# Panel Proposal

### 1. Title

**Towards a global microhistory of the Sulu Archipelago, c. 1400–1945**

### 2. Convenors

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### 3. Format

Double panel.

Given the great amount of research that has been done on Sulu the recent ten–twelve years, and against the background of the need historize by bringing research on the pre-colonial era into conversation with the research on the colonial era, we propose a double panel with a total of six presentations:

*Panel 1: Pre-Colonial Transformations in Sulu, c. 1400–1850*

Three presentations.

*Panel 2: Colonialism and Indigenous Agency in Sulu, c. 1850–1945*

Three presentations.

### 4. Description (panel abstract)

Over the past decade, historical research on the Sulu Sultanate in present-day southern Philippines has boomed and at least a dozen important studies have been published since around 2013. On the one hand, historians have explored the early history of Sulu (including the spread of Islam, the foundation of the Sulu Sultanate, its relationship with neighbouring polities, such as Brunei, Maguindanao and Spanish, Dutch and English colonisers, as well as with more distant powers, such as China, Japan and the Ottoman Emprire). On the other hand, researchers have focused on the later history of the Sulu Sultanate, particularly during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (including questions of sovereignty, trade. treaty-making, piracy, and colonial attempts to implement the civilizing mission).

A hallmark of much of this research has been the effort to approach Sulu and neighbouring parts of the region from the perspective of (new) diplomatic history, maritime and environmental history, in contrast to the earlier focus in research on war, conflict, raiding and other forms of violence. A central aim of recent research has also been to highlight the importance of indigenous agency in, for example, religious contacts, trade, state formation, treaty making, and internal and external negotiation patterns. In doing so, researchers are currently pathing the ground for a more nuanced and multivocal understanding of Sulu in the context of maritime Southeast Asia in both pre-colonial and colonial times.

This double-panel introduces some of the current frontlines of research on Sulu and its relations with other parts of Southeast Asia and beyond. The panel sheds light on connections and ruptures in the region’s rich history of encounters, not only with colonial powers but also with other Asian actors and powers. In doing so, the panel presents a new take on global microhistory that makes it possible to challenge existing grand narratives of, for example, diffusion, piracy and raiding, war, hegemony, and colonisation, by turning the focus to indigenous agency. The panel features presentations by scholars from both Southeast Asia and Europe and contributes to furthering dialogue beyond methodological regionalism and research traditions.

### 5. Panel presenters and papers

To be decided.

### 6. Discussant

To be decided.