

Monday, 23.05.2022, 16:15 - 18:00 CEST

Miles Ogborn, Queen Mary University of London:

'He will become a different being': Christianity and Slavery in the early nineteenth-century Anglo-Caribbean World.

Abstract:

This lecture examines the ways in which Christianity came to define the debate over slavery and freedom – and the nature of the free black subject – in the early nineteenth-century Anglo-Caribbean world. Responding to the movement for the abolition of the slave trade, and the question of slavery's future, the role of Christianity in the sugar colonies was rethought by both the established church and nonconformist (Baptist and Methodist) missionaries in ways which made religion central to the definition of a shared humanity and to any reconfiguration of rights. Inevitably, given the versions of Christianity that intersected within the Caribbean and were developed by its enslaved people, this was a fractured and contradictory set of developments. Evangelical Anglicans tried to reconcile significant individual and collective transformations with a sense of order; Nonconformist missionaries struggled to define what forms of Christianity they would and would not accept among the enslaved; and pro-slavery Anglicans came into conflict with anti-slavery activists, nonconformists, and the imperial state over religious toleration. In each case, what was particularly at issue were the forms of speech through which contested religious practices were made evident. The paper concludes by briefly examining how these tensions and conflicts shaped the Jamaican uprising of 1831-2 and its aftermath.

Bio:

Miles Ogborn, FBA is Professor of Geography at Queen Mary University of London. He is the author of *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680-1780* (New York, 1998), *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago, 2007), *Global Lives: Britain and the World, 1550-1800* (Cambridge, 2008) and *The Freedom of Speech: Talk and Slavery in the Anglo-Caribbean World* (Chicago, 2019).