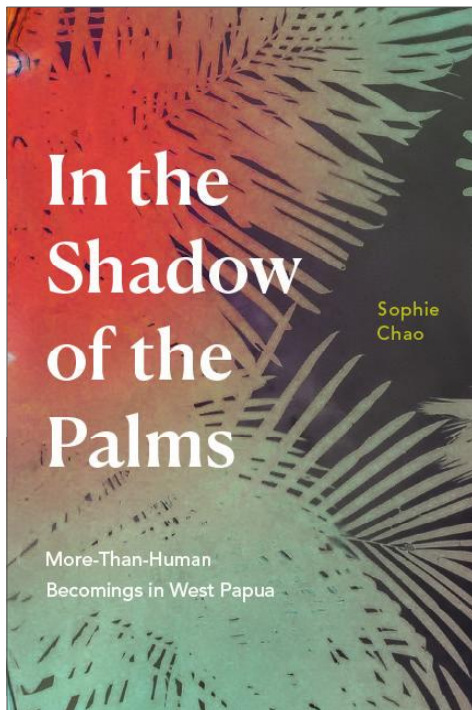


## Circle News

### Members' Recent Publications



#### **In the Shadow of the Palms**

More-Than-Human Becomings in West Papua

**SOPHIE CHAO**

With *In the Shadow of the Palms*, Sophie Chao examines the multispecies entanglements of oil palm plantations in West Papua, Indonesia, showing how Indigenous Marind communities understand and navigate the social, political, and environmental demands of the oil palm plant. As Chao notes, it is no secret that the palm oil sector has destructive environmental impacts: it greatly contributes to tropical deforestation and is a major driver of global warming. Situating the plant and the transformations it has brought within the context of West Papua's volatile history of colonization, ethnic domination, and capitalist incursion, Chao traces how Marind attribute environmental destruction not just to humans, technologies, and capitalism but also to the volition and actions of the oil palm plant itself. By approaching cash crops as both drivers of destruction and subjects of human exploitation, Chao rethinks capitalist violence as a multispecies act. In the process, Chao centers how Marind fashion their own changing worlds and foreground Indigenous creativity and decolonial approaches to anthropology.

Duke University Press Scholars of Color First Book Award recipient

*"The stories Sophie Chao tells in this amazing book are mesmerizing, and her interpretation of them is clear and powerful. She makes a major contribution to the intersection of multispecies and posthumanist scholarship and critical BIPOC studies in ways that could shape imaginations both in and beyond the academy. Brilliant, insightful, and meticulous, In the Shadow of the Palms will be an influential and important book."* — Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, coeditor of *Feral Atlas: The More-than-Human Anthropocene*

<https://dukeupress.edu/in-the-shadow-of-the-palms>

June 2022 | 336 pages, 14 illustrations

978-1-4780-1824-7 \$28.95 paperback **\$20.27 with discount**

Special offer: Use coupon code **E22CHAO** to save 30% when you order from [dukeupress.edu](https://dukeupress.edu).



## Upcoming Summer/Winter 2022 Programs and Meetings

### “Living Relations”

#### Seventeenth Ischia Summer School on the History of the Life Sciences

Ischia, Italy, 26 June – 3 July 2022

This week-long summer school on the theme of “Living Relations” provides advanced training in history of the life sciences through lectures, seminars and discussions in a historically rich and naturally beautiful setting.

*Organizers:* Janet Browne (Harvard), Christiane Groeben (Naples), Nick Hopwood (Cambridge), Staffan Müller-Wille (Cambridge) and Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn (Naples)

*Confirmed faculty:* Jenny Bangham (QMUL), Maaïke van der Lugt (Versailles), Terence Keel (UCLA), Noémie Merleau-Ponty (CNRS), Erika Milam (Princeton), Justin E. H. Smith (Paris), Marianne Sommer (Luzern), Banu Subramaniam (Amherst), Emily Varto (Dalhousie)

*Funding:* Fritz Thyssen Foundation, National Science Foundation, George Loudon, History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences.

More information: <<http://ischiasummerschool.org/>>

### Global History and Culture Centre Annual Conference

Thursday 9th and Friday 10th June 2022

OC0.01 Oculus Building, University of Warwick

#### Keynote

Professor Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga (MIT)

#### Website and Registration

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/ghcc/event/bigpicture/>

£5 registration fee, places are limited.

#### Overview

The history of science lacks a sense of the ‘big picture’. Nearly three decades ago, James Secord identified this problem in an influential special issue of *The British Journal for the History of Science*. At the time, the history of science was dominated by localised case studies—quantum mechanics in Weimar Germany, phrenology in 1830s Edinburgh, experimental philosophy in seventeenth-century London, and so on. These case studies, localised in time as well as space, were important for challenging the post-war consensus that modern science was universal. However, as Secord noted,

this proliferation of case studies also undermined any sense of the ‘big picture’ —how and why science changed over the *longue durée*, and how science moved between different parts of the world. “The striking lessons of recent research need to be applied to longer time spans, a broader range of participants, and wider regional and global perspectives,” argued Secord in 1993.

Despite Secord’s argument, the history of science is still dominated by localised case studies. It still lacks a sense of the ‘big picture’, even if in recent years the field has started to move beyond its Eurocentric focus. There are now many excellent national and regional studies of the history of science in Latin America, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific. Yet it is still not entirely clear what these individual case studies add up to. Localism, as the historian of science Peter Galison noted, has its own limits. And although some ‘big picture’ histories of science have been written since 1993, they are hard to reconcile with each other, and tend to be heavily skewed towards the history of ideas.

This conference, sponsored by the Global History and Culture Centre at the University of Warwick, will bring together leading international scholars to reflect on what ‘big picture’ histories of science might look like today. We hope that a dialogue between historians of science and the broader historical discipline will facilitate new ways of thinking beyond individual case studies. The meeting will invite participants to reflect on what recent trends in historical scholarship, such as global history and environmental history, might offer for ‘big picture’ histories of science.

### **Speakers**

Sophie Brockmann (De Montfort University)  
Michael Bycroft (University of Warwick)  
Pratik Chakrabarti (University of Houston)  
Gianamar Giovannetti-Singh (University of Cambridge)  
Aleksandra Kaye (University College London)  
Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga (MIT)  
Jahnvi Phalkey (Science Gallery Bengaluru)  
Dagmar Schäfer (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science)  
James Secord (University of Cambridge)  
John Tresch (Warburg Institute)  
Camilo Uribe Botta (University of Warwick)  
Duygu Yildirim (European University Institute)

## Book Reviews

H-Net Staff via H-REVIEW <[h-review@lists.h-net.org](mailto:h-review@lists.h-net.org)>

Elsa L. Fan. *Commodities of Care: The Business of HIV Testing in China*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021. 216 pp. \$25.00 (e-book), ISBN 978-1-4529-6121-7; \$100.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-5179-0764-8; \$25.00 (paper), ISBN 978-1-5179-0765-5.

Reviewed by Elise Li Zheng (Georgia Institute of Technology)  
Published on H-Sci-Med-Tech (May, 2022)  
Commissioned by Penelope K. Hardy

In the book *Commodities of Care*, Elsa L. Fan details how HIV rapid-testing technology, which has been widely deployed by health funds and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) targeting the MSM (men who have sex with men) community, has transformed the landscape of HIV care into a performance and market-oriented regime, making (homosexual) bodies into social/political capital (hence the "commodities of care"). The monograph is based on the author's prior engagement with HIV-related philanthropical work in mainland China. Her acquaintance with various levels of personnel in the system (NGO staff, local officials, community workers, and patients) adds depth and nuance to the ethnographical material and articulates succinctly the social and economic logic of HIV care in China's MSM communities.

The book mainly focuses on two critical aspects of how commodities are made through the cost-effectiveness structure of HIV care delivery among MSM. The first is how the performance-based health programs and their governing techniques have (re)shaped the way prevention and control are administered. In chapters 1 and 3, Fan details the economic logic behind the distribution of testing services among various communities and the ways the audit regimes and languages of value have reconfigured the landscapes of HIV prevention and care. Global donors and local centers for disease control (CDC) in China have adopted a performance-based financing structure that calls for scale and standardization, allowing accounting and accountability measures to be established so that local organizations and their operations can be incentivized and closely monitored. Rapid testing targeting MSM suits this logic and structure, as it produces performance goals. Small organizations, which largely depend on the donors and Chinese CDCs' social service contracts, translate the

outreach and testing efforts into a value-production process to secure funds and "long-term sustainability" (p. 50). However, during the actual operation, other vital aspects in HIV care (such as treatment and prevention) and other groups are downplayed or even neglected. As Fan criticizes in the book, the current structure is "a very narrow purview of what mattered, and left little room, or funding, to explore alternative methods of prevention and care for MSM" (p. 10).

The second aspect, shown in chapter 2, is the making of MSM, through testing and community outreach, as an identity and selfhood of those who are deemed "at risk." The term was originally an epidemiological instrument and focused only on sexual behavior rather than sexuality for "neutral" HIV surveillance. Nevertheless, this category has been reinvented and reimagined with a Chinese context for the purpose of test initiatives. It transfers the target population (some of whom are "hidden" in heterosexual relationships because of traditional social values) as subjects of governance by creating a new form of selfhood (*\_ziworentong\_*) and self-responsibilities--the "empowerment" of the target population (p. 51). MSM identity is created by defining and finding out who is "at risk" to test, and hence it is deeply entangled with the financial initiatives of testing as outsourced social service from funding sources and authorities to NGOs and local communities. Fan argues that this process transformed MSM into commodities of care "that accrue political and economic value," which is transacted between the stakeholders (p. 23).

From a science and technology studies (STS) point of view, Fan's work demonstrates the critical entanglement of the material and the social--how a certain technology is shaped by and shapes social relationships. When it comes to finding out if someone has a certain disease, "testing" is initially material yet also socially constructed with this material. Testing can differ from diagnosis; in diagnosis, medical professionals make claims based on various sources of information, and the practice is embedded in the authority of medicine and performed through physician-patient interactions.[1] Testing, however, is usually seen as more technical. It is to reflect the existence of certain pathogens, and the results are simple. The technical parts do not get much attention in this book. However, testing can play a pivotal role as not only a technical tool but also a "sociotechnical system" that entangles various social forces to render the patients visible and as subjects of governance and that directs resources and shapes identities in the care and prevention business.

Chapters 4 and 5 extend the discussion into the communities and individuals themselves. With scholarly engagement with biopolitics and bio-citizenship, Fan touches on the power issues between selfhood and governmentality in HIV prevention and care. However, this part seems to be a weaker aspect of the book and connects less with the testing technology. How does the technology signify self-control and channel responsibilities into the way they live their lives? What is the link between individual identity and epidemiological knowledge production? China is seen by the field of medical sociology/anthropology (and some STS) as an ambivalent case of neoliberal health (e.g., psychotherapy); is the making of MSM selfhood part of the neoliberal health regime, and what is its implication in the context of China's political regime?[2] Fan rarely mentions or addresses this "elephant in the room," the political sensitivity of homosexuality and social advocacy under an authoritarian government in China. The latter part of the book could perhaps have been better organized around the theoretical and empirical connections with Chinese politics, which are hard to obscure in contemporary China studies.

Overall, this book offers a strong argument on how testing technology's social and economic logic could shape the care and prevention of HIV in China. It shows the intricate relationship between technology and its social production. More nuanced and deeper political discussions can be addressed in future research. The socio-material approach can inspire future study of the current COVID-19 pandemic, for example, how polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests became a vital component in shaping the landscape of the pandemic and public health responses. The production, financial structure, distributing strategies, and performance behind COVID-19 tests should not be ignored.

#### Notes

[1]. Annemarie Jutel, "Sociology of Diagnosis: A Preliminary Review," *Sociology of Health & Illness* 31, no. 2 (2009): 278-99.

[2]. Li Zhang, *Anxious China: Inner Revolution and Politics of Psychotherapy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020).

Citation: Elise Li Zheng. Review of Fan, Elsa L., *Commodities of Care: The Business of HIV Testing in China*. *H-Sci-Med-Tech, H-Net Reviews*. May, 2022.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=57699>

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# Bibliography of Selected Recent Publications

## Articles

*Regional Environmental Change* 22 (June 2022):

“The climate change policy integration challenge in French Polynesia, Central Pacific Ocean,” by

- [Alexandre K. Magnan](#),
- [Toanui Viriamu](#),
- [Annabelle Moatty](#),
- [Virginie K. E. Duvat](#),
- [Gonéri Le Cozannet](#),
- [Lucile Stahl](#) &
- [Ariadna Anisimov](#)

Article number: 76 (2022) [Cite this article](#)

Abstract

This paper discusses whether existing coastal risk reduction policies in French Polynesia—a French Overseas Territory with a high degree of political autonomy—(i) consider current and future coastal risks from climate variability and change, and (ii) are designed to evolve as new knowledge on climate change emerges. The analysis relies on the study of risk-relevant policy documents and considers *Coastal risk integration* (i.e. extent to which coastal hazards and associated impacts are considered) and *Adjustability* (i.e. potential for the policy documents to be adjusted over time) as proxy outcomes for climate change policy integration more broadly. The results show that there are still important gaps relating to an insufficient incorporation of climate-related coastal hazards into the existing policy documents, and to difficulties in both implementing these documents and making them more climate change-compatible. While recent examples on the ground provide encouraging early signs towards more adjustable local policies, they are to date too time- and/or space-bounded to represent any real shift at the territory level.

“Post-cyclone resilience of an agroforest-based food system in the Pacific Islands,” by

- [Ashley McGuigan](#),
- [Tamara Ticktin](#),
- [Mesulame Tora](#),
- [Veniana Tikonavuli](#),
- [Shimona A. Quazi](#) &
- [Rachel Dacks](#)

Article number: 57 (2022) [Cite this article](#)

## Abstract

As climate change increases the probability and/or severity of major disturbances worldwide, understanding how agroecological food systems can be resilient to the effects of major disturbances becomes critical. Farm-level crop and cultivar richness are critical to food security and nutritional dietary diversity, but quantitative research of how they are impacted by major disturbances, including the dynamics of their recovery, is largely lacking. We assessed the resilience of an agroforest-based food system to a recent Category 5 cyclone. Specifically, we carried out vegetation surveys in Fijian agroforests pre-cyclone, and 1 and 3 years post-cyclone, to assess changes in staple starch crop and cultivar richness over time. Resilience, measured as robustness, redundancy, reactivity, and resourcefulness, varied with the scale of analysis. At both the crop and cultivar scale, the agroforestry systems were highly reactive to cyclone disturbance. Crop species richness increased immediately post-cyclone and 3 years later remained higher than pre-cyclone levels, largely due to the increased presence of famine food crops, indicating system robustness, redundancy, and resourcefulness as well. Farmers also planted many new starch crop cultivars post-cyclone, especially of sweet potatoes, but the total number of cultivars declined over time, indicating limited redundancy and resourcefulness. Frequent crop substitutions for cassava over taro or yams, and high cultivar dynamism that resulted in the loss of traditional varieties, can have consequences both for nutritional diversity and the maintenance of cultural traditions. This research suggests resilience is present in Fijian agroforest systems, yet a greater focus on crop cultivar diversity is needed.

“Fighting for Forests: Protection and Exploitation of Kōje Island Timber during the East Asian War of 1592–1598,” by Baihui Duan and Rebekah Clements, *Environmental History*

## Abstract

Warfare drove depletion of forests and forest management in the early modern world, as states required increasing control over timber resources to support their growing militaries. East Asia was no exception. Scholars have shown how the Chosŏn Korean state tightened control over forests via its navy during the seventeenth century, following invasions by the Japanese hegemon Toyotomi Hideyoshi between 1592 and 1598. This devastating conflict between China, Korea, and Japan was the largest war of the sixteenth-century world. The vast size of the Japanese invasion fleets, the naval battles that were fought along the Korean coastline, and the building of fortresses throughout the occupied parts of the peninsula meant timber was of paramount significance during the war. The Korean island of Kōje was of particular strategic importance both for its location on the southern coast facing Japan and for the high-quality pine lumber produced there. This article explores the exploitation and protection of the forest environment of Kōje during the war, focusing on a four-month period at the start of 1597 when tensions came to a head. The case of Kōje shows the efficacy of direct management of forests by naval forces, as well as the results of a clash between early modern Chinese, Japanese, and Korean state cultures of timber control. The management of Kōje’s timber by the Chosŏn navy during the war also helps explain why it was the navy that was later given administrative responsibility for managing forests in the postwar period.



“A Spiteful Campaign: Agriculture, Forests, and Administering the Environment in Imperial Singapore and Malaya,” by Timothy P. Barnard and Joanna W. C. Lee, *Environmental History*

### Abstract

The Singapore Botanic Gardens, founded in 1859, was a center for the development of imperial botany where new flora was identified and other plants acclimatized. The ostensibly scientific orientation of the Gardens proved inadequate for the growing number of large capitalistic firms established in Malaya to cultivate cash crops, so the British government established two new bureaucracies—a Department of Forestry and a Department of Agriculture—that more explicitly catered to the demands of British industry in the region. This shift in policies prompted quarrels between bureaucrats and botanists, who shared a commitment to the imperial project but disagreed with environmental administration in British-controlled Southeast Asia. The debates proved significant, facilitating the expansion of plantation estates, massive deforestation, and a transformed natural environment as capitalistic investment began to override scientific knowledge, laying the groundwork for the environmental exploitation of the region throughout the twentieth century.

## Books

*Red Leviathan: The Secret History of Soviet Whaling*, by **Ryan Tucker Jones**, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2022

Publisher’s Note: “A revealing and authoritative history that shows how Soviet whalers secretly helped nearly destroy endangered whale populations, while also contributing to the scientific understanding necessary for these creatures’ salvation.”

## Conferences, Meetings, Workshops, and Lectures

### International Workshop on “Oceans Disconnect”

**November 21-22, 2022**

*global dis:connect* will host the international workshop *Oceans Disconnect* organised by David Armitage (Harvard), Sujit Sivasundaram (Cambridge) and Roland Wenzlhuemer (Munich).

Over the past three decades, the rapidly expanding historical literature on oceans and seas has traditionally been framed around the geographical units of the world’s water bodies; it has been directed towards tracking long-distance connections, so as to problematise the political and specialist organisation of historical knowledge around “nation”, “area” and “civilisation.”

Yet the promise of the first, boosterish, phase of oceanic history has lately ebbed. Globalisation now looks more reversible and halting. And transnational historians more generally are examining disconnection rather than connection as a dynamic in world history.

Along these lines, new work in oceanic history is insisting on particularity, friction, interruption, materiality and resistance. There is growing attention to the critical foundations of connection, where people, things, ideas, legal systems, could demonstrate instability, violence, and invisibility at the very nodes of globalisation. And historians are increasingly focusing on the choke-points within the world's oceans: straits and narrows, gulfs and bays; pirates' nests and contested waters; natural disaster and commercial risk; closed seas and maritime limits, among other topics. This workshop will interrogate the underside of connection and the dynamics of disconnection in oceanic history.