

Markaz-i Noor
Centre for Shaikh-ul Aalam Studies
University of Kashmir, Srinagar

Course Title: Kashmir's Connected Histories

Course Code: SAS21001GE

Course Type: Generic Elective (GE)

Semester: 1st

Introduction and Expected Learning Outcomes:

Historically speaking, and particularly from 15th century and onwards the Kashmir region *emerged* as a space of interconnected and a vibrant network of routes, both along its eastern and the western flanks. On the northeastern side, Kashmir was connected to places like Yarkand, Kasghar, Leh, trans-Karakoram, Lhasa etc., and through these grids and nodes eventually to the Silk Road, ensuring that the economy of the region, particularly the shawl economy, was supported and sustained. Concomitantly over this period, we also witness a process of Islamisation in the Kashmir Valley. This involved a movement of people, particularly Sufi travellers and traders from the West Asian region into Kashmir providing a crucial impetus to the expansion of Islam in the region while further integrating it into a wider economic sphere. However, scholars have rarely addressed these networks or its impact on Kashmir's complex history and culture. In fact Kashmir represents a case of what Indrani Chatterjee describes elsewhere as "connections unread" or "reproducing disconnection".

Familiarising students with categories like mobility, circulation, movement, etc., as an alternate way of conceptualising the past, while emphasising the idea of region as a dynamic entity, the present course would seek to recover these forgotten connected histories of Kashmir. The course would also allow the students to recognise that their conceptions of the past are often shaped by presentist notions and imaginations, and the political uses that history is put to.

The temporal span of the course stretches from c. 1500 (when Kashmiri merchants and Kashmiri shawls began to enter into the Asian markets), to the present time when the region is embroiled in a political conflict, while recognising 1947 as a moment of rupture that changed the history of Kashmir in significant ways.

Unit-I: Routes and Networks

The unit seeks to bring Kashmir's pre 1947 histories and networks into focus by emphasising its historical connections with trans-Himalayan regions like Ladakh and Tibet and eventually with Central Asia and the Silk Route. These linkages and networks, which were often a subject matter of various journals published in the 19th century offer a corrective to any uncritical use of terms like borderlands as a way to engage with Kashmir, especially in the context of its historical past.



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Unit-II: Commodities and Practices

This unit attends to the flow of commodities and practices along the Kashmir-trans Himalayan network of routes. Until the late 19th century, commodities like the Kashmiri shawl entered into the Asian and global markets through these traditional routes, connecting Kashmir to the global market economy, thus challenging the established notions that have now come to define these rather neglected geographies

Suggested Readings:

Brian Caton, "Teaching South Asia beyond Colonial Boundaries" *ASIA Network Exchange*, Spring 2014, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 45-53

C. Markovits, J. Poucheпадass, and S. Subrahmanyam (eds), *Society and Circulation: Mobile People and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia 1750-1950*, London: Anthem, 2006 (Introduction)

M. Ishaq Khan, "The impact of Islam on Kashmir in the Sultanate period (1320-1586)", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 23, No. 2, (1986), pp. 187-205

Abdul Wahid Radhu, *Tibet Caravans: Journeys from Leh to Lhasa*, Speaking Tiger, 2017 (Introduction)

Michelle Maskiell, "Consuming Kashmir: Shawls and Empires, 1500-2000", *Journal of World History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, Spring 2002, pp. 27-65

Jacqueline H. Fewkes, *Trade and Contemporary Society along the Silk Road*, London and New York: Routledge, 2009 (Introduction & Chapter 1)

Shonaleeka Kaul, *The Making of Early Kashmir: Landscape and Identity in the Rajatarangini*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018 (Introduction)

Shonaleeka Kaul, "Kashmir and its endemic spirituality are timeless", *The Frontline*, March 16, 2018

Neeladri Bhattacharya, "Predicaments of Secular Histories" *Public Culture*, (2008) 20(1): 57-73

N.B., A broad reading list is also available for those who are interested

