

Colonialism and Climate History

Preliminary Workshop Program

Washington, DC, 6-8 June 2013

Conference Co-organizers: John R. McNeill, Franz Mauelshagen, Eleonora Rohland, Jean-François Mouhot

6 June 2013

2:00-2:30 pm

John R. McNeill (Georgetown University): Welcome Address

2:30-3:15 pm

Sara Miglietti (Centre for the Study of the Renaissance, Warwick, UK): Governing through the Environment: Climate Theory in the Early Colonial Age

3:15-3:30 pm Coffee Break

3:30-4:15 pm

Sam White (Oberlin College): Cold, Drought, and Disaster in the Spanish Conquest of New Mexico

4:15-5:00 pm

Geoffrey Parker (Ohio State University): Colonies, Climate, and the General Crisis

6:30 Dinner

7 June 2013

9:00-9:45 am

Georgina Endfield (University of Manchester): Articulating Climate Anxiety: Drought, Water Scarcity and Litigation in Colonial Mexico

9:45-10:30 am

Sherry Johnson (Florida International University): Climate and Colonialism during the Spanish Enlightenment in the Eighteenth Century: Case Studies from the Greater Caribbean

10:30-11:00 Coffee Break

11:00-11:45 pm

Eleonora Rohland (KWI, Essen): Hurricanes, Subsistence Crises and Disaster Migration in the Lower Mississippi Valley, 1722-1804

11:45-12:30 pm

Alexander Jorge Berland (University of Manchester): "No Colony is subject to greater vicissitudes of weather and more alarming Physical evils": Climate and Crisis in Antigua, 1770-1890

12:30-2 pm Lunch Break

2:00-2:45 pm

Elizabeth Rushton (University of Manchester): Pathological Swamps and Clean Coastal Air: An Emerging Medical Topography from 19th Century Belize

2:45-3:30 pm

Lawrence Culver (Utah State University): King Climate: Debating Cotton and Climate in Antebellum America

3:30-4:00 pm Coffee Break

4:00-4:45 pm

Eric Jennings (University of Toronto): How high is safe? Altitude and Microclimate as Panaceas in French Colonial Indochina

4:45-5:30 pm

Mike Osborne (Oregon State University): Hydroimperialism in France and Her Colonies

7:00 Dinner

8 June 2013

9:00-9:45 am

Anya Zilberstein (Concordia University): ???

9:45-10:30 am

Mark Carey (University of Oregon): Cold War Climate Science since 1950

11:30-11:00 am Coffee Break

11:00-11:45 pm

Franz Mauelshagen (KWI, Essen): The Climates of Colonialism: A Global Perspective

Abstracts:

Georgina Endfield:

Articulating climate anxiety: drought, water scarcity and litigation in colonial Mexico

In this paper I draw on the rich colonial archives of Mexico to explore how anxieties over climate variability and specifically droughts, were articulated in legal proceedings over natural resources. There are thousands of lawsuits (*pleitos*) from the colonial period charting instances of illegal water use, water monopolisation, diversion, water theft, deprivation and usurpation and requests for reinstatement of water rights and all cross-sections of society appear to have been involved in water disputes at some stage throughout the colonial period. The degree of antagonism over this most essential resource, however, appears to have been exacerbated by drought, while a fear of water deprivation or perhaps memory of the impacts of drought induced scarcity underpinned many of the documented water disputes. In as much as there may be some association between drought and an escalation in disputes over water, I wish to demonstrate that there was a strong element of opportunism in water litigation, and an awareness of the propensity for drought and its impacts may have been employed by litigants as a legal “tool” to reinforce or refute claims of water shortage, monopolisation, deprivation and/or restitution.