Panel Proposal for EUROSEAS 2019 Berlin Conference

Southeast Asia and Central-Eastern Europe: Forgotten Connections, Stories and Histories

Convenors:

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Double session

Much scholarly focus has been devoted to the study of the European colonial presence in Southeast Asia. However, the British, the French or the Dutch were not the only Europeans involved with the region. In fact, Southeast Asia has attracted many Central and Eastern European (Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Serbian, Russian etc.) missionaries, travellers, adventurers, soldiers, writers, journalists, businessmen, and scholars. This panel aims to begin to gather scholars, histories, stories, and perspectives of/about/on Southeast Asia or its parts from different Central and Eastern European countries. Secondly, the panel seeks to reflect on Central/Eastern European scholarship on Southeast Asia (especially historically, but also at present), as well as experiences and accounts of Europeans who travelled and/or lived in Southeast Asia and through their accounts and work triggered interest in the region, and in some cases also contributed to scholarship on Southeast Asia (e.g. Harry J. Benda, who was born in former Czechoslovakia, lived in the Dutch East Indies, and later established Southeast Asian Studies at Yale and Singapore). Last but not least, the panel will explore how Eastern/Central European views were conditioned by and incorporated into particular European cultural/historical situations. So far, scholarship on these questions has taken place mostly within the national boundaries of the Central and Eastern European countries. While the idea of the panel originated in discussions among Czech scholars, it aims to be the first step in stimulating a conversation across Central and Eastern Europe, and in expanding our understanding of Europe and European interaction with Southeast Asia beyond Western European empires.