

HUMAN ERROR OR NATURAL CALAMITY?

WRECKS IN LEGAL HISTORY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WORLD

This talk will build upon a legal archive of insurance cases fought by the East India Company, ship-owners, the British Admiralty, and insurance companies in the Marine Court of Calcutta, to demonstrate the courtroom debates were critical in developing the correct geographical nomenclature and science of tides and winds from the latter half of the eighteenth century. As the nautical marketplace expanded in the Bay of Bengal from the eighteenth century onwards, fire and piracy emerged as risks associated with maritime routes and tropical storms became the “unknowns.” Attempts to manage trade in these storms operated within a terrain of financial experiments, which were developed over the centuries of long-distance trade. Within this financial backdrop storms emerged as problems of administering justice and estimating risks. In the nineteenth century, these court records became a significant archive for colonial scientists to develop atmospheric knowledge in the service of actuarial science and insurance laws. By documenting how these courtroom debates became *jurisgenerative* sites of knowledge production about climate, my work resituates the standard accounts of the origins of western meteorology to the littorals of the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal. It concludes by showing how the Bay of Bengal, faced with the exigencies of global trade in the eighteenth-century, thus became the space of both legal and financial experimentation and subsequently a laboratory for nineteenth-century weather science.



Wreck of the Traveller, East-Indiaman, on a Rock, near Sunkin Island.
London, Pub. by T. Agnew, Mar. 18, 1810.

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Die Veranstaltung findet online über Zoom statt.
Bitte melden Sie sich für den Zoom-Zugang bei:
sekretariat.wsu@geschichte.uni-freiburg.de
(Natascha Kindermann)

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg

Historisches Seminar

Forschungskolloquium der Professur für Wirtschafts-, Sozial- und Umweltgeschichte (Prof. Dr. Melanie Arndt)

zusammen mit dem Lehrstuhl East Asian Studies (Prof. Dr. Sabine Dabringhaus) und der Professur für Neuere Geschichte der Universität Heidelberg (Prof. Dr. Stefanie Gänger)

