

10th EuroSEAS Conference – Panel Submission

Revolutionising Print / Revolutionary Politics: Printed Matter and Politics in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, 1850s - 1970s

Convenors:

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Format:

1 x 90 min Single session Panel

Abstract:

The role of printing and publishing in colonial and independence movements within the Malay world has been extensively documented. From William Roff's study of print and Malay nationalism in the 1960s, to Benedict Anderson's notion of "print capitalism" in the 1980s, the printed press, mainly in the form of the newspaper and periodical, has been convincingly argued to have provided a social, linguistic and political coherency to various independence movements in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. However, scant attention has been given to the wider breadth of print culture that emerged at the turn of the twentieth-century, in the run up to decolonisation in the respective countries, including: anti-colonial political brochures, feminist newsletters, comics, underground weeklies during the Second World War, post-war lifestyle and literary magazines and others. Consequently, such printed matter is often relegated to the margins - sometimes literally - of the study of print and politics in the Malay world in order to privilege a unitary view of independence politics in the abovementioned countries.

In the wake of a resurgent interest in the print history of the Malay world, this panel seeks to relook such printed matter in these regions (including, but not limited to, brochures, flyers, magazines, handwritten presses, advertisements) in order to widen the narrative of print and politics in the Malay world. How can the expansive, and sometimes contradictory print culture of this region enrich and complicate our understanding of Malay modernity, particularly amidst decolonisation and independence? How was print culture during this time assimilated and understood in existing indigenous modes of knowledge production in these territories? Most importantly, what are the divergences and convergences in the medium of the printed press across Dutch- and British-occupied Southeast Asia and what does this ultimately reveal to us about print as a medium? This panel welcomes contributions from a wide array of disciplines, such as media studies, gender studies, design and others, that are focused on the study of the above material and issues.