

Sacred Forests of Asia
Spiritual Ecology and the Politics of Nature Conservation

April 22-24, 2022

Hosted by Bard College at Simon's Rock

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82029937853?pwd=QIBScVBvQjUrWlVwM1BPN0FHhGRudz09>



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The Book and the Conference

This conference celebrates our [forthcoming volume on sacred forests of Asia](#), the first cross-cultural, multidisciplinary study of sacred forests in South, East, and Southeast Asia. Our contributors foreground new scholarly dialogues on the nature of sacred space, place, landscape, and ecology in the context of sharply contested ideas of the Anthropocene. Given the vast geographic range of sacred groves in Asia, our contributors examine the diversity of associated cosmologies, ecologies, traditional local resource management practices, and environmental governance systems developed during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. Adopting theoretical perspectives from political ecology, the book views ecology and polity as constitutive elements interacting within local, regional, and global networks. Readers will find the very first systematic comparative analysis of sacred forests that include the *karchall mabhuy* of the Katu people of Central Vietnam, the *leuweng kolot* of the Baduy people of West Java, the *fengshui* forests of southern China, the groves to the goddess Sarna Mata worshiped by the Oraon people of Jharkhand India, the *mauelsoop* and *bibosoop* of Korea, and many more. Incorporating in-depth, field-based case studies, each chapter shows how the forest's sacrality must not be conceptually delinked from its roles in common property regimes, community resource security, spiritual matters of ultimate concern, and cultural identity.

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Program

(All times listed represent US Eastern Time)

Friday April 22 – South Asia

8:40-8:50 - General Introduction: Chris Coggins (Bard College at Simon's Rock) and Bixia Chen (University of the Ryukyus)

8:50-9:00 - Introduction to South Asia - Sacred Forests and Human-Environment Relations
Chris Coggins and K.G. Saxena (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

9:00-9:15 - Radhika Borde (Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic) - The Politics and Poetics of Forested Sacred Natural Sites in East-Central India

9:20-9:35 - Mukul Sharma (Ashoka University) - "Come Let Us All Play": Sacred Groves, *Sarna*, and "Green Politics" In Jharkhand, India

9:40-9:55 - Shruti Mokashi (Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE))
- Forest Gods and Forest Conservation: Local Perceptions of Village Sacred Forests in the Bhimashankar Region, Western India

10:00-10:15 - Prithibi Gogoi (Tezpur University) - *Daikhos*—Sacred Groves, Clan Rituals, and Gender Exclusion Among the Dimasas of Assam

10:20- 10:35 - Abdullah, Shujaul Mulk Khan, Zahoor Ul Haq, and Zeeshan Ahmad (Quaid-i-Azam University) - Muslim Graveyard Groves: Plant Diversity, Ecosystem Services, and Species Conservation in Northwest Pakistan

10:40-10:55 - Elizabeth Allison (California Institute of Integral Studies) - Sacred Forests as Sites of Bio-Cultural Resistance and Resilience in Bhutan

11:00-11:30 - General Discussion (Chris Coggins, Moderator and Discussant)

Saturday April 23 – East Asia

8:50-9:00 - South Asia (Continued) - Eliza Kent (Skidmore College) - Can Tamil Sacred Groves Survive Neoliberalism?

9:00-9:10 - Introduction to East Asia - Sacred Forests and Human-Environment Relations
Chris Coggins and Bixia Chen

9:10-9:25 - Chris Coggins, Bixia Chen, Jesse Minor (University of Maine, Farmington) - China's Fengshui Forests: The Fate of Lineage Wind-Water Polities Under Ecological Civilization

9:30-9:45 - Dowon Lee (Seoul National University), GoWoon Kim, Wanmo Kang, Insu Koh (College of Medicine, University of Vermont), and Chan-Ryul Park (Korean National Institute of Forest Science) - Korea's Sacred Groves—The Maeulsoop: Forest Types, Ecosystem Services, and Current Distribution

9:50-10:05 - Bixia Chen (University of the Ryukyus) - *Utaki* and *Ashagi* Sacred Forests on the Ryukyu Islands: Vegetation Structure and Conservation Management Challenges

10:10-10:25 - Lily Zeng - Nostalgia, Restoration, and Reinventions of Sacred Groves in Xishuangbanna, Southwest China

10:30-10:45 – Naoya Furuta (Taisho University) - Shrine Forests in Honshu, Japan

10:45-11:15 - General Discussion (Bixia Chen, Moderator and Discussant)

Sunday April 24 – Southeast Asia

8:50-9:00 – Introduction to Southeast Asia - Sacred Forests and Human-Environment Relations
Chris Coggins, Nikolas Århem, Agni Klintuni Boedhihartono, Hoan Phan, Ha Le, and Ekoningtyas Wardani

9:00-9:15 – Phan Thi Hoan and Le Van Ha (Vietnam Academy of Social Science) - Stories of the Trees: Understanding Traditions and Transitions in the Katu Peoples' Perceptions of Forests in Central Vietnam

9:20-9:35 – Nikolas Århem - The Katu Spirit Landscape: Forests, Ecology, and Cosmology in the Central Annamites

9:40-9:55 - Prasit Wangpakapattanawong (SUTHEP Mountain Nature Center) and Auemporn Junsongduang (Roi Et Rajabhat University) - Roles and Importance of Sacred Forests for Biodiversity Conservation in Thailand

10:00-10:15 - Man Han Chit Htoo (ICRC), Bram Steenhuisen (WWF), Bas Verschuuren (Wageningen University) - The Role of Spirits in Indigenous Ontologies and Their Implications for Forest Conservation in Karen State, Myanmar

10:20-10:35 - Intu Boedhihartono (University of British Columbia) (and Yohannes Purwanto, Indonesian Institute of Sciences, LIPI, and Indonesian Man and the Biosphere Program National Committee) - Governance Must Evolve to Meet New Needs of Indonesian Forest Communities (With highlights from Purwanto's "Sacred Forests, Sacred Natural Sites, Territorial Ownership, and Indigenous Community Conservation in Indonesia)

10:40-10:45 - Ekoningtyas Margu Wardani - The Sacred Forest of the Orang Rimba Hunter-Gatherers of Sumatra

10:45-11:15 – General Discussion (Jesse Minor, (Bixia Chen, Moderator and Discussant)