

## **Borneo and beyond: connecting the local and the global in Borneo's past**

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Panel abstract: Borneo is often characterised as a remote, isolated island, peripheral to regional and global networks and narratives. Scholars of Borneo, however, have long recognised the inaccuracies of this perception, given the island's long history of participation in global trading networks. Eric Tagliacozzo (2013) argues that, in fact, by the second half of the nineteenth century, Borneo was a centre of transnational connection. During this period, European interests on the island targeted trade in mineral resources, forest products and the cultivation of export crops. At the same time, Western explorers and collectors were drawn to the island, motivated by a search for wealth and for knowledge of Borneo's unique flora, fauna and peoples - knowledge which was highly prized in scientific circles. The introduction of European styles of governance and peace-making gave further impetus to trade, but Borneans remained at the centre of these networks, agents of change in their cross-cultural interactions with global forces.

This panel aims to explore Borneo's position as a hub in such transboundary networks – economic, political, scientific and cultural - and to highlight the island's historical significance in regional and global perspective. Participants will demonstrate how a world-history framework can be combined with interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Borneo's past to draw out previously unheard voices in the island's story. These approaches include the consideration of alternative source material, such as oral histories and material culture; interrogating colonial sources from new perspectives, including recently declassified archives; and the examination of 'subaltern' experiences in Borneo societies.

### **Single session panel**