Soldiers of Tin: Nature and Labour in Colonial Australasia

Dr Amrita Malhi
Thursday 10 February, 5.30 pm
Conference Room, free

How are natural landscapes transformed into industrial ones? How are human beings transformed into labour? How do colonial power relationships and technological change contribute to these transformations?

This presentation will discuss these questions in relation to the tin mines established by the Billiton Company in its place of origin on Belitung Island, off Sumatra in the Netherlands East Indies. In particular, it will examine how overseas Chinese workers were strongly associated with more sophisticated technology and social organisation than Belitung’s resident communities. The talk will also consider how Belitung and its people were profoundly changed by their long connection with mining, and its social and environmental impacts.

Dr Malhi is the inaugural Minerals Council of Australia Fellow at the National Library of Australia, and recently received her PhD from the Australian National University.

This Fellowship is supported by the Minerals Council of Australia.