**Panel Proposal EuroSEAS 2024**

**Protocols versus realities: the dynamics of biomedical ethics in early twentieth century Southeast Asia**

Single session:

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Bianca Angelien Claveria MA, Leiden University

Caroline Schep MA, Leiden University

***Description and explanation of the chosen format***

This panel is open to presenters that share a medical-historical focus on Southeast Asia. Differences in academic backgrounds and specializations will, however, benefit the discussion in this panel. Cabalquinto, based in Manila, specializes in maternal health in the Philippines; Claveria, previously based in Manila and currently in Leiden, works on vaccination programs and experiments in the Philippines; and Schep, based in Leiden, studies drug testing in Indonesia. By combining these approaches, this panel will provide a comparative overview of the dynamics of bioethics in early twentieth century Southeast Asia. Moreover, different aspects of a very broad field and a large geographical region can be highlighted, allowing for exchange and discussion. And last but not least: having researchers from Southeast Asia and from Europe in one panel combines current perspectives and provides a great opportunity for international collaboration. Researchers interested in this format and topic are welcome to join.

***Description of the panel***

One of the crucial changes that the field of medical history has gone through in recent decades, is its move away from a Eurocentric or western focus. Although most of the early medical histories of former colonies, such as the countries of Southeast Asia, were limited by a colonial perspective – that saw medicine merely as a “tool of empire” and disregarded local practices –, more recent historians have emphasized the plural character of the medical markets and healthcare systems in these countries. This plurality of people and practices that was present in these countries, resulted in a uniquely dynamic medical atmosphere of which ethics were an integral part.

Many developments merged in late colonial or postcolonial states. Ethical protocols that were drawn up in western countries were transferred to those working in the colonies. There, they collided with local religious beliefs, cultural practices, and ethics – and at times, met with resistance amongst locals. Moreover, many historians have pointed out the racial bias in (medical) ethics that could lead to different treatments and researches in colonial settings; some even describe colonies as “laboratories”. It thus appears that concepts such as informed consent are very dynamic and can be employed in ambiguous ways. Such tensions in the early twentieth century have continuities and similarities in recent crises such as the vaccine disinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic. This panel probes into the historical aspects of such dynamics of biomedical ethics in early twentieth century. How was informed consent understood in Southeast Asia at this time by both colonial and local health workers? What meaning did protocols have in a colonial setting? What were the effects of these medical-ethical dynamics? This panel will attempt to provide initial answers to this question by illustrating different case studies on aspects including vaccinations, gender, medical education, and maternal health.

***Discussant***

Dr. Maurits Meerwijk, Leiden University