

Proposal for a Laboratory

TITLE: Histories of Philosophy in a Southeast Asian Perspective

Conveners: Preciosa de Joya and Lara Hofner

Brief description of the format: Why a laboratory?

In the penultimate EuroSEAS in 2019 in Berlin, we convened a Roundtable on *Philosophies in SEA*. Together with scholars from different Southeast Asian countries and Europe, we discussed the potential of conceptualizing Southeast Asian philosophy, not merely as a reflection of national programs, but as a space for regional conversations exploring possibilities of a philosophical common ground.

This was the first event in the history of EuroSEAS to have "philosophy" in the title, which indicates the long-standing neglect, if not absence, of the discipline in Southeast Asian Studies. In further encouraging a regional exchange of ideas, the EuroSEAS laboratory would be an ideal platform, providing a more intimate setting for an extended discussion that could allow for shared ideas to grow, with an eye to presenting them to a wider audience. Some of the participants will remain the same as in the Roundtable in Berlin but we also would like to include some new faces and diversify the Southeast Asian voices even more.

Even though we are engaged in philosophical debates, our discussions will be inter- or maybe even post-disciplinary, as most of us have worked in different disciplines in Area Studies and are thinking along these integrative lines.

Plans for discussion: Why continue the idea of Philosophies in Southeast Asia?

If we are talking about philosophy in and from Southeast Asia or philosophy in a Southeast Asian place (Janz 2009), we also need to think about the different histories of philosophy in the different places and languages that constitute Southeast Asia. In exploring this topic, we ask the following questions: What were the historical and socio-political events that defined and influenced philosophical inquiry in each Southeast Asian country, and how did these shape the practice and teaching of the discipline of philosophy? What were the key philosophical concepts that emerged from this intellectual engagement, and what kind of contestations and localizations took place? Who were the major proponents of these philosophical movements and with what intentions?

Most of the particular histories of philosophy will differ to varying degrees from the conventional narrative of European history of philosophy (from Greece via the Arab world and religious medieval scholars, to an European exceptionalism), but are also interwoven with it, in part because colonialism spread around the globe, carrying with it a whole package of epistemic assumptions. Much research remains to be done to fill in the existing gaps, especially for a generally marginalized region like SEA, even though some efforts have been made (<https://www.uni-hildesheim.de/en/histories-of-philosophy>). For all academic disciplines it is crucial to talk with each other (instead of about each other), and even more so while researching new issues in established fields. We want to counter the traditional "North" to "South" unidirectionality and enter into a productive polylog (Wimmer 2004).

On this historical and philosophical journey, we want to reconsider some of the questions and the critique that has been voiced by decolonial thinkers, to lay the ground for future philosophizing in a Southeast Asian context. With this we want to take philosophical responsibility in the horizon of the European expansion (Elberfeld 2021).

In the laboratory, first we will take some inputs from the participants; then we will discuss the different projects and find points of conjunction, and finally present them to an interested audience.