

PROPOSED PANEL TITLE:

***Contestations of Performing Arts Within and Across Southeast Asian Borders***

CONVENOR:

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PANEL DESCRIPTION:

Among many intangible cultural heritages, traditional and popular performing arts such as music, film, dance and theatre are practices that are passionately contested within and across the national borders of Southeast Asia. In some instances, such practices are contested between local actors and state institutions. Take for example, the *Mak Yong* dance that is officially banned by the Islamic state government in North Eastern Malaysia. Despite this, local practitioners continue to hold public performances of this dance, ignoring the ban completely. Taking into account the shared cultural and colonial histories of the region, nation states or nationalists also seek to claim particular artistic practices for the corpus of their national cultural heritage. In recent times, Indonesian nationalists claimed that Malaysia's national anthem was stolen from the Indonesian song, "*Terang Boelan* (Bright Moon)". A deeper investigation, however, reveals a complex history of the contested song's circulation across the region. Beyond these examples, throughout Southeast Asia, contestations of ownership over various performing arts practices occur over historical, political, national, religious and ethnic contexts. Do internal and external contestations of performing arts practices indicate the inherently precarious nature of national, postcolonial state formations? Conversely, do these contestations demonstrate the politically entrenched conceptions of national identity and cultural heritage in the region? This panel aims to provide much needed insights into how and why – despite inherently fluid, cross-cultural and often shared histories – performing arts practices are contested between state institutions and individuals within and across Southeast Asian borders.

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