Agrarian Frontiers in South and Southeast Asia

Seminar
Winter Term 2015/16

Study programs:
MA Transcultural Studies
MA Social and Cultural Anthropology
MA Health and Society in South Asia

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Münster
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Office hours: by appointment

Time: Wed. 4:15 pm - 5:45 pm,
Venue: Room 002 (library), Karl Jaspers Center
Moodle: https://elearning2.uni-heidelberg.de/course/view.php?id=9492
Self-enrolment key: Agrarian1516

Course Description

This seminar looks at historical and contemporary processes of expanding agriculture into forested landscapes across tropical Asia. From the colonial introduction of plantations to postcolonial land-rushes by small-scale cash crop farmers, South and Southeast Asian have witnessed dynamic processes of encounters between agrarian capitalism and indigenous forms of land use (such as swidden cultivation).

The main focus of the seminar will be on interrogating the notion of an agrarian frontier, which is increasingly gaining traction in anthropological literature. These assemblages are dynamic frontiers of law (land rights, conservation regimes), economy (capitalist and non-capitalist relations of labor and exchange), culture (migrants and indigenous populations) and power (edges of statehood, Zomia). It will be of special interest to look at the role of specific plants (crops) in co-producing these landscapes. What are the specifics contributions of the socio-natural properties of plants like tea, rubber, palm oil, or ginger in creating these frontier situation.
Requirements

**Active participation, preparation of core readings (2 CP)**
Students are expected to come prepared to class. In addition to active participation in class and the reading of the mandatory texts, students will submit discussion questions. Discussion questions are short written responses to the mandatory readings of each week. They usually have the form of a statement about the text (e.g. the argument) and a question for discussion that builds on that statement. For six weeks/subjects of the seminar students will submit 3 questions each to the Moodle discussion forum. The student will be expected to show familiarity with the reading material by referring to page numbers and other referential markers.
Due: every Tuesday midnight (prior to the class).

**Book Review (2 CP)**
All students will read one ethnographic monograph (Li 2014, approx. 22 Euro) and write a midterm essay/book review (2000-2500 words) about it. It is a classical book review that discusses the content, form and main arguments of the book. But it also relates the book to the other reading in class.
Due: 29 November 2015

**Term paper (3 CP)**
Mandatory for MATS, optional for MA Social and Cultural Anthropology, MAHASSA. 5000-7000 words. In preparation of the term paper students will submit a one page outline, which contains a) the title of the paper, b) an abstract (your idea, question, approach in +/- 250 words), and c) a (realistic) list of references to be used in the term paper. Outline due: 20 January 2016.

Syllabus

**14 October: Introduction**

**21 October: Frontiers, Borders, Edges**
(read pp 8-44, skim the rest)

**28 October: Frontiers of Accumulation**

4 November: Frontiers and expanding statehood


11 November: Frontiers of land control


18 November: Frontier ethnography reading week (no class)

25 November: Frontier ethnography reading week (no class)

2 December: Land’s End

Reviews due 29 November 2015
Panel discussion on Land’s End

9 December: Forest Frontiers

16 December: Plantation frontier


13 January: Frontier dynamics in Laos
Guest speaker Dr. Michael Kleinod, University of Bonn


20 January: Frontier dynamics at Wayanad’s settler frontier (South India)


27 January: Frontier Crops


or


3 February: final discussion