

Material culture, heritage and history in Southeast Asia

Convenors: Elsa Clavé (Harvard Asia Center) and Mulaika Hijjas (SOAS)

Double panel: 5-6 participants and a discussant

Artifacts such as textiles, regalia items and other ritual objects, but also photographs and manuscripts, have now found a place in the pantheon of national heritage and the discourse of patrimonialisation in Southeast Asia. But while they are increasingly displayed in museums and described in catalogues, this visibility (including in digital archives) has not been used for historiography, even when these artifacts have much to contribute towards critical scholarship of political, intellectual and literary history in the region. The panel proposes to tackle this issue by discussing the meaning of those artifacts in relation to national history, material heritage, and historiography. By doing so, we intend to emphasize the connection and disconnection between those three domains, as well as the sociohistorical reasons which explain it. By bringing together Southeast Asianists from different disciplines, we propose to reflect on different approaches to study and consider how these artifacts may better inform the understanding of the histories of the different countries. Papers are invited discussing specific case studies, how and why these may be excluded from national historical narratives, and exploring how artifacts, both in traditional and digital archives, open up new possibilities for a more pluralist historiography.