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Natural History Collections and Empire (1)

HSS Conventional session

Natural history museums and herbaria in the Global North owe much of their authority to plants, animals, and minerals collected in Europe and its former colonies. Recent estimates assume that a large majority of natural objects in repositories in Europe and the United States stem from former colonial areas in South America, Asia, and Africa. This unequal distribution of the planet's natural heritage is the historical result of intimate and often invisible linkages between natural history repositories and evolving schemes of colonial exploitation, violence, and commerce. This panel takes natural historical collections as an analytical starting point for an inquiry into the field of natural history and empire from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. The contributors to this panel reflect upon questions such as: How can natural historical collections help us to better understand daily practices and polycentric networks of collection

and natural historical knowledge production in former colonial empires? How can a collection centred focus enable us to write a history of 'biodiversity heritage' in which often violent forms of colonialism are not ignored? Can digital technologies be used to integrate indigenous knowledge in the system? The panel has a special focus on new approaches: large-scale digitization and the digital enrichment of collections and archives in the field for example, provide historians with new means to understand how objects have been transferred from the Global South to the Global North, to emphasise colonial processes in these transfers and to reach out to source communities. But micro-histories of objects too show how specimens from the natural world contain more than only biological or geological information, but have cultural and political histories too. This panel is part of a multi-panel submission.

Organizer: Andreas Weber

University of Twente

Co-Organizer: Fenneke Sysling

Leiden University

Chair: Andreas Weber

University of Twente

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📅 Friday, November 19, 2021
4 - 5 PM CET

📺 Online Meeting



82 Attendees

Messaging

Talk with other attendees about "Natural History Collections and Empire (1) "

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Ask a Question

Let the hosts and speakers know what is on your mind.

ASK QUESTION

Co-Chair: Fenneke Sysling
Leiden University

Lauren Williams, McGill University and **Victoria Dickenson**, McGill
University: *The American Black Parrot: Exploring an 18th-century Paper Museum*

Whitney Barlow Robles, Dartmouth College: *The Kitchen in the Cabinet:
Histories of Food and Natural Science*

Luciana Martins, Birkbeck, University of London: *Resources of hope: reactivating
Indigenous biocultural knowledge*

HSS

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