

Eric Tagliacozzo (Cornell University)



Chinese 'Illegalities' in Colonial Southeast Asia: Lessons from the Fin-de-Siècle Maritime World

Wednesday, October 29, 2014
4:15 p.m., The Senate Chamber, Aston Webb
University of Birmingham

How have Chinese been typecast as 'illegal' in colonial eyes in the various parts of Southeast Asia? What has been their significance as a community, and how has this changed over time? To what extent is Chinese 'illegality' a myth and to what extent has it corresponded to any historical truth? My presentation will examine the interface between overseas Chinese and the colonial state writ-large in Maritime Southeast Asia, particularly in the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya, over the course of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. In the first part of my talk, I will look at various sites of contestation, as this pertained to this ethnic divide across the Insular World of Southeast Asia. The second part of my talk looks at the archipelago through 'secret societies' and 'illegal trade', as these concepts were understood by colonial governments. Finally, the third part of the lecture then focuses on the border itself, partially maritime in nature and partially overland, as Chinese communities on the evolving frontier were classified by these states. In total, I hope to show some of the ways in which the maritime Southeast Asian milieu dictated new ways of type-casting Chinese communities, and how this fit into larger taxonomic processes of the state at a time of evolving modernity.

Speaker Bio: Eric Tagliacozzo, Director of the Comparative Muslim Societies Program, Director of the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project and Professor of History at Cornell University. Author of *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915* (Yale University Press, 2005); *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

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