

Title: Manuscript libraries of South East Asia

Convenor: Dr Mulaika Hijjas, SOAS University of London (mh86@soas.ac.uk)

Panel format: This is envisaged as a classical panel, ideally a double session. If the convenor is permitted to serve as discussant, I would be happy to do so. Although I will be inviting colleagues at a range of institutions who I know to be working on suitable topics, there will be several open spaces available. The aim is to make new connections and facilitate a conversation among researchers working in a variety of South East Asian manuscript traditions and a range of disciplines, with a view to a possible publication.

Panel description: Research on South East Asian manuscripts has often proceeded on the basis of the single manuscript, or of multiple exemplars of a single text in order to reconstruct an original reading. While such philological work remains fundamental, new developments in terms of critical approaches (increased attention to the role of colonial collecting in constituting manuscript archives) and to the available corpus (large-scale digitisation efforts of manuscripts that remain in situ) have opened up new perspectives for scholarship. Instead of focusing on manuscripts as individual texts, it is now increasingly possible to consider them as collectives, embedded within a particular historical and social milieu—that is, as libraries. Papers are invited on any aspect of the library, broadly conceived as the social and physical space in which manuscripts were copied and read, in any South East Asian manuscript culture. Of particular interest would be papers on reading, collecting, storage or scribal practices across South East Asian cultures, including the physical structures or buildings in which manuscripts were kept, and/or the social groupings in which they were read and recopied. Work on mapping or inventorying genres or other distinct groups of texts within libraries, and/or tracing the networks of circulation that brought them to a particular place, would also be welcome.