



Azim Premji University Colloquium Series
presents a lecture on

"Governing Monsoon Landscapes: The East India Company's Expansion on Its North-Eastern Frontier in the Early 19th Century"

Speaker

Gunnel Cederlöf

Professor of History, Uppsala University and Research Fellow,
KTH/Royal Institute of Technology

Date: April 16, 2015 (Thursday)

Time: 2.00 to 3.30 pm

Venue: 10th Floor Auditorium, Pixel A, Azim Premji University

Watch the live broadcast of the talk by clicking <http://lectures.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/>. It can be accessed from Android and iOS devices too.

About the Lecture

This talk takes a new view on the process of forming British colonial rule during the unsettled half-century from the 1790s to the 1830s. To understand these transformations we have to revitalise agrarian and political history by rereading it through climate history. We also need to revise spatial frames and see beyond the boundaries of continental and nation-state India. The East India Company (EIC) was, first and foremost, a mercantile corporation that aimed at getting in command of the millennium-old over-land commercial routes that connected India and China. The British East India Company's north-eastern frontier span the Brahmaputra to Burma and beyond. Simultaneously, the Mughal diwani grant (1765) compelled the EIC to govern people and territory. The two interests - trade and government - often clashed.

I will discuss the incompatibility of governance and the ever-changing landscapes in a region defined by the monsoon. When rivers moved and land was inundated for months, any attempt to form a uniform administration tended to clash with the hybrid landscapes and waterscapes. Characteristic of this period is the daily compromise and mediation through administrative and military practice which shaped colonial polities and subject formation when the British Empire took root in Asia.

About the Speaker

Gunnel Cederlöf is Professor of History, Uppsala University and Research Fellow, KTH/Royal Institute of Technology. She is also Guest Professor at Linnaeus University and Visiting Professor at Shiv Nadar University. Her research as a professor of history has focused on relationships between natural conditions, political power, social change, and legal rights, particularly targeted at the situation of vulnerable sections of society—*dalits* and *adivasis*—during social transformations. Her current research focuses on the formation of governance and subject rights at the time when the British Empire formed in Asia, and enquires into the role of commerce, law and property, and the enabling and constraining conditions of climate and ecology.

Among her publications are *Founding and Empire on India's North-eastern Frontiers, 1790-1840: Climate, Commerce, Polity* (2013), *Landscapes and the Law: Environmental Politics, Regional Histories, and Contests over Nature* (2008), *Bonds Lost: Subordination, Conflict and Mobilisation in Rural South India c. 1900-1970* (1997), *Ecological Nationalisms: Nature, Livelihoods and Identities in South Asia* (2005, with K. Sivaramakrishnan).