



The Leiden Terra Incognita Lecture

The third *Leiden Terra Incognita Lecture*
in Colonial and Global History

Circulation as Relational History

By Prof. Dr. Kapil Raj

Tuesday 6 December 2022 at 15.30 hrs
Venue: Gravensteen (Pieterskerkhof 6)

Ever since its institutionalisation as a university discipline in the course of the nineteenth century, history — along with the vast majority of social sciences — have been entrapped in “methodological nationalism”, the assumption that nations are the natural units for study, thus equating society with the nation-state, and conflating national interests with the purposes of the social sciences. Questions thus very often get reduced to explanations limited to national parameters without taking account of broader dynamics. In the context of nations that gained independence from European colonialist in the post-WW II era, Postcolonial Studies have sought to engage with this nationalist straightjacket by attempting to situate their histories, especially during the colonial period, as a process of resistance to European imperial domination and imposition of the latter’s outlook and values. However, a number of questions and issues are thus blindsided in this systematically agonistic perspective, or for that matter in its opposite, a free-flowing diffusionist model based on a simple-minded Whiggish model of progress. In light of the fact that human societies, past and present, are constantly interacting with each other together with the phenomenon of human migrations, a number of new historiographical approaches that attempt to engage with these “relational” processes have emerged in the last decades.

This talk will start with a presentation of some of the most prominent amongst such propositions – comparative history, *histoire carrefour*, *histoire croisée*, connected history, circulatory history... – before developing the last one, including its areas of applicability, in some detail. As an illustration of the workings of this approach, the talk will focus on a case-study in the context of the European encounter with South Asia – the making of the monumental *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus* commissioned in the 1670s by the military commander of the then Dutch colony of Kochi, and its iterations in subsequent Indo-European interactions.

The lecture will be published as a booklet to be distributed after during the lecture.



Professor Kapil Raj is a leading historian in the history of science. He writes on intercultural interactions and the making of scientific knowledge, and the global dimensions of local knowledge production. His publications include *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650-1900* (2007), “Mapping knowledge go-betweens in Calcutta, 1770-1820” (2009), and “Thinking Without the Scientific Revolution: Global Interactions and the Construction of Knowledge” (2017).

On **Wednesday, 7 December** Professor Kapil Raj will also teach a **Masterclass** about “Natural Knowledge: Data, Objects, and Persons in Global Knowledge Networks” for graduate (R)MA and PhD students. The Masterclass is hosted by the “Routes and Roots in Colonial and Global History” research network of the **N.W. Posthumus Institute** and organised by Neilabh Sinha and Melinda Susanto.

For more information and enrollment, please contact m.sinha&hum.leidenuniv.nl

The **Leiden Terra Incognita Lecture** is an annual lecture organized by the research group Colonial and Global History (COGLO) of the Institute for History at Leiden University, and has the aim to explore the historiographical frontiers of the field of colonial and global history.

On behalf of COGLO

Fenneke Sijssling, Michiel van Groesen and Jos Gommans