Lady Gwillim's Botany

Henry Noltie and John Bosco Lourdusamy
Moderator: Minakshi Menon (MPIWG)

Magnolia coco (Lour.) DC.

September 15, 2020
9:00AM (EDT)
To register for this virtual event, please visit:
https://bit.ly/31Z6rJM

The Gwillim Project, which centres around the unpublished correspondence and artwork of two sisters who lived in Madras at the beginning of the nineteenth century, brings together an international network of scholars from diverse fields in order to explore the collections from multiple perspectives.

The Gwillim Project Online will host a panel moderated by Minakshi Menon that focuses on Elizabeth Gwillim's interest in botany, featuring a paper by Henry Noltie. John Bosco Lourdusamy will give a response to the paper. Elizabeth Gwillim's keen interest in the natural world included plants as well as birds. Her sister Mary described her surrounded by botanical specimens, in conversation with local experts. As Elizabeth wrote, her studies of Telugu were aimed at increasing her ability to understand local plant knowledge. In this paper, Henry Noltie places Elizabeth's botanical studies within the wider context of colonial botany in and beyond Madras.

Henry Noltie worked at RBGE from 1986 to 2017 as a curator and taxonomist. From 2000 his work was on historical aspects of the rich herbarium and illustrations collections of the RBGE, especially relating to India. This resulted in a series of publications on Scottish East India Company surgeons, and the botanical drawings they commissioned from Indian artists in the late 18th and early 19th century.

John Bosco Lourdusamy is an Associate Professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras. His latest academic interests center around the history of tea plantation is India with specific focus on the evolution and transfers of technology in the tea industry. More generally, he is interested in the history of global circulation of (other) crops and commodities and is a historian of science, technology, and medicine in colonial India.

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