

LECTURE

British Colonialism and the Taming of the Foreshore and Littoral Societies in Early Colonial Madras

Monday, 16 June 2025

17:00 hours s.t.

Centre for British Studies
Mohrenstr. 60, 10117 Berlin

Vidhya Raveendranathan

Visiting Scholar, Centre for British Studies
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Much of the existing historiography on the histories of mobility in the Indian Ocean have privileged the study of the lascar, dock labour and the indenture migrant as constituting objects of maritime labour. In thinking about littoral labour in colonial Madras, this talk moves away from the deep sea proletariat to documenting the amphibious and contingent histories of coastal communities who served as vital channels of transport and communication for colonial state formation and empire building in South India.

The talk delves into the enduring tensions between the colonial transformation of Madras coast into a spatially coherent legal space through mobilisation of caste authority, pier construction, a summary justice system and its disruption by the lived social practices, moral economies and quotidian interactions of various coastal populations in colonial South India.

Vidhya Raveendranathan is currently a Visiting Scholar at the Centre for British Studies, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Everyone is welcome to attend.

Großbritannien-Zentrum der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Mohrenstraße 60 | 10117 Berlin | www.gbz.hu-berlin.de

Register at: events.gbz@hu-berlin.de

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