**EuroSEAS 2024 Book Panel Application**

**Title**

Memories of Unbelonging: Ethnic Chinese Identity Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia

**Panel Convenor**

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**Description of Format**

I am proposing a single session book panel on my recently published book, *Memories of Unbelonging: Ethnic Chinese Identity Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia* (University of Hawai’i Press, 2023). The panel will start with a 20-30 minute presentation from myself as the book’s author on the main themes of the book. 3 invited discussants will then each have 15 minutes to critically discuss the book’s findings and arguments, with each discussant assigned a particular aspect of the book that relates to their own area of expertise and recent work. The panel will then end with a Q&A session with the audience.

**Panel Description**

The ethnic Chinese have had a long and problematic history in Indonesia. For over three decades under Suharto’s New Order regime, a cultural assimilation policy banned Chinese languages, cultural expression, schools, media, and organizations. This policy was only abolished in 1998 following the riots and anti-Chinese attacks that preceded the fall of the New Order. In the post-Suharto era, Chinese Indonesians were finally free to assert their Chineseness again. But how does an ethnic group recover from the trauma of assimilation and regain a lost cultural identity?

*Memories of Unbelonging: Ethnic Chinese Identity Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia* (2023) is an ethnographic study of how collective memories of state-sponsored ethnic discrimination have shaped Chinese identity politics in post-Suharto Indonesia. The book argues that trauma narratives are at the core of modern Chinese identity politics. Examining spaces and domains such as residential enclaves, educational institutions, the creative arts, and politics, it paints a vivid picture of how different generations of Chinese Indonesians make sense of their historical trauma, ethnic identity, and belonging in a post-assimilation environment. Far from being passive victims of history, the book shows how the ethnic Chinese are actively challenging old stereotypes and boundaries of acceptable Chineseness in the country. Furthermore, placing the analysis within the broader context of China’s rise in the twenty-first century, the book demonstrates how the combination of persistent local anti-Chinese sentiments and a sense of pride over China’s growing global dominance have prompted many Chinese Indonesians to re-evaluate their sense of ethnic and national belonging.

The proposed list of discussants and their topics of discussion are as follows (composition of panel discussants may change closer to the date):

1. Dr Jessica Soedirgo, Universiteit van Amsterdam: Dr Soedirgo will be discussing the book’s analysis of ethnic Chinese political activism in the post-Suharto era, relating it to her own work on ethnic and religious conflicts in Indonesia.
2. Dr Rika Theo, Universiteit van Amsterdam: Dr Theo will be discussing the book’s analysis of ethnic Chinese collective memory and trauma, relating it to her own expertise of the politics of remembrance in Indonesia, especially in relation to past atrocities such as the 1965 killings of suspected communists.
3. Dr Tintin Wulia, University of Gothenburg: Dr Wulia will be discussing the book’s analysis of how Chinese Indonesian trauma is expressed through visual culture. She will be relating her discussion to her own artistic practice as a Chinese Indonesian artist who has portrayed her family’s experiences of trauma in her artworks.