

Title

Sonic Entanglements: Sound, Archive, and Acoustic Historiographies in Southeast Asia

Convenor

meLê yamomo (University of Amsterdam/Freie Universität-Berlin)

Background

Sound studies and sound history now asserts itself as a crucial discipline, yet Mark Smith (2004) noted the absence of historical work on non-Western sounds, and Veit Erlmann (2004) raise the absence of “current debates of Third World scholars interested in auditory perception.” This panel brings together into conversation cultural historians, musicologists, and sound scholars working on sound history, epistemologies of listening, and theoretical ontologies of the sound archives about SEA. The panel critiques Benedict Anderson’s (1991) notion of modernity built on print capitalism, and engages sound history in exploring acoustemology (acoustic epistemology) as a decolonial methodology in understanding SEA modernities. This is critical if we are to consider that in the colonial territories, less than ten percent were literate to the printed language (Ricklefs et al. 2010, Nathan 1922). Thus, this print illiteracy is used to justify the absence of subaltern SEA ‘voices’ in modern historiography. Taking this into consideration, this double panel of six presenters will address three overarching themes:

Acoustic Mobilities. What paradigmatic shifts transpired with the reconfiguration of new modes of mobilities and communication technology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? In rethinking about early sound historiographies of SEA, how do we account for the social lives of human laborers, socio-cultural actors, and sound objects migrating to different regions, nations, and institutions in Southeast Asia?

Sonic Knowledge. How did the early sound recordings constitute and construct knowledges and understandings of modernities in SEA: i.e. ‘modern’ race epistemologies, notions of modern state (and/or urban) institutions and citizenship, and the emergence of a transnational cultural/media industry? How did the materiality of the early sound technologies mediate sonic discourses of global modernities among communities in the SEA? How do we take into account the mediality of the early recording technologies as the very epistemes of SEA modernities?

Listening Societies/Communities. How did listening constitute the imagined (trans)national and translocal communities in SEA? What theoretical tools and methodologies can we employ to better understand these transregional conditions and processes? In working with nation-based sound archives: How do we engage the materials that are stored in archives of the different post-imperial centers and peripheries, and on the other hand, documents catalogued in different languages of the postcolonial societies and previous colonizers? Furthermore, how do we deal with the challenges in the limits of their institutional and ‘ownership’ policies?

Format

Double Panel (6 Presentors)

- Dr. meLê yamomo (University of Amsterdam/Freie Universität-Berlin)
- Prof. Jose Buenconsejo (University of the Philippines)
- Dr. Barbara Titus (University of Amsterdam)
- Teilhard Paradela (University of British Columbia)
- (Additional names of other participants will be added in due course)

+ 2 Discussants (one for each session – names to follow)