

***International Seminar on History of Global Climate Change: Water, Ecology, Politics and the Management of Nature, 21 - 22 January 2015 at Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Salt Lake, Kolkata, India***

**Concept Note**

At the beginning of the twentieth century a majority of scientists believed that climate of the world had been essentially constant over at least five thousand years. In the next 100 years this assumption fell through. The possible effects of past climatic shifts on human activities are yet to be explored. Historians have paid little attention to this aspect until in the 1950's and 1960's. It is critical for the historians to understand that climate history is central to the recently unfolding sub-discipline of environmental history. It is also intimately connected with history of waters in more ways than one. Earth's hydrological cycle – the sun-powered movement of water between the sea, air and land – is an irreplaceable asset that human actions are now disrupting in dangerous ways. Although vast amount of water reside in oceans, glaciers, lakes and deep aquifers, only a very small share of Earth's water – less than one – hundredth of 1 percent – is fresh, renewed by the hydrological cycle, and delivered to land. That precious supply of precipitation – some 110,000 cubic kilometres per year – is what sustains most terrestrial life. Like any valuable asset, the global water cycle delivers a steady stream of benefits to society. Rivers, lakes and other freshwater ecosystems work in concert with forests, grasslands and other landscapes to provide goods and services of great importance to human society. The nature and value of these services can remain grossly underappreciated, however, until they are all destroyed or depleted. Climate history calls for an in-depth understanding of the inter connections between water resource on the one hand and deforestation, rainfall, river flows, soil erosion, climate change, global warming, draught, famine and various natural calamities on the other.

Climate change through a long *duree* period and its impact on the rise or decline of civilizations are now worth looking into. Rising or falling temperatures, monsoon behaviour, melting of snow on the mountains, rising sea levels, more powerful storms and cyclones in recent times may have a message to convey regarding the interactions of the humans with the natural world. In South Asia and the Asia Pacific in particular, climate had been central to the growth or prosperity of human civilizations. It was most crucial to rice production or settled agriculture. We are aware of how the change of climate and decline of monsoon in north western India possibly led to the fall of the Indus Valley Civilization.

There is little disagreement among the scholars engaged in Environmental History that history of climate is important to the discipline. The proposed International Seminar on the

History of Climate organised by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies is the first of its kind and it will address some of the fundamental questions most relevant to the very discipline of Environmental History.

This two-day international seminar on 'History of Global Climate Change: Water, Ecology, Politics and the Management of Nature' organized by the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS), Kolkata, aims to bring together many leading scholars sharing a common interest in the environmental history. The present seminar will make an attempt to address the broad areas of environmental concern in human societies across the global and the complex patterns of the human–nature relationship by focusing on the history of climate change.

*Abstracts of papers to be presented at the seminar must relate to the panel themes listed below. The abstract (500 words) and bio-note (300 words) may kindly be sent to my email address by November 10, 2014. The full paper (5000 words) has to be submitted by 10.1.2015.*

Sessions will include (this is subject to change)

1. Inaugural Session
2. Does History of Climate Matter?
3. Climate, forestry, conservation, land-use, water resources and Waterways, Rivers, Dams, the politics of Water
4. Natural Calamities – Flood, Rainfall, Cyclone, Tsunami, Draught and other environmental disasters
5. Climate: A Comparative Study of Asia and the Wider World
6. Valedictory Session

For further information please contact:

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