**Panel proposal EuroSEAS Amsterdam 2024**

**Conference dates: 23 July – 25 July 2024**

(1) title: *Guided by objects: from the museum to Southeast Asia (and back)*

(2) convener: Klaas Stutje PhD, NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies; k.stutje@niod.knaw.nl

(3) brief description of panel, max. ½ page,

The call to restitute cultural objects acquired in a colonial context from European heritage institutions to formerly colonized countries in Southeast Asia is rapidly gaining momentum. Often, in Asian and European public and official discourse the restitution of ‘colonial’ objects is framed as a ‘return’ (*pengembalian* in Bahasa Indonesia) to the country of origin and to the context where they naturally belong. As such, the return is conceptualized as an endpoint, a formal undoing of a moral wrong in the past, and as the closing chapter of a book about looting, appropriation and dispossession in a colonial context.

In the panel *Guided by objects*, we propose to approach objects and their histories differently. Above all, we regard objects as micro-historical guides tying together a variety of locations and geographies, a diversity of perspectives, significations and meanings, multiple social stratums and intersections, and different epochs and regimes. The moments of (violent) acquisition in a colonial context and – potentially – post-colonial restitution are obviously significant turning points in the social biography of an object, but their histories stretch further back in time and have new trajectories into the future. We argue for a socially differentiated and politically conscious analysis of the position of objects in (pre)colonial and postcolonial societies, and the power to determine their trajectories.

This panel asks how objects and their micro-histories relate to grand histories and dominant narratives. Under what circumstances do objects, as heritage, become a mobilizing force in response to social and political challenges, and to whom? What role can objects play to decolonize museums and societies, in Europe and Asia, nationally and locally? And which objects and collections tell which histories?

(4) brief description and explanation of the chosen format, max. ½ page,

This panel is a single session (1 x 90 min.) with four speakers from a number of institutions and diverse nationalities. The presenters approach the topic of this panel from diverse disciplinary backgrounds (from history, to archeology, to anthropology and museology) and with different empirical material at hand (from ethnographic objects, to war loot, to religious ancestral symbols and photographs).

(5) presenters:

Speaker 1: Adieyatna Fajri MA, NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Amsterdam

Speaker 2: Dwirahmi Suryandari MA, Max Planck Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Berlin

Speaker 3: Diana Miryong Natermann PhD, Universität Hamburg, Hamburg

Speaker 4: Karwin Cheung MA, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

(6) Discussant: Prof. dr. Marieke Bloembergen, KITLV Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies & Leiden University