

CONFERENCE ON  
INTER-ASIAN CONNECTIONS III: HONG KONG  
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CALL FOR WORKSHOP PAPERS  
*DEADLINE: Friday, June 24, 2011*

Workshop Title:  
**Asian Crossings, 1789-1914**

Workshop Directors: Ross FORMAN National University of Singapore <a href="mailto:ellrgf@nus.edu.sg">ellrgf@nus.edu.sg</a>	Julia KUEHN The University of Hong Kong <a href="mailto:jkuehn@hku.hk">jkuehn@hku.hk</a>
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The long nineteenth century was a period of major social, economic, and cultural shifts in Asia that were often spurred by colonialism, even when not specifically linked to it. Some of the most noteworthy drives and effects of these shifts include: competition between European imperial projects (French, British, Russian, Dutch, Portuguese); the growth of intra-Asian imperialist projects (in Korea, Taiwan, Manchuria and elsewhere); changes to historical trade routes in the Indian Ocean and between China and her neighbors; large-scale labor movements both within the region (from China to Southeast Asia, for instance) and beyond (from India to Mauritius, Southern Africa and the Caribbean or from Japan to Brazil and Peru); and the development of multicultural urban spaces as a product of these and other forces. These larger concerns also had a significant impact on local geographies. For example, the East India Company's opium trade with China altered the lives of peasants in Bengal and Bihar and, in many cases, drove them to emigration. Similarly, the foreign presence in Shanghai had a direct impact on the development of the Chinese periodical press.

Our workshop proceeds from the premise that textual artifacts—be they maps, travel narratives, account ledgers, novels, newspapers, or personal papers—offer a privileged means to assess what some of the effects of “Asian Crossings” were and how they manifested themselves.

We invite participants from the humanities and social sciences to join us in investigating how “Asian Crossings” reshaped the real and imaginative geography of the region. Our aim is to bring together scholars in a range of disciplines—including literary studies, history, geography, South Asian Studies, and East and Southeast Asian Studies—to map some of the ways in which the direct and indirect impact of imperialisms during the long nineteenth century gave rise to contemporary Asian modernities. We also welcome the participation of writers, artists, and filmmakers whose work engages with Asian pasts. We hope to attract scholars not only from different disciplinary backgrounds, but also from different linguistic traditions. In our own field of literature, for instance, it is rare that specialists working on Francophone literature, culture, and history in Asia speak to those working on Anglophone traditions – and equally rare that scholars of literature in English dialogue with scholars of Chinese, Hindi, or Arabic. Thus an important goal of “Asian Crossings” is not just to explore old geographies, but also to create new conceptual geographies of exchange for scholars working on a variety of Asia-centered topics.

The initial research questions for the project are as follows:

- How can postcolonial methodologies be revisited so that they take into account relationships other than those between colonizers and colonized? How can a better understanding of the multiple exchanges between different Asian locations help us to imagine alternative ways of studying Asia?
- In what ways has the area studies model interfered with our ability to see the interconnectedness of different Asian spaces to each other and to other parts of the world during the long nineteenth century?
- To what degree can imperialism be considered a process common to different Asian societies during the long nineteenth century? To what degree did it create new “crossings” within Asia and beyond?

The workshop is just the beginning of our deliberations. We hope that participants will work with us to produce an edited special issue and/or anthology and will collaborate with us on further inter-institutional and web-based projects on the theme of “Asian Crossings.”

For additional details and application guidelines, please visit the Conference website: <http://www.ssrc.org/programs/pages/interasia-program/conference-on-inter-asian-connections-iii-hong-kong-june-6-8-2012/>.