

Modernity's Environment: Rubber Plantations and the Making of Vietnam, 1897-1975

Mitch Aso

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Dr. Aso's talk uses rubber production as a lens to examine Vietnamese social and environmental history. It analyzes how rubber plantations became key symbolic and material environments and the consequences of this development for Vietnam. In particular, it investigates the relationships among humans and non-humans in the rubber industry and how its reliance on tree monocultures transformed these relationships. Finally, Aso's presentation touches on the question of how rubber plantations structured the violent environments of the First and Second Indochina Wars. Focusing on one commodity, rubber, and the people who produced it, helps construct alternative historical narratives about the environment and offers greater flexibility in responding to the challenges that face Vietnam in the twenty-first century.

Mitch Aso is an Assistant Professor of the Global Environment in the History Department at the University at Albany, SUNY. Before landing in Albany, he completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the National University of Singapore. In 2014-2015, he was a Fellow at the Institute for Historical Studies, UT-Austin. He is currently finishing a book manuscript called *Forest without Birds: Rubber Plantations and the Making of Vietnam, 1897-1975*, which explores the transformation of environments, human health, and knowledge through the places and people involved in rubber production in Vietnam. His dissertation on French colonial Vietnam won the 2013 Young Scholar Prize of the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science. He has recently published articles in *Modern Asian Studies*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, and *Science, Technology, and Society*. He teaches courses on global environmental history and Asian history.

Wednesday, April 13

12:00 Noon

Room 203, Luce Hall, 34 Hillhouse Avenue