Abstract: Most writings on lands and rivers in South Asia have disingenuously accepted the “politics of separations.” Land as property and river as resource, thus, are overwhelmingly recognized as distinct conceptual domains. Histories about land settlements, rent extraction, the burdens of revenue, legal ownership, or the commons have occupied discussions only as the political economy of the soil. Rivers, on the other hand, became a technical subject involving infrastructure and the biographies of engineering and control. Professor D’Souza will argue that this politics of separations acquired a defining force in the region only through the course of the long nineteenth century. An amphibian South Asia with its soil-water admixtures actually characterized its environmental and social worlds before being transformed into the reptilian terrain of colonial modernity.


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