International conference report

South Asia and the Long 1930s: Appropriations and Afterlives

6-7 December 2013, Leiden, the Netherlands

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ON 6 AND 7 DECEMBER 2013, the international conference ‘South Asia and the Long 1930s: Appropriations and Afterlives’, was convened in Leiden. Conceptualised by an expanding and amorphous collective of historians of modern South Asia at the Leiden University, the conference was organised jointly by Prof. Nira Wickramasinghe and Dr. Sanjukta Sunderason from the Leiden Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) and Dr. Carolien Stolte from the Institute for History. The conference received generous funding support from the Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences, the Asian Modernities and Traditions research profile of Leiden University, the LIAS, the IAS and the Leiden University Fund. It brought together South Asianists across disciplines and research specialisations to focus on the complex forms and terrains of the political, social and cultural currents of the 1930s. Yet the scope of the conference spanned beyond South Asia, and the organisers were fortunate to be able to include experts from other regions to engage with the currents and resonances of the 1930s. As a result, all panels benefited from discussants who provided inputs from the Middle Eastern, European, British, and Chinese perspectives. Shaping modern South Asian studies in Leiden as well as opening up South Asia to thematic dialogues from other regions (and area studies perspectives) was one of the driving forces behind the conference.

The three panels in this two-day conference elaborated upon themes that can be seen to frame the 1930s: International Affinities, Aesthetics and Politics, the Market and the Ordinary. Reflecting research specialisations of the three key organisers, the panels were chaired by Carolien Stolte, Sanjukta Sunderason, and Nira Wickramasinghe respectively. The first conference day kicked off with two sessions on ‘International Affinities’. This theme was selected to shed light on the complex forms and terrains of the political, social and cultural currents of the 1930s. Yet the scope of the conference spanned beyond South Asia, and the organisers were fortunate to be able to include experts from other regions to engage with the currents and resonances of the 1930s. As a result, all panels benefited from discussants who provided inputs from the Middle Eastern, European, British, and Chinese perspectives. Shaping modern South Asian studies in Leiden as well as opening up South Asia to thematic dialogues from other regions (and area studies perspectives) was one of the driving forces behind the conference.

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