

Panel:

Regional administration and local response: a comparative study across colonial Southeast Asia

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Abstract:

This panel addresses colonial administration and its impact on local society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in several colonies and countries in the region. Taking a comparative approach, it investigates the dissemination, adjustment, and consequence of some prevailing policies and practices that were adopted by the colonial administration to, for instance, enumerate the local population through colonial censuses in Malaya and Hong Kong, or extract nature resources from tin mines along the west coast of the Malay Peninsular in southern Burma, southern Siam, and northern Malaya. Certain methods, based on colonial precedents in other parts of the world, were introduced; and (re)implemented in various locations of this region with varying degrees of success. Intra- and inter-regional travellers, such as relocating colonial officials, itinerant vendors and seasonal labourers, facilitated constant circulation of information and practices, and influenced, or responded to, the effectiveness of central and local administration. Furthermore, in order to follow the travelling personnel and ideas of interest, our comparison often looks beyond the Southeast Asian region and inevitably extends to South and East Asia, thus situating the panel in a wider, pan-Asian context.