

A WORKSHOP BY THE MUHAMMAD ALAGIL
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN ARABIA ASIA STUDIES

CONNECTING IMAGINARIES

CONVERSATIONS ON ARABIA-ASIA-AFRICA

28-29
NOV
2024



This workshop is organised by the Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship in Arabia Asia Studies at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore.

Today, we have rich scholarship that has brought to the fore imaginaries such as the South China Sea, Malay World, Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, to name a selection. These imaginaries have emerged from and broadened the remit of area studies in meaningful ways. Besides a few notable works, however, research that connects the different imaginaries and their bodies of scholarship is scarce, in part, because the knowledge and linguistic skills are demanding for the vast scopes involved. More collaborative transregional discussion and research are necessary.

This workshop aims to contribute to the scholarship on connecting imaginaries by focusing on efforts within Asia-Arabia-Africa and thus it takes the community of scholars at the National University of Singapore (NUS) as its point of departure. It brings NUS scholars into conversation with the wider scholarship – drawing, in large part, on the existing network of the Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship in Arabia Asia Studies. The workshop envisions contributing to connecting imaginaries in conjunction with the consolidation of transregional studies at NUS by building on the University’s existing strengths in area studies and other disciplines.

To facilitate a broad and inclusive platform, the workshop includes submissions from both those actively working on transregional themes and those open to thinking about the same. The aim is to share and discuss a wide range of topics and ideas by drawing into conversation scholars across areas and disciplines. Presentations will thus be brief and based on abstracts rather than draft papers, and there is no expectation of publication. The purpose is to set a transregional studies agenda based on the outcome of the collective conversation.

The ambitious scope of Asia-Arabia-Africa offers an expansive canvas to foster conversations between scholars working on different imaginaries to bring to light historical and contemporary processes that are obscured or hidden by the bounded understandings of national and regional foci. The workshop’s framing allows for the consideration of both oceanic and landward orientations, and thereby embraces major and often divergent scholarly trajectories. It is thus open to the broadest range of topics, including contributions on historical and present-day mercantile, migratory, labour, trade, and transportation networks, the spread of faiths, ideas, and politics, as well as the environment. Although scholars have explored many of these topics, especially individually, there is a need to forge greater collaborative work to advance empirically driven research, thinking, and terminology that connects imaginaries.

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

DATE	TIME (SGT)	PANEL SESSION
28 Nov 2024 (Thu)	10:00 – 10:15	WELCOME & INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
	10:15 – 11:15	PANEL 1 – COSMOLOGIES AND GENEALOGIES
	11:45 – 12:45	PANEL 2 – INDIAN OCEAN AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN CAPITALISMS
	14:00 – 15:30	PANEL 3 – EQUALITY, SOLIDARITY AND THEIR DISCONTENTS
	16:00 – 17:30	PANEL 4 – METHODS AND PROBLEMS IN KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION
	18:00 – 20:00	WORKSHOP DINNER <i>(For speakers and chairpersons only)</i>
29 Nov 2024 (Fri)	09:30 – 10:30	PANEL 5 – EXPERIMENTAL FRONTIERS: MAKKAH AND SHENZHEN
	11:00 – 12:30	PANEL 6 – INDIVIDUALS AND COLLECTIVES ON THE MOVE
	14:00 – 15:00	PANEL 7 – OTHER PATHWAYS: FOOD CULTURE + ADAPTATIONS TO FORCES OF NATURE
	15:30 – 17:00	ROUNDTABLE – SYNTHESIS, RESPONSES, AGENDAS
	17:00 – 17:15	CLOSING REMARKS

28 NOVEMBER 2024 • THURSDAY

10:00 – 10:15	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
	SUMIT MANDAL <i>National University of Singapore</i>
10:15 – 11:15	PANEL 1 – COSMOLOGIES AND GENEALOGIES
<i>Chairpersons</i>	ENGSENG HO <i>Duke University</i> SUMIT MANDAL <i>National University of Singapore</i>
<i>10:15 online</i>	Imperialism and Occultism between Early Modern Arabia, India, and Mozambique AHMED Y ALMAAZMI <i>Princeton University</i>
<i>10:25 online</i>	Singapore’s Alexanders: Kingship, Premodern Pasts and Connected Imaginaries TEREN SEVEA <i>Harvard University</i>
<i>10:35</i>	QUESTION & ANSWER
11:15 – 11:45	MORNING TEA BREAK
11:45 – 12:45	PANEL 2 – INDIAN OCEAN AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN CAPITALISMS
<i>Chairperson</i>	TIM WINTER <i>National University of Singapore</i>
<i>11:45 online</i>	Neoliberalism and Haute Finance: A View from Indian Ocean Dubai NISHA MATHEW <i>Mahindra University</i>
<i>11:55</i>	New Histories of Capitalism in Southeast Asia SENG GUO-QUAN <i>National University of Singapore</i> FAIZAH ZAKARIA <i>National University of Singapore</i> FARABI FAKIH <i>Universitas Gadjah Mada</i>
<i>12:05</i>	QUESTION & ANSWER
12:45 – 14:00	LUNCH BREAK
14:00 – 15:30	PANEL 3 – EQUALITY, SOLIDARITY AND THEIR DISCONTENTS
<i>Chairperson</i>	SUMIT MANDAL <i>National University of Singapore</i>
<i>14:00 online</i>	Islah, Expanded: Migrants and the Remaking of “Monsoon Islam”, c. 1920–1940 KELVIN NG <i>Yale University</i>
<i>14:10 online</i>	Transregional Lives and Literature: Connecting Women’s Writing across East and Southeast Asia SHOW YING XIN <i>Australian National University</i>
<i>14:20</i>	“Awas!”: Entomology and Decolonization in the Time of Bandung ANTHONY D. MEDRANO <i>Yale-NUS College & National University of Singapore</i>
<i>14:30</i>	QUESTION & ANSWER
15:30 – 16:00	AFTERNOON TEA BREAK

16:00 – 17:30	PANEL 4 – METHODS AND PROBLEMS IN KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION
<i>Chairperson</i>	VINEETA SINHA <i>National University of Singapore</i>
<i>16:00</i>	A History of Loss: Connecting Imaginaries across Fugitive Archives
<i>online</i>	IZA HUSSIN <i>University of Cambridge</i>
<i>16:10</i>	The Frontiers and Trails of Casino Urbanism: Thoughts on Writing Comparatively
	KAH-WEE LEE <i>National University of Singapore</i>
<i>16:20</i>	Stilted (Global) Imaginations: The Case for Building Area Studies in the Arab World
<i>online</i>	MOHAMMED ALSUDAIRI <i>Australian National University</i>
<i>16:30</i>	QUESTION & ANSWER
17:30	END OF DAY 1
18:00 – 20:00	WORKSHOP DINNER (For speakers, chairpersons and invited guests)

29 NOVEMBER 2024 • FRIDAY

09:30 – 10:30	PANEL 5 – EXPERIMENTAL FRONTIERS: MAKKAH AND SHENZHEN
<i>Chairperson</i>	TIM BUNNELL <i>National University of Singapore</i>
09:30	Learning from Makkah: Frontiers of the More-Than-World City JAMES D. SIDAWAY <i>National University of Singapore</i> YANNIS-ADAM ALLOUACHE <i>National University of Singapore</i>
09:40	Zoneworlds: Conceptualizing Inter-Asian Interaction through Special Economic Zones TAOMO ZHOU <i>National University of Singapore</i>
09:50	QUESTION & ANSWER
10:30 – 11:00	MORNING TEA BREAK
11:00 – 12:30	PANEL 6 – INDIVIDUALS AND COLLECTIVES ON THE MOVE
<i>Chairperson</i>	MAITRII V. AUNG THWIN <i>National University of Singapore</i>
11:00	Connecting Ilkhanate Persia, Kish, Ma’bar, Samudera-Pasai and Yuan China: Micro and Hybrid Histories SHER BANU AL KHAN <i>National University of Singapore</i>
11:10	Manuscripts in Circulation: Two Family Archives of Arab Immigrants in Malabar PKM ABDUL JALEEL <i>National University of Singapore</i>
11:20 <i>pre-recorded</i>	The Sailing Scribe: Mansur Al-Khariji and the Oceanic Worlds of the Gulf FAHAD AHMAD BISHARA <i>University of Virginia</i>
11:30	QUESTION & ANSWER
12:30 – 14:00	LUNCH BREAK
14:00 – 15:00	PANEL 7 – OTHER PATHWAYS: FOOD CULTURE + ADAPTATIONS TO FORCES OF NATURE
<i>Chairperson</i>	SAHANA GHOSH <i>National University of Singapore</i>
14:00	The Reaches of the Archipelagic KATHLEEN BURKE <i>National University of Singapore</i>
14:10	Imagining New Inter-Asias Through Natural Disasters FAIZAH ZAKARIA <i>National University of Singapore</i>
14:20	QUESTION & ANSWER
15:00 – 15:30	AFTERNOON TEA BREAK
15:30 – 17:00	ROUNDTABLE – SYNTHESIS, RESPONSES, AGENDAS
<i>Chairperson</i>	SUMIT MANDAL <i>National University of Singapore</i> MAITRII V. AUNG THWIN <i>National University of Singapore</i> SAHANA GHOSH <i>National University of Singapore</i> VINEETA SINHA <i>National University of Singapore</i>
	DISCUSSION
17:00 – 17:15	SUMMARY & CLOSING REMARKS SUMIT MANDAL <i>National University of Singapore</i>
17:15	END OF WORKSHOP

Imperialism and Occultism between Early Modern Arabia, India, and Mozambique

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In the 17th century, the Yaʿrubī Empire was no ordinary imperial power. Between 1624 and 1720, it swept across the Arabian Peninsula, the Swahili coast, and the Persian Gulf, launching raids and establishing fortified outposts from Mangalore to Mogadishu. Yet, the engine of this expansion was not just military might—it was something otherworldly. The Yaʿrubī rulers saw themselves not merely as political authorities but as cosmocratic visionaries, cloaking their imperial ambitions in a web of divine sanction, cosmic symbols, and occult rituals. Drawing legitimacy from prophecies and celestial alignments, they claimed a mandate not just to rule but to reshape the Indian Ocean. This blend of imperialism and occultism created an Empire where politics and the occult were deeply intertwined. Across their dominions, occult texts were authored, circulated, and used by the Yaʿrubīs’ agents—proselytizers, scholars, traders, and even sailors—who carried this religio-political ideology across Arabia-Asia-Africa.

These manuals of occult sciences were not merely guides to conquest; they were metaphysical blueprints that offered insights into astrology, alchemy, talismans, and divine cosmology, all aimed at securing power and consolidating authority. Instead of confining these occult texts to rigid territorial and linguistic frameworks, I track their circulation along oceanic routes, following the Yaʿrubīs’ influence from the port of Mangalore, the Islands of East Africa, to the coastal strongholds of Mozambique. Beyond a scholarly pursuit, the occult sciences were a lived practice integral to daily negotiations of power. By tracking occult texts, I illuminate a history that foregrounds non-European imperial dynamics, emphasizing transoceanic knowledge flows, cultural translations, and embodied experiences of imperial agents who operated transregionally. In this talk, I unravel the Yaʿrubīs’ imperial ideology through an occult work authored in Yemen—a text that found its way into mosques, markets, and palaces from Muscat to the Mozambican coastline, revealing how occultism, imperialism, and geopolitics collided in ways that reshaped the contours of the early modern Indian Ocean world.

Keywords: Indian Ocean world, imperialism, occult sciences, Yaʿrubī Empire

Ahmed Y AlMaazmi is an Emirati historian who focuses on the intersection of occultism and imperialism in the Indian Ocean world. After completing his studies in cultural anthropology at Rutgers University as a Fulbright fellow, he embarked on a PhD in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. He is writing his doctoral dissertation, “An Enchanted Sea: The Occult Sciences in the Early Modern Indian Ocean World, 1450-1750”. This work examines the connected histories of occult sciences and empire-building across Arabia, East Africa, and South Asia, told through intellectual projects that accompanied the rise of the Omani empire and its diasporic communities. His recent work includes the article, “I Authored This Book in the Absence of My Slave”: Enslaved East Africans and the Production of Occult Knowledge across the Omani Empire”, to be published in November 2024 in the journal *Monsoon*.

Singapore's Alexanders: Kingship, Premodern Pasts and Connected Imaginaries

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This talk explores sources on the heirs of the pre-Qur'anic prophet-king Iskandar Dhu al-Qarnayn in the premodern Malay world. It focuses particularly on the premodern origins of Singapore and its Alexandrian dynasty, following the path of the island's inaugural kings and heirs of Alexander, some of whom were memorialized as saints and miracle workers (*karamat*). The first part of this talk delves into Malay chronicles that memorialized the cosmopolitan ancestry and charismatic authority of divinely sanctioned Southeast Asian kings. The second part of this talk shifts its attention to the resilience of premodern Islam in modern Singapore. It examines how poets, panegyrists, storytellers and shrine caretakers from the late nineteenth century to the present have preserved histories of premodern kings and *karamat*. In conclusion, the presentation will consider how Singapore's premodern Islamic past survives, refusing to be removed, let alone forgotten, amidst aggrandizing urban redevelopment. In focusing on Singapore's Alexanders, this talk also draws attention to Islamic networks that connected men and women to Muslim and non-Muslim communities across the Indian Ocean world, and the multilingual texts and oral traditions that connected devotional communities. It follows the path laid by historians to recover and remember an interconnected Islamic past that draws little attention in official history as well as academic scholarship.

Keywords: kingship, sainthood, connected history, origins, shrines

Teren Sevea is Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at Harvard Divinity School. Sevea is the author of *Miracles and Material Life: Rice, Ore, Traps and Guns in Islamic Malaya*, that won the 2022 Association for Asian Studies' Harry J. Benda Prize. He also co-edited *Islamic Connections: Muslim Societies in South and Southeast Asia* and is currently completing a book titled "Singapore Islam: The Prophet's Port and Sufism across the Oceans".

Neoliberalism and Haute Finance: A View from Indian Ocean Dubai

Nisha Mathew

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Scholars specializing in Asia's colonial past have been remarkably generous in giving the Indian Ocean and its diverse mercantile communities their due in narratives of European imperialism. Legal historians have also highlighted the Indian Ocean's significance in the emergence of international law and the rise of a global economy defining capitalism on a planetary scale. With the end of the British Empire and the rise of nation-states and national economies, however, the Indian Ocean seems to have faded into oblivion, its mercantile communities conspicuous by their absence in scholarship on the post-war world dominated by American values and ideals. Where it has made a comeback following the onset of globalisation and the opening of national borders, the Indian Ocean has resurfaced primarily as a socio-cultural realm in studies of trading diasporas and migrant communities, particularly in the contemporary Middle East and Southeast Asia. The Indian Ocean's contributions to the economic and legal dynamics of neoliberalism, or the revival of the global economy, after a hiatus of about half a century following the Second World War, have not garnered the attention it deserves. Nor have we addressed the legacy of the Indian Ocean in ushering in an era of haute finance following the end of the Bretton Woods era. This paper is a modest attempt to close these gaps. To do so, I zero in on one critical link in the Arabia-Asia chain of connections: Dubai, and one commodity that preserved intact the economic and legal dynamics of the Indian Ocean: gold.

Keywords: Indian Ocean, neoliberalism, haute finance, gold

Nisha Mathew is a historian of the Indian Ocean specializing in maritime trade relations between Arabia and western India, particularly Bombay and Malabar. She received her PhD from the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and was Muhammad Alagil Postdoctoral Fellow in Arabia Asia Studies at Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (NUS). She also held a Research Fellow position at the Middle East Institute at NUS. Her most recent publications include "Bhakt Nation: The Return of the Hindu Diaspora in Modi's India", in the journal *History and Anthropology* and "Sovereignty on the Move: Gold, Financial Capital and a Neoliberal State in India" in *Territory, Politics, Governance* (forthcoming). Dr Mathew is currently Associate Professor at the School of Law, Mahindra University, Hyderabad and visiting faculty at National Law School, Bangalore.

New Histories of Capitalism in Southeast Asia

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Global capitalism has been in crisis mode since 2007-2008. In contrast to Europe and America, and East and South Asia, relatively few historical works have emerged in recent years to chart the trajectory of capitalism in Southeast Asia. This project convenes a group of historians to start a dialogue about the trajectory of global capitalism from a Southeast Asian standpoint. New “histories of capitalism” of the Atlantic World, most noticeably seen in the works of Thomas Piketty (2013) and Sven Beckert (2014, 2019), show that capitalism’s investment in free market logics has only reproduced and deepened structural inequality over time. In contrast, a consensus appears to be emerging among social historians and anthropologists of Southeast Asia, that dynamic smallholders in agriculture and cottage industries continued to thrive alongside big businesses and colonial/authoritarian government (Van Meerkerk 2019, Bosma 2019, Tania M. Li 2021).

With a focus on the twentieth century, we re-trace the uneven structures of markets when national economies were formed in the 1930s, under the tutelage of colonial empires, and re-examine the politics of their integration into a US-Japan-led regional neo-liberal order since the 1960s. Underlying these efforts to relate our particular research projects to a broader regional and global histories of capitalism, is a shared thematic interest in re-discovering forgotten transnational connections between small-holder communities and their entrepreneurial partners (both diasporic and local). We are also interested in examining how transregional market formations perpetuated racial or class divisions, and particular industries wrought transformative ecological effects on the region’s rainforests and waterways (Amrith 2024). Our conversations spanning the year 2024-25 will culminate in a two-day workshop at the National University of Singapore during the week of 7-11 July 2025. We aim to bring out a special issue in the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* on this subject in 2025-2026.

Keywords: capitalism, race, class, environment

Seng Guo-Quan is Assistant Professor of History at the National University of Singapore. He is a historian of Chinese societies in Southeast Asia, with a special interest in race, gender and sexuality structures in the region, and how they have been shaped through the forces of imperialism, nationalism and global capitalism. He is the author of *Strangers in the Family: Gender, Patriline and the Chinese in Colonial Indonesia* (Cornell University Press, 2023). He has also published with *Comparative Studies in Society and History, Indonesia* and the *Journal of Chinese Overseas*. He is now working on a second book tentatively titled, “A Diaspora of Shopkeepers: Empire, Race and Chinese Commercial Expansion in Southeast Asia (1870-1970s)”. With a focus on Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, this book looks at cross-border business network formations and race-relations on the ground in the process of Chinese wholesale and retail trade expansion.

Faizah Zakaria is Assistant Professor in the Departments of Southeast Asian Studies and Malay Studies at the National University of Singapore. Her research interests centre on religion and ecology, environmental justice and indigenous movements in island Southeast Asia. Her first monograph *The Camphor Tree and the Elephant: Religion and Ecological Change in Maritime Southeast Asia* (2023) was published by the University of Washington Press. She is presently working on a research project on science and religion in volcanic eruptions and co-coordinates a digital humanities project on comparative Asian medicine. She received a PhD in history from Yale University in 2018.

Farabi Fakh is the head of the Master's Program at the History Department, Universitas Gadjah Mada. He received his PhD from Leiden University in 2013 and published a monograph with Brill in 2020 titled *Authoritarian Modernization in Indonesia's Early Independence Period, 1950-1965*. His research interests include state, institutional and knowledge decolonization in Indonesia and urban history. He is currently conducting research on corruption during the New Order by analysing normative competition in major scandals such as the bankruptcy in 1975 of Indonesia's oil giant, Pertamina. Related to this topic is the wider ongoing historical research that he is doing on the emergence of the oil industry in Indonesia in the early 20th century as constitutive and entwined with the emergence of state elites and capitalism in the country. Capitalism is analysed here as a local and embedded phenomenon, rooted in the geology and geography of Indonesia.

**Islah, Expanded:
Migrants and the Remaking of “Monsoon Islam”, c. 1920–1940**

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As growing numbers of migrants established themselves in British Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, its urban centers—including Penang, Batavia, Surabaya, and especially Singapore—emerged as regional centers for the publication and circulation of texts in various languages. Taking seriously the Indian Ocean as a distinctive space with a history uniquely shaped by the forces of migration and pilgrimage, my paper examines how Muslim thinkers of ostensibly “foreign” provenance—Hui Chinese, South Indian, and Hadrami Arab—elaborated claims for economic, religious or political equality. These claims gained increasing traction as disparate groups of Muslims—including Chinese, Indian and Arab migrants in Malaya and the East Indies—confronted their new identification as “minorities”, “immigrant laborers”, or “Foreign Orientals” in an age of competing nationalisms. My paper focuses on two parallel claims for social equality advanced by migrant communities: the Tamil Muslim reformers associated with P. Daud Shah’s *Darul Islam* periodical; and the Hui Chinese members of the Chinese Islamic South Seas Delegation. I situate this emergence of “equality” across several domains of political and religious thought against the broader backdrop of Islamic reform among Malay and Hadrami Arab thinkers across both sides of the Straits. My paper argues that these invocations of religious equality are best apprehended as an effort to assert new claims to political rights, legal entitlements, and communal affiliation across empires, against a broader backdrop of renewed debates around migration, citizenship, and pluralism across early twentieth-century Southeast Asia. Offering an intellectual history across vernaculars, it examines the emergence and development of specific religious networks across communal affiliations, shedding new light on the interlinked histories of the Tamil, Chinese and Arab diasporas in Southeast Asia and across the Indian Ocean.

Keywords: Islam, diasporic histories, Indian Ocean histories, religious reform

Kelvin Ng is a PhD candidate at the Department of History at Yale University. He is also pursuing a graduate certificate in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and a graduate certificate in Translation Studies. His research work brings together the social history of migration and the intellectual history of internationalism in four linked Indian Ocean spaces: British India, Republican China, British Malaya, and the Dutch East Indies. His research interests more broadly include political economy, intellectual history, and histories of migration.

Transregional Lives and Literature: Connecting Women's Writing across East and Southeast Asia

Show Ying Xin

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As a researcher in literature and socio-cultural history, I am particularly drawn to how non-elite women engage with writing and literary imaginaries despite their marginalised positions. This workshop allows me to think about unexpected connections between my two research projects examining migrant women's writing in Southeast Asia across different historical periods. The first focuses on a pioneering Chinese-language periodical established in Singapore in 1946 by a feminist editor from China. Though short-lived—ending soon after the declaration of the Malayan Emergency in 1948—this left-wing magazine served as a critical platform for Chinese women's local political mobilisation, dialogues and literary expression. Through analysis of creative writings and essays by editors and contributors, I examine how these women crafted a transnational sisterhood narrative that negotiated between nationalist discourse (both Malayan and Chinese) and practical discussion on women's emancipation. Their writings reveal complex gendered intersubjectivities that simultaneously empowered and constrained women's engagement with self, family, nation and world. The second project investigates contemporary literature by Indonesian domestic workers in Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong. These writers position themselves as "perantau" (those seeking livelihood overseas), which speaks to a traditional Malay World concept of mobility that does not imply a settled notion of migration. Their literary writings, produced within today's rigid nationalist temporary labour migration regime, illuminate how migrant women navigate discriminatory host societies that view them merely as transient labour without the right to stake claims to any state. Despite their distinct historical and social contexts, both cases illustrate how migrant women use writing and literary imaginaries to transcend prescribed roles, forge solidarity networks, and articulate alternative visions of belonging. Their literary practices reveal enduring traditions of resistance and self-expression among women navigating displacement and precarity in Asia.

Keywords: women's writing, migrant women, migrant workers' literature, Chinese diaspora, Southeast Asian literature

Show Ying Xin is a Lecturer in the School of Culture, History and Language, College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University. Her works explore the history and culture of migration, decolonisation and the impact of the Cold War on Asian societies through literature and art. She co-edited (with Ngoi Guat Peng) *Revisiting Malaya: Uncovering Historical and Political Thoughts in Nusantara* and authored the Chinese translation of Alfian Sa'at's short story collection *Malay Sketches*. She is currently an academic visitor at NUS Chinese studies department and a Digital Fellow at the National Library of Singapore, working on postwar Sinophone literary periodicals in Malaya.

**“Awas!”:
Entomology and Decolonization in the Time of Bandung**

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In 1955, the city of Bandung hosted the Asia-Africa conference. This political event was a watershed moment in the age of decolonization. From Nehru’s India to Sukarno’s Indonesia, the Bandung conference birthed a post-area studies imaginary just as the world of areas studies was taking root in postwar academic circles. Out of Bandung would emerge the non-aligned movement (1961) and the term “Global South” (1969). But in 1955, Bandung was the city at the center of new spirit of “development”—one that was anti-imperial, anti-colonial, and pro-technocratic (Chakrabarty 2005, 4812). Science and technology were central to the language of decolonization, and Bandung, for its part, was pivotal to platforming “the engineer over the poet or the prophet” in a post-area studies imaginary (Chakrabarty 2005, 4813).

Yet the time of Bandung was also anti-foreign, and it was the “threat” of the foreign that inflected the language of decolonization too. A short distance from Bandung was Bogor, the city that served not only as host to pre-conference activities, but also as home to the country’s agricultural research institute. In 1955, one of the institute’s leading entomologists, Tjoa Tjien Mo, published *Awas! Hama-hama asing mengantjam pertanian kita!*, a public pamphlet that warned about the ways in which “foreign pests threaten” Indonesia’s economic life and food security. But as much as *Awas!* embodied the spirit of the time, it also reflected the biopolitical pogroms of the postwar tide. From India to Indonesia, “ethnonationalist movements seized the opportunity...to rid new nation-states of ‘foreigners’ and ‘outsiders’” (Ramnath, 2023, 5). Tjoa (1905-1978) was a Sumatra-born scientist of Peranakan Chinese heritage. This presentation explores what we can learn from insects and the local entomologists who studied them, and it considers how the idea of “foreign pests” offers insights into the language of decolonization in the time of Bandung.

Keywords: science, ecology, decolonization, development

Anthony D Medrano is the National University of Singapore (NUS) Presidential Young Professor of Environmental Studies at Yale-NUS College and Assistant Professor in the Department of History at the National University of Singapore. He also holds appointments at the Asia Research Institute and the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum (LKCNHM). His teaching and scholarship look at the histories of biodiversity research in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Medrano is the editor of *Lala-Land: Singapore’s Seafood Heritage* (Epigram, 2024), co-editor with Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz of a forthcoming special issue of the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* titled “Returning to the Region: Philippine History and the Contingencies of Southeast Asia”, and co-editor with Eunice Tan of *The Green Dot: Stories of Singapore Biodiversity* (LKCNHM, forthcoming). He is completing his first book, *The Edible Ocean: Science, Industry, and the Rise of Urban Southeast Asia*, which is under contract with Yale University Press.

A History of Loss: Connecting Imaginaries across Fugitive Archives

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“The history of the archive”, Antoinette Burton (2001, 66) remarks, “is a history of loss”. This presentation explores loss, and methodologies of recovery, through a series of archival encounters: a tiger in the forest, two kings across the Pacific, two sultans across the Indian Ocean. Through these encounters, I ask how we might connect imaginaries across Asia-Arabia-Africa when the archives are so often colonial and partial. I suggest that the history of the archive is indeed a history of loss, but that methodologies that map and reconsider the loss may provide productive ways for engaging world history and inter-Asian connection.

Keywords: methods, decolonial theory, circulations, travels

Iza Hussin is Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and International Studies and the World History Faculty at the University of Cambridge, and Mohamed Noah Fellow in Asian Politics at Pembroke College Cambridge. Her work focuses on the framing of Islamic law and legal institutions in the political contexts of colonialism and nation-building (*The Politics of Islamic Law: Local Elites, Colonial Authority, and the Making of the Muslim State* [Chicago, 2016]; *سياسات تقنين الشريعة: النخب المحلية والسلطة الكولونيالية وتشكل الدولة المسلمة* [Madarat Press, 2018]), and on global circulations of ideas about Islam and law (<https://cambridge.academia.edu/IzaHussin>). She is an Editor of the Cambridge University Press Asian Connections Series (with Timothy Brook and Engseng Ho), and serves on the Editorial Boards of *Indonesia and the Malay World* and the Social Science Research Council’s *The Immanent Frame*.

The Frontiers and Trails of Casino Urbanism: Thoughts on Writing Comparatively

Kah-Wee Lee

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Over the last decade, I have been following the tracks of a new frontier of capitalist extraction. The global casino industry first gained access to the massive Chinese market when Macau's gaming monopoly was liberalized in 2000. Within fifteen years, Macau had overtaken Las Vegas as the largest source of gaming revenue and was, until the pandemic struck, briefly the richest city in the world. The frontier of extraction grew rapidly. Singapore and Manila quickly changed their legislation to host large-scale casino development, and smaller but extremely lucrative casinos also appeared in places like Vladivostok and Saipan. Today, Japan, Thailand and Dubai are the next "hotspots" of possible casino legalization.

How does one study a frontier of capitalism stretched loosely across cities and continents? How can one write alongside its explosive tempo and fast-changing geography, or could one exploit the relative slowness of research to gain analytical leverage? I share some preliminary thoughts on a mode of comparative writing that takes the peripatetic and dialogic process of extended fieldwork as something inherent to and generative of analysis. Instead of enforcing a plane of equivalence between discreet cases and common units, writing comparatively proceeds as a series of detours that mirror my engagement with these cities, the ways they pose questions at each other and the dissonant directions each city pulled me toward. Though I thought I was working at and on the frontier, I now realize that I was always following its trails, waiting for the dust to settle in order to see more clearly.

Keywords: comparative writing, frontiers of extraction, multi-sited ethnography, casino urbanisms

Kah-Wee Lee is an interdisciplinary scholar who works on the relationships between space and power, particularly through the lenses of modern expertise such as architecture, urban planning, law and public administration. His current project, "Casino Urbanisms", examines the expansion of the casino industry across Singapore, Manila and Macau and asks how licit and illicit channels of capital flow are transforming these cities. Lee's research has been published in the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *Environment and Planning A and C*, *Geoforum*, and *Cities*. He is the author of *Las Vegas in Singapore: Violence, Progress and the Crisis of Nationalist Modernity* (2018).

Stilted (Global) Imaginations: The Case for Building Area Studies in the Arab World

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Over the past decade, revisionist and conceptual innovations—in terms of space, time, and motion—have allowed us to rethink Arabia’s ideational positionality vis-à-vis the Afro-Eurasian world. This includes work published by Nile Green, Engseng Ho, Rosie Bsheer and me. Yet these significant advances in framing have been largely limited in their impact to Western (or more precisely, Anglophone) scholarship. Within Arabic-language academic production, the ideational imagining of the “Arab self” and its relationship with the other has remained locked inside and impoverished by a highly-conventional and essentializing ethnocentric (or geopolitical) approach, notwithstanding the few exceptions that prove the general rule. The impact of the abovementioned shifts in framing cannot be felt anywhere in the Arabic-speaking world.

An illustrative problem is modern Arabic-language knowledge production in China which has maintained a high degree of uniformity in its output over the course of a century. In this brief talk, I wish to highlight some of the structural causes behind this dismal situation, specifically reflecting on the failure (or inability) of the Arabic-speaking world to develop a substantive area studies tradition. More significant to the purpose of our gathering, I will discuss how any attempt at engendering new perspectives on transnational ideational connections (or world-making imaginaries) that offers emancipatory potential should be predicated, on the one hand, on supporting the development of such traditions in the Arabic-speaking world, and on the other hand, bringing more local voices, based in the region itself, into the “global” conversation.

Keywords: conceptual innovations, area studies in the Arabic-speaking world

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Learning from Makkah: Frontiers of the More-Than-World City

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Considerations of global or world cities and world city networks have long been analytical and empirical endeavours in urban studies. This has been supplemented by discussions of comparative urbanism and planetary urbanization. Paradoxically, the city of Mecca (henceforth Makkah, as per the official transliteration), amongst the world's most connected cities, whilst also being a quotidian reference-point for a quarter of humanity, is almost entirely erased from such analytical and empirical ventures. Mobilizing emerging critical and decolonial Muslim geographies, this article seeks illumination and learning from Makkah, asking what such a focus implies for key urban studies debates about comparative urbanism, planetary urbanization, and world cities.

Methodologically, we draw on participant observations and interactions from three journeys to Makkah undertaken by both authors over four years as well as methods of urban experiential encounter under the banner of psychogeography. We approach contemporary Makkah in its local, regional and global contexts and reconsider urban frontiers along three vectors: 1) Makkan securityscapes and evolving biopolitical regimes, 2) Makkan workplaces, where labour is mostly performed by subaltern migrant workers, and 3) Makkan political ecologies, where extreme heat, an arid natural environment, and a rising environmental awareness complicate the 'climate-proof', 'resilient' and 'sustainability' claims of new infrastructures. Hence the contribution of the paper is at once empirical, referencing Makkah in wider urban studies, theoretical, learning from the city in terms of implications for wider debates about urban frontiers and scales, and methodological, in so far as psychographic, along with allied walking methods, are proposed as a flexible and rewarding research strategy.

Keywords: cities, decolonial, ecology, labour, Makkah/Mecca, psychogeography

James D. Sidaway has served as Professor of Political Geography at NUS since 2012. He previously taught at the University of Amsterdam and several English universities. Following a doctorate based on research in Mozambique, he has worked on Portuguese geopolitics, Portuguese-Spanish border relations, as well as cross-border frontier dynamics around Singapore and in Myanmar. Over the last decade or so, he has also published several co-authored papers and a book based on ethnographic research in Cambodia, Iraqi Kurdistan, Abu Dhabi and Doha. Amongst his recent papers is "Beyond the decolonial: Critical Muslim geographies" in *Dialogues in Human Geography* (2023).

Yannis-Adam Allouache is a political and urban geographer interested in the politics of transregional labour migration and its relationship with urban transformations. He obtained his PhD in Geography from NUS in 2024 with a dissertation titled "Infrastructural Geographies of Precarious Labour and Solidarity: Southeast Asian migrants' Employment Journeys across Taiwan's Urban Peripheries". Prior to moving to Singapore for the PhD, he completed a Master of Arts in Political Science from the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa and worked in the Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister, Asia Pacific branch, at Global Affairs Canada.

Zoneworlds:
Conceptualizing Inter-Asian Interaction through Special Economic Zones

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Special Economic Zones (SEZs, defined broadly here to include Free Trade Zones, Export Processing Zones, and Free Economic Zones) now play a significant role in the rise of Asian economies and have emerged as unique nodes of inter-Asian connections. In 1980, as part of China's opening and reform, Deng Xiaoping initiated one of the nation's first SEZs in Shenzhen, a southern Chinese city bordering Hong Kong. Since then, hundreds of SEZs have been created both within China, as well as in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Dubai, India, Jordan, the Philippines, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Pakistan. In recent years, SEZs have also become footholds for China's "One Belt and One Road Initiative", a development strategy that focuses on infrastructure exports to and expansion of trade networks in all of Asia and into Europe and East Africa.

Across diverse political economic settings and throughout historical eras, zones can be identified by two common features: they are usually located in cross-border areas with easy connections to globally-linked economic regions; they are oftentimes laboratories for experimental governance logics, or in other words, "exceptional" political economic spaces separate, in different ways, from the "normal" functions of national political economies and related national sovereignty concerns. By focussing on Shenzhen's early history in the context of the rise of Asian Tigers and inter-Asian circulation of information, knowledge, and technology, this presentation explores the following questions: How do we balance or integrate the local historical and geographical peculiarities and regional and global commonalities in our understanding of SEZs? What does the history of SEZs tell us about the national and transnational narratives of modernity in Asia? And how are these legacies manifested in contemporary views on migration, investment, and trade, via and through zones in the Asian economies?

Keywords: special economic zones, borders, China, Asian Tigers

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Connecting Ilkhanate Persia, Kish, Ma'bar, Samudera-Pasai and Yuan China: Micro and Hybrid Histories

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In understanding the “Malay World” we cannot ignore its Malay-Muslim civilizational past and its connections beyond the region. Tracing these connections may lead to new insights that can reframe and reimagine the makings of the “Malay World” and may challenge present understandings of the “Malay World” or “Malay civilisation”; this may be critical in constructing a Malay civilisational future. So, how can these transregional connections, conversations and convergences shape or reframe our understanding of the “Malay World” imaginary? This analysis focuses on a micro-level history and on individuals who have been overlooked by Indian Ocean network studies, namely the role of transregional family networks in connecting distant regions. Family networks open new geographical and cultural imaginaries and vistas on the study of state-formation and conversion in the early modern period by transcending regional and disciplinary boundaries and connecting individuals, states and networks at complex and multiple intersections in the maritime world of the Indian Ocean and beyond. Following a diverse group of individuals from the Ilkhanate to Yuan China, this presentation illustrates that people and family networks played a vital role in shaping and influencing larger socio-religious changes in the Indian Ocean. It reveals how this microcosm illuminates broader, macro networks characterized by complexity, multi-layered interactions, multi-lateral engagements, diverse and hybrid ethnicities, interwoven empires, and interregional dynamics within global Islamic networks. In addition, it brings to light a shared Muslim past based on global maritime Muslim networks where multi-centred and circulatory exchange between Muslim societies blurred the local and the global, and the centre and the periphery, testifying to the intricate and interconnected history of the global Muslim world. The presentation demonstrates the need to go beyond borders set by disciplines, geographies and cultures to appreciate the hybridity and fluidity of the human connections that shaped Muslim pasts.

Keywords: Malay World, micro-history, hybridity, Indian Ocean

Sher Banu AL Khan is Associate Professor in the Malay Studies Department at the National University of Singapore. Her research interest is the Malay world, and Southeast Asia in general, in the early modern period, focusing on history, gender studies, manuscript studies and Islam. She has published in numerous journals and edited books amongst which are “Ties that Unbind: The Botched Aceh-VOC Alliance for the conquest of Melaka 1640-1641”, *Indonesia and the Malay World*; “What Happened to Syaiful Rijal?” in *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde*; “Men of Prowess and Women of Piety: The Rule of Sultanah Safiatuddin Syah of Aceh 1641-1675” in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*; and “The Jewel Affair: The Sultanah, her Orangkaya and the Dutch Foreign Envoys”, in M. Feener, P. Daly and A. Reid, eds, *Mapping the Acehnese Past*, (KITLV: Leiden, 2011). Her book *Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom: The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641-1699*, was published by Cornell and NUS Press in 2017.

Manuscripts in Circulation: Two Family Archives of Arab Immigrants in Malabar

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My presentation examines two significant manuscript collections, developed within the migratory settlements of two distinct Sayyid immigrant families—the Ḥaḍramī ‘Alawīs of Southern Arabia and the Bukhārīs of Central Asia. These collections were digitized as part of the Arabia Asia Archival Project of the Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship in Arabia Asia Studies. The presentation focuses on archives of the Shihāb al-Dīn Imbiccikōya Tangal collection at Calicut and the Ḥāmid Kōyamma Tangal Bukhārī collection at Chāvakkad, Thrissur, both located in the state of Kerala, India. Although these communities settled in Malabar in different periods—the Bukhārīs in the sixteenth and the Ḥaḍramīs in the late seventeenth centuries onwards—they carried books with them, preserved them in new places, added new texts to the collection, copied or inherited certain others from Sufi scholarly linkages and produced some original texts in Malabar. Texts copied in the homelands of Arabia or Central Asia did not simply find a final resting place in distant diasporic locations in the Indian Ocean. Rather, they were reformulated as new forms of commentaries and super commentaries on older texts, with original contributions added to the evolving collections set up by members of the diaspora. Analysing these texts, this paper highlights, firstly, the manuscript culture developed by Arab societies in the Indian Ocean and, secondly, the significance of a transregional perspective in understanding the texts and societies that composed and preserved them.

Keywords: manuscript cultures, textual circulation, transregional studies

PKM Abdul Jaleel is a Research Fellow associated with the Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship in Arabia Asia Studies, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Over the last few years, he has been documenting historical as well as intellectual traditions and cultural expressions of Arab societies across the Indian Ocean. Previously, he taught West Asian Studies at the University of Kerala, India and was a Visiting Research Fellow at Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies. Jaleel is currently working on a book titled *Sacred Sailors: Islam in the Sufi Cosmopolis of the Indian Ocean*, which is a transregional study of Sufism and how it shaped the cosmopolitan nature of Islam in the region by examining the case of the ‘Alawī Ṭarīqa.

The Sailing Scribe: Mansur Al-Khariji and the Oceanic Worlds of the Gulf

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How did Gulf nakhodas (ship captains) produce the routes they traversed around the Indian Ocean? I draw on the writings of one Kuwaiti nakhoda, Mansur bin Ibrahim Al-Khariji (1879-1954) to explore the intellectual labour that made movement and circulation in the Gulf and Indian Ocean possible. His manuscript, produced after a long sailing career, includes notes on navigation, on transactions, and on the political geographies he traversed, together with stanzas of poetry. His notes shed light on the workings of a world in motion—of institutions and ideas that animated circulation around the Gulf and Indian Ocean maritime marketplace. Al-Khariji's writings offer us a vista into a world of marketplace engagement and textual production – from single contracts and letters to larger treatises—that emerged from the movement of Gulf dhows around the Indian Ocean.

Through an engagement with Al-Khariji's writings, I hope to accomplish two things. First, I want to shed light on nakhodas as thinkers in the Indian Ocean world—as actors who did not simply guide their dhows along the waters, but who actively thought about that movement, and the marketplace itself. Second, and more broadly, I hope to offer reflections on a nautical world that has been pushed to the margins of a terrestrially moored historiography. The Gulf has long been a poor cousin to the more established regions of Middle East historiography: Turkey, the Levant, and Egypt. By directing our attention to the ocean, I hope to integrate the Gulf into what is perhaps a more capacious and accommodating historiographical space—one that more closely aligns with the transregional horizons of otherwise marginal actors like Al-Khariji.

Keywords: Gulf, Indian Ocean, dhows, nakhodas, oceanic history

Fahad Ahmad Bishara is Associate Professor of History and of Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *A Sea of Debt: Law and Economic Life in the Western Indian Ocean, 1780-1950* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) as well as several articles on the histories of the Gulf and Indian Ocean. He has recently completed *Monsoon Voyagers: An Indian Ocean History* (to be published University of California Press) which relates an oceanic history of the Gulf, told through the voyages of a single Kuwaiti dhow in 1924-25.

The Reaches of the Archipelagic

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Scholars have used a range of frameworks to capture patterns of connectivity that link today's Southeast Asia to other geographies. While different in focus and ambition, these frameworks often share a desire to challenge framings such as the nation, with its origins in nineteenth-century Europe, together with the 'regions' of Cold War area studies. Even when deployed flexibly, many of these frameworks construct alternative spaces and geographies, whether economically, socially, or culturally. This paper explores archipelagic theory as a method rather than an alternative spatial construct. As Ananya Jahanara Kabir proposes, archipelagic theory aims to capture interactions between inter-island and transoceanic mobilities, which exist together in a non-hierarchical relation. To what extent can archipelagic theory succeed in crossing imaginaries? To explore this question, I pair archipelagic theory with food culture. By doing this, I ask to what extent is archipelagic theory a non-hierarchical project. Can it adequately capture the multidirectional relations in island Southeast Asia—not just coastal elites looking towards the water, but hinterland food producers and foragers looking towards forests, mountains and valleys?

Keywords: food cultures, archipelagic theory

Kathleen Burke is an historian of food, gender, and maritime empires in the Indian Ocean World. Her first book project, "Hearth of Empire: A History of Indian Ocean Cuisine", explores cuisine as a framework to uncover historical agencies of marginalised historical actors—including women and enslaved cooks—in the Dutch empire in the Indian Ocean. Her current project examines an even greater diversity of historical actors who produced knowledge about plants in the early modern Indian Ocean, focusing on the travels and transformations in knowledge as indigenous American plants were transported to island Southeast Asia. Her latest publication, 'Recultivating Connections Across the Indian Ocean', is forthcoming in *Slavery and Abolition*.

Imagining New Inter-Asias through Natural Disasters

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Southeast Asia is situated in a zone of natural hazards stemming from climate and geology. Climate patterns, in particular monsoon cycles whose intensity and duration were shaped by El Niño-Southern Oscillation, caused droughts, flooding, and typhoons. These fluctuating levels of water impacted agricultural output, especially in the mainland, where the stability of early modern rice-growing states was partly dependent on their ability to adapt to climate perturbations. Tectonic movements and seismic activity placed island Southeast Asia at risk of volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and consequent tsunamis, specifically in the archipelago which is now Indonesia and the Philippines. The histories of such events can be simultaneously continuous in their cyclical predictability and discontinuous as moments of rupture. These vulnerabilities extend beyond the region, especially in the age of climate change.

There is much room to examine how new and existing connections in Southeast Asia-Arabia-Africa could be reconfigured in the wake of natural disasters. This presentation highlights current historical scholarship that productively analyses natural disasters beyond national limits and within the context of a broader Asia. Using the examples from the early modern Little Ice Age up to the period of high colonialism, I show that this historiography has focused mainly on shared vulnerabilities rather than shared mitigations. Opening up the conversation to include connected adaptations to the forces of nature can be potentially more generative. These adaptations can encompass, among others, multiple flows: material aid, trade and currencies between the different regions, evolving ideas about the causes and meaning of disasters from various philosophies, movement of peoples and the growth of transnational institutions to cope with crises catalysed by natural disasters. Historicizing these flows may reveal unexpected connections and better show how affected communities have learned to adapt and survive through a range of strategies at multiple scales—individual, community, state, regional and global.

Keywords: natural disasters, mitigation, environment

Faizah Zakaria is Assistant Professor in the Departments of Southeast Asian Studies and Malay Studies at the National University of Singapore. Her research interests centre on religion and ecology, environmental justice and indigenous movements in island Southeast Asia. Her first monograph *The Camphor Tree and the Elephant: Religion and Ecological Change in Maritime Southeast Asia* (2023) was published by the University of Washington Press. She is presently working on a research project on science and religion in volcanic eruptions and co-coordinates a digital humanities project on comparative Asian medicine. She received a PhD in history from Yale University in 2018.

ABOUT THE CHAIRPERSONS

Engseng Ho is Professor of Anthropology at Duke University. He is the author of *Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (2006) and a leading scholar of transnational anthropology, history and Muslim societies, Arab diasporas, and the Indian Ocean. His research expertise is in Arabia, coastal South Asia and maritime Southeast Asia, and he maintains active collaborations with scholars in these regions. He is a co-editor of *Asian Connections* book series at Cambridge University Press. Ho previously worked as Professor of Anthropology, Harvard University; Senior Scholar, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies; Country and Profile Writer, the Economist Group; International Economist, Government of Singapore Investment Corporation/Monetary Authority of Singapore; Director, Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore; Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professor in Arabia Asia Studies.

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Sumit Mandal is Muhammad Alagil Chair in Arabia Asia Studies at the National University of Singapore. He is a transregional historian who researches the outcome of longstanding inter-cultural and inter-religious interaction in the Malay World—understood as a flexible and expansive cultural geography. His current research explores *keramat* (Muslim shrines) in the Indian Ocean as the built archives of a little-known past enmeshed in individual acts of intellectual and political leadership, inter-cultural interaction, transregional connections, piety, and miracles. This research has taken him to Java, Sumatra, Singapore, the Malay Peninsula, and Cape Peninsula (South Africa). Mandal is the author of *Becoming Arab: Creole Histories and Modern Identity in the Malay World* (2018).

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Tim Bunnell is Professor in the Department of Geography and Director of the Asia Research Institute, where he is also Leader of the Asian Urbanisms cluster. The primary focus of his research is urbanisation in Southeast Asia, examining both the transformation of cities in that region and urban connections with other parts of the world. His publications include *From World City to the World in One City: Liverpool through Malay Lives* (2016) and *Urban Asias: Essays on Futurity Past and Present* (2018; co-edited with Daniel P.S. Goh). His interest in the nexus of new technology and urban development began with doctoral research on the high-tech Multimedia Super Corridor in Malaysia in the 1990s.

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Pa Kuan Huai is a PhD student in the Department of History at the National University of Singapore. She is interested in modern Asian history, with an emphasis on youth, gender, and marginalized groups. Her research focuses on the social movements in Peninsular Malaysia during the 1960s and 1970s, exploring how young people in the peninsula experienced the Global Sixties. She studies how the construction of race was conflated with Cold War ideologies in postcolonial Malaysia and how young activists of the period negotiated these political circumstances. She has conducted oral history interviews with former labor activists, student activists, and members of the Communist Party of Malaya. These transcripts are part of “Reconceptualizing the Cold War: On-the-ground Experiences in Asia”, an online archive of oral history collections compiled by the National University of Singapore historian, Masuda Hajimu.

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Umang Kochhar is a PhD student in Malay Studies at the National University of Singapore, focusing on the historical connections between India and the Malay World through Persianate linkages. His research examines the diplomatic exchanges and trade between these regions during the Persianate age, with an emphasis on cross-cultural interactions. Alongside his main research, he is also interested in Food History, the role of Sufi Dargahs, and architecture in the Indian Ocean world. His academic work explores the intersections of culture, history, and the global networks that shaped the region.

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Cover: Map from the first printed Arabic World Atlas, Malta, 1835. Courtesy of the National Library of Australia.