**EUROSEAS, Amsterdam 2024**

**Title:** Religious Intellectuals in Southeast Asia: Post-coloniality, Faith, and State

**Conveners:** Esra Tiryaki ([tiryakie@hu-berlin.de](mailto:tiryakie@hu-berlin.de)) and Ariff Hafizi Radzi ([ariff.radzi@hu-berlin.de](mailto:ariff.radzi@hu-berlin.de)), Institute of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

**Abstract**

The postcolonial moment in Southeast Asia evokes recollections of forging ‘nationhood’ and numerous entanglements in terms of identity and faith. Religion increasingly took a central role in daily life, workplace, and governmental policies in Southeast Asia. During this period, a number of intellectuals emerged, transcending the classical boundaries of scholarship with their approaches to articulating religious discourse in a more progressive and eclectic manner (Kersten, 2011). Reason, rights, and faiths were central to these intellectuals’ discourse, as opposed to ‘secular’ intellectuals who concentrated solely on man and ignored God, or to religious clerics who focused on God but ignored the human element (Bayat, 2007: 85). Southeast Asian intellectuals such as Syed Hussein Alatas, Nurcholish Madjid, and Muhammad Natsir for example, deconstructed old paradigms and offered new perspectives, paving the way for a more nuanced understanding of how religious discourse intersected with broader socioeconomic and political changes, shedding light on the complex dynamics that informed the region’s postcolonial identity.

These intellectuals are not only worthy of analysis for contemporary religious thought but also for dissecting the multiple dimensions of religious and socio-political issues vis-à-vis the growing influence of postcolonial state policies in Southeast. Asia. It is important to put religious intellectualism into a critical perspective, i.e. contextualising it in the socio-political environment within which it has arisen, and scrutinising the effects that prevailing ideas have on societies (Mannheim, 1991).

We are interested in:

* the study of the emergence and development of religious intellectualism in Southeast Asia, embracing all religious traditions including Islam, Buddhism, or Christianity,
* the capture and/or co-optation of religious-intellectual ideas and concepts in state and non-state-sponsored discourses,
* the reception of certain religious discourses in Southeast Asia under democratic and/or autocratic regime conditions,
* the construction of religious intellectualism with regard to power dynamics, positionalities, and social imaginaries (e.g. how religious intellectualism is constructed in order to have a lasting impact on societies and state governance),
* the legacies of religious intellectualism from the postcolonial period to present-day Southeast Asia.

This panel contributes to the ongoing task of epistemic decolonisation and does so on the basis of a social re-contextualisation of (religious intellectual) thought and experience from Southeast Asia.

**References**

Bayat, A. (2007). *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn.* Stanford University Press.

Kersten C. (2011). *Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam*. Hurst Publishers.

Mannheim, K. (1991). *Ideology and Utopia.* Psychology Press.

**Format**

The panel is planned to be a single 90-minute session with up to four presenters and a discussant. Each presenter will be given 15 minutes to present their paper. The discussant will be given 20 minutes to comment on the papers. The panel is open to individuals with a wide range of disciplinary and geographical expertise. A special issue in a peer-review journal is envisioned as a future product from this panel.

**Discussant:**

Professor Claudia Derichs, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin ([claudia.derichs@hu-berlin.de](mailto:claudia.derichs@hu-berlin.de))

**Papers/Presenters:**

Presenter 1: Esra Tiryaki, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, S.H. Alatas and Islamic Developmentalism in Malaysia, 1970s-1990s

Presenter 2: Ariff Hafizi Radzi, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Authoritarianism and Return to Islam: A Comparative Analysis of Sayyid Qutb and Nurcholish Madjid Approaches to “Islam and Statehood”

Presenter 3: Adonis Elumbre, University of Hamburg, “tbc”

Presenter 4: NN (allocation by the conference organisers are welcome)