

City University of Hong Kong

Department of Public Policy

Research Student Seminar

**TRADING TRAJECTORY OF
MEDICINAL AND AROMATIC
PLANTS IN THE TRANS-
HIMALAYAN REGIONS:
BORDER, CIRCULATION AND
THE NETWORKED REGIME**

by

CHAPAGAIN Arjun

PhD Student

Date:	12 Aug 2019
Time:	1500-1630
Venue:	POL's Multi-purpose Room (B7516), Yeung Kin Man Acad. Building City University of Hong Kong
Language:	English

Abstract:

For centuries, the Tibetan Medicine has been assembling its raw materials of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) from overseas countries such as Nepal, India, and others. Today, the shipment of MAPs from Nepal to Tibet (and China in general) follow two

trajectories. One is the long-distance maritime line that starts from Nepal, to India, Hong Kong, and then China. The maritime line is usually used to ship large volume of goods by experienced merchants and cooperates. The other is a collection of trans-Himalayas land paths across the border between Nepal Himalayas and Tibetan plateaus. The land paths are mainly spontaneous, on and off, contingent upon agency of individual pickers and/or dealers. The ever-changing trading trajectories have been shaped by the always contingent geopolitical tension, territorial identity construction, regulative systems on border control, economic calculation, and the encounter of various human and non-human things. Moving along the paths are harvesters, herders, traders, monks, and with them, their trade, the religious practises, and an assembled geopolitical identity of Tibetan Medicine. Studies on the trans-Himalayas region has witnessed a growing body literature on the cross-border trade, mobility and sovereignty, and assemblage of Tibetan medicine. However, the exploration into the intersection of the three through the lens of geopolitical culture is fragmented. Through the proposed study, I attempt to unravel the material consequence of assembled geopolitical culture of Tibetan Medicine Identity, drawing upon the conception of assemblage that attends to the heterogenous human and non-human things, their encounters, and more importantly, the production of the conditions for these encounters to happen. I propose the concept of “networked regime” to understand the trajectories, border regime and geopolitical culture in cross border Himalayan MAPs trade from Nepal to China, and aim to explore how “networked regime” responses to assembled geopolitical culture of Tibetan Medicine Identity and the contemporary trajectories dynamics created by the industrialization of Tibetan medicine and globalization of MAPs trade. In particular, the study will explore the entanglement of 4Ps i.e. plants, people, pathways and policies, that weaves together the trans-Himalaya trajectories. Adopting Multi-site ethnographic study, archives studies, and discourse analyses, this study will compare the trading trajectories in the past and in the present, and will interact with the MAPs practitioners, harvesters, traders, exporters, pharmacies along both maritime and the cross-mountain trajectories.

Keywords: Tibetan medicine identity, trans-Himalayan MAPs trade, networked regime, trajectory, geopolitical culture, assemblage.