

EuroSEAS 2021 Panel proposal – for Single session

Title:

The legacy of colonial officialdom - biographical traces from Timor

Convener:

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Abstract:

Timor Island is highly interesting for study of colonial processes due to the presence of two colonial powers during a long period of time (17th to 20th centuries). The experiences of Portuguese and Dutch colonialisms, their connectivities, similarities and differences, is still an understudied field in spite of the extensive source materials. The panel looks at the Westerners who administered Timor during the late colonial era (19th-20th centuries), their educational backgrounds, experiences, and motivations, and their role in the legislative and administrative changes that Timorese colonial society underwent during the period. It explores the possibilities to write a collective biography of officials as groups of individuals, and strives to capture their mindsets through published or unpublished writings. A comprehensive comparison between the two colonial spheres will have importance for our understanding of Asian colonialism in general and Timor in particular, and thus link to postcolonial theorizing about Western expansion through grounded cases.