

## Call for Papers

### **Life along the River: Interactions between Human Societies and Valley Environments in the Convergence Zone of the Inner Asian Highlands, 1600s–1950s**

The convergence zone of the Inner Asian Highlands consists of the present-day parts of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces in western China. It lies at the intersection of the Himalayan, Mongolian, Loess and Yungui plateaus, where the upper Yellow, Yangtze, Mekong and Salween rivers and their tributaries flow among towering mountains and segment the region into countless long valleys. Different “natural systems” take place in these relatively parallel valleys along elevational gradients. Historically, these valleys sat on the overlapped margins of dominant centers of power. They often served as political, economic and cultural corridors between China proper and Inner Asia. Meanwhile, the valleys have been the homelands of many remarkably distinct ethnic groups. Local riverine settlers experienced a series of multi-directional political integrations and economic and cultural exchanges. Fluidity has been a constant marker of the ways of life in these valleys.

The conference will bring together scholars to discuss the interactions between the culturally diverse inhabitants and valley habitats in the meeting place of the Inner Asian Highlands. It aims to explore how different societies in the long “corridors” between Inner Asia and China proper have adapted to, negotiated with, transformed and interpreted their environments. The participants will examine how the natural environment has shaped “human systems,” and delve into various cultural groups’ interactions with weather, land, water, vegetation, animals, disaster, disease and so on along these valleys. The conference also seeks to understand this frontier zone as a center onto itself by employing an approach that combines anthropological fieldwork with historical and environmental studies.

We welcome proposals for 20-minute presentations. Please send your working title and abstract of 300 words and a short bio to Marnyi Gyatso (Email: [lifelongtheriver2021@gmail.com](mailto:lifelongtheriver2021@gmail.com)).

Applicants will be informed on the outcome before March 1, 2021.

Due to the uncertainties with Covid-19, the conference will be held on-line from New York. There will be no registration fee.

#### **Conference Organizers:**

The Modern Tibetan Studies Program  
The Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University  
Marnyi Gyatso ([gyatsoyang@gmail.com](mailto:gyatsoyang@gmail.com))  
Eveline Washul ([esy2103@columbia.edu](mailto:esy2103@columbia.edu))

#### **Publication Opportunities:**

We will publish a special journal issue on the conference theme in 2022. We also plan a proposal for an edited volume with one of the leading academic publishers.

#### **Timeline:**

Deadline for the Submission of Abstracts: January 31, 2021  
End of Review Process: February 20, 2021  
Deadline for the Submission of Papers: June 15, 2021  
Conference: July 22–23, 2021  
Publication: Fall 2022