

## Intellectuals in Intercontinental Conversations

### *Conveners*

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### *Format*

A double panel with six presenters and one or two discussants.

### *Abstract*

In an attempt to redeem thinking from the normative discipline of philosophy, the Filipino Jesuit philosopher Fr. Roque Ferriols, S.J. re-writes the Platonic dialogue, replacing the exchange between the iconic master philosopher Socrates and the quintessential ignorant pupil with a conversation between two nondescript characters, "A" and "B." Before the designation of roles and titles or the establishment of any corpus, the search for knowledge takes place in the encounter between persons, and ideas are born in the process of speaking and talking back to each other in the intimacy of an intellectual conversation.

Postcolonial/ decolonial theories have highlighted the politics of discourse, and have heightened our awareness of the epistemic violence that subalternizes non-Western agency and thought, sometimes to the point, however, that systemic oppression and silencing alone appear to define knowledge production. But as has been richly shown in more grounded scholarship on Southeast Asia, engagement with Western ideas have led not simply to a slavish submission to the influence of the other, but to localisation in two senses: as a creative adaptation of ideas that leads to the emergence of what Sumarsam calls the "mestizo culture" of fruitful intercultural dialogues; and Zeus Salazar's *pagpopook* (*pook*, "place"), which involves an articulation of difference, an untranslatability of experience, and an affirmation of a self-consciousness.

This panel aims to explore historical encounters of Southeast Asian intellectuals with Western interlocutors, with attention not only to the power structures that defined their relation, but also to the complexity and liveliness of conversations, which may transform, disturb, and/or inspire both thinkers, and where thinking grows from the back-and-forth of an encounter. The contribution of this panel lies in its focused, grounded questioning of the particular dynamics and transformative mutuality of each encounter. To retain a sufficiently sharp focus, we are limiting the scope of our conversations to thinkers who lived in the same times and communicated with each other (thus, the likes of Socrates are excluded).