

Panel proposal for EuroSEAS 11<sup>th</sup> conference,  
7 to 10 September 2021,  
at Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic

## **Images and imaginations; Maluku in early modern art and illustrations**

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The European expansion in maritime Asia in the 16th and 17th centuries generated a substantial body of visual representations in the form of illustrations and maps as well as fine art. Inspired by work such as Cécile Fromont in *The Art of Conversion* (2014) where she analyses historical interactions between the Kingdom of Kongo and European powers through a combination of art-, material culture- and archival sources, this panel opens for new discussions about historical relations between the Maluku region and Europe.

We ask questions about how images convey discourses of foreignness and exoticism in Europe, how more or less correct observations were altered to suit expectations and power relations, and to what extent we can use the visual archive as sources to the Maluku side of the story.

The Spice Islands, or Maluku, is an interesting case in point. While not characterized by large kingdoms or monumental architecture, the region was a prime object for European expansion, by Portuguese, Spanish, English and Dutch ventures due to the enormous potential profits of the spices. During the successive phases of subordination in the 16th and 17th centuries a series of illustrations were made of local people, buildings, animals, birds and landscapes. Some of these were published in widely read travel literature and were reified in new versions. In another set of visual sources from the period, the setting is European and/or Christian but key components carry references to Maluku. Put short, the panel discusses what western art can tell us about Maluku in early modern history and what Maluku meant in European imaginations of the time.

*Format: We aim for a single session (90 min) with 4 presenters and a discussant.*

*We are aware of the request for panels to reflect variety in national/regional background.*