads to methodological questions of how to compose an anthropology that attunes beyond the human and analyses across deep and accelerated, long and short temporal scales. It also leads to questions of the

ethics and politics of storying climates: whose perspectives get heard and whose voices are silenced? And in what ways are stories to be responded?

“CLIMING MOUNTAINS? CLIMATE, WATER AND POWER IN THE PERUVIAN ANDES.”



Karsten Paerregaard
Professor Emeritus of
Anthropology, University of
Gothenburg, Sweden.

Karsten Paerregaard is
the Professor Emeritus of
Anthropology at School of

Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, where he took up the position as chair Professor of Social Anthropology in 2012. He has previously worked at University of Copenhagen and the Danish Institute of International Studies. Paerregaard has been the principal investigator of several research projects and been granted research funding numerous times in Sweden and Denmark. He has also been research fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington DC and at Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, Uppsala and has twice been visiting Professor at University of Florida. Paerregaard's ethnographic field research has been centered in Peru where he has worked for almost 40 years. It also includes multi-sited fieldwork among Peruvian migrants in North America, Southern Europe, Japan, and Argentina and Chile. Paerregaard's research interests and publications cover such topics as ecology, water and irrigation, livelihoods, social organization, power and inequality, religious denominations, ritual activities, ethnicity and indigeneity, and cosmology and offering practices.

Currently, his research is focused on the intersection between migration, environment, climate and culture in the Peruvian Andes. His books include *Linking Separate Worlds. Urban Migrants and Rural Lives in Peru*, Berg (1997); *Peruvians Dispersed. A Global Ethnography of Migration*, Lexington (2008); and *Return to Sender. The Moral Economy of Peru's Migrant Remittances*, UC Press(2015). He has recently completed a book manuscript titled *Andean Meltdown. A Climate Ethnography of Water, Power and Culture in Peru*, which examines the impact of climate change on water management and mountain worship in the Peruvian Andes and which currently is reviewed by an American university press. Paerregaard has also published extensively in international journals, recently in HAU. *Journal of Ethnographic Research* (2020), *Environmental Communication* (2020), *Water International* (2020), *Water Alternatives* (2019), *Climate and Development* (2018) and *WIRE's Water* (2018).

Abstract

The paper's aim is to unpack the relation between climate, water, and power in the Andes. The region suffers from chronic water

scarcity and Andean people have always depended on melt water from glaciers and ice mountains. The Inca cosmology crafted the circulation of water as a relation of reciprocity between humans and a non-human realm inhabited by mountain deities, ancestors, and other spiritual beings. To legitimize their own sovereignty the Incas represented themselves as human proxies of the divine force that created the world and therefore as masters of the hydrological circle. After the Spanish conquest the indigenous population adapted to colonial rule by identifying the new conquerors with their own ancestors and when Peru gained its independence, Andean people reset their cosmological compass once again by substituting their pre-Hispanic ancestors with mountain deities and the Spanish conquerors with the mestizo class that became Peru's new rulers. The anthropomorphic configuration of mountain deities as images of the region's political power holders still prevails in the Andes but climate change and the water crisis it generates is compelling Andean people to reinvent their cosmology once again. The paper examines how this happens by asking: What are the relations of power that tie humans to mountains, ice, and water in the Andes? How do Andean people engage with and configure the divine forces they believe inhabit mountains, the landscape, and the water? And lastly, how does climate change, glacier melt, and water shortage challenge the Andean cosmology?

Conveners



Dan Smyer Yü
Kuije Professor of Ethnology,
Yunnan University
International Faculty Member,
University of Cologne

Dan Smyer Yü is the Kuije Professor of Ethnology, School of Ethnology and Sociology and the National Centre for Borderlands Ethnic Studies in Southwest China at Yunnan University, and an international faculty member of University of Cologne, Germany. He received his Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of California at Davis in 2006. Currently he is the co-lead of HUC's Thematic Working Group on Himalayan Environmental Humanities, an elected board member of International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture, a member of the Advisory Board of Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, and the Series Editor of Routledge Environment, Multispecies Indigeneity and Borderland Series. He is the author of *Mindscaping the Landscape of Tibet: Place, Memorability, Eco-aesthetics* (De Gruyter 2015), and the co-editor of *Trans-Himalayan Borderlands: Livelihoods, Territorialities, Modernities* (Amsterdam University Press 2017), *Environmental Humanities in the New Himalayas: Symbiotic Indigeneity, Commoning, Sustainability* (Routledge 2021), and *Yunnan-Burma-Bengal Corridor Geographies: Protean Edging of Habitats and Empires* (Routledge 2021).



Arupjoyoti Saikia
Professor, Department of
Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology
Guwahati

Arupjoyoti Saikia is the Professor of History in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati. His teaching and research interests are in the field of Assam's economic and environmental history. A post-doctoral fellow of Yale University, he has held visiting fellow positions at Cambridge University; University of London; Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla; and University of Calcutta.

His book *The Unquiet River: An Environmental History of the Brahmaputra* (Oxford University Press, 2019) was short-listed for Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay Book Award in 2020 and long listed for Atta Galatta-Bangalore Literature Festival Book Prize. This book got Honorable Mention for Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy Book Prize in 2021 by the Association of Asian Studies. Saikia's other published works include *Forests and Ecological History of Assam, 1826-2000* (Oxford University Press, 2011) and *A Century of Protests: Peasant Politics in Assam since 1900* (Routledge, 2014).



Jelle J.P. Wouters
Associate Professor, Department
of Social Sciences
Royal Thimphu College

Jelle J.P Wouters is a social anthropologist and the Associate Professor at the Department of Social Sciences, Royal Thimphu College, Bhutan. He holds an M.Pil. in social anthropology from the University of Oxford and a Ph.D. in anthropology from the North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, where he was also a Wenner-Gren grantee. Prior to joining RTC in 2015, he taught at Sikkim Central University, India, and was a visiting faculty at Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, Germany, under the "Excellence Initiative" of the German Research Foundation. He is the author of *In the shadows of Naga Insurgency* (OUP 2018) and *Nagas as a society against voting and other Essay* (Highlander Books 2019), and the co-editor of *Nagas in the 21st Century* (Highlander Books 2017) and *Democracy in Nagaland: Tribes, Traditions, and Tensions* (Highlander Books 2018).

Programme schedule

Saturday, 9 October 2021

Local time	Welcome remarks	Keynote session	Chairperson and discussant
Kathmandu: 17:45-19:45	Izabella Koziell , Deputy Director General, ICIMOD	"The 'Third Pole' and monsoon Asia: Histories, Narratives, Futures" – Sunil Amrith , Yale University, United States	Chairperson – Arupjyoti Saikia , Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati
Mumbai: 17:30-19:30			
U.S. (EDT): 8:00-10:00	Tshewang Tandin President, Royal Thimphu College	"Climing Mountains? Climate, water and power in the Peruvian Andes" – Karsten Paerregaard , University of Gothenburg, Sweden	Discussant – Dan Smyer Yü , Kuige Professor of Ethnology, Yunnan University, and International Faculty Member, University of Cologne
U.S. (PDT): 5:00-7:00			
Oslo/Stockholm/Berlin/ Amsterdam: 14:00-16:00			
Bogota/Lima: 7:00-9:00 Sydney/ Melbourne: 23:00-1:00			
Bandar Seri Begawan: 20:00-22:00			

****20-25 minutes for each keynote talk; 45 minutes for discussions**

Organizers: Himalayan University Consortium Thematic Working Group on Himalayan Environmental Humanities; in partnership with My Climate Risk, a lighthouse activity of World Climate Research Programme (WCRP), Himalayan Centre for Environmental Humanities (HCEH), Yunnan University, and The Global South Studies Center at University of Cologne. Co-hosted by Royal Thimphu College.

ICIMOD gratefully acknowledges the support of its core donors: the Governments of Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden, and Switzerland.