

TELLING APART:

How Ethnicity Became Political in Early Modern Siam

26 (Thu)

December 13:30-15:00

Mid-sized Meeting Room (No.332)

3rd Floor, Inamori Center, CSEAS, Kyoto University

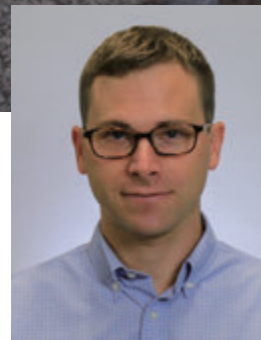
No
Reservation
required



Format: Hybrid

<https://kyoto-u-edu.zoom.us/j/92468569092?pwd=2afrNQBamW9aul0MQ94fUodKBcLc0y.1>

Southeast Asia's ethnic groups are commonly viewed either as age-old, natural categories of social organization or as the legacies of colonial "divide and rule" tactics which transformed cosmopolitan kingdoms into fractured "plural societies." Both views imply that ethnic identities were static and even apolitical before the late nineteenth century. Thai-language evidence, however, reveals that patterns of ethnic identification shifted substantially over the early modern period (1400-1850). This talk introduces my first book project by examining five early modern "moments" in which ethnicity was mobilized in new ways. I show that each new mode of ethnic claim-making practice was political—in that it made new claims about people, their labor, and their social relationships—and that it conceptualized increasingly abstract kinds of groups as ethnic. As each of these moves laid the groundwork for modern conceptions of ethnicity and nation, this talk also decenters Europeans in the region's modern intellectual history.



Matthew Reeder

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Matthew Reeder is an assistant professor of history at the National University of Singapore (NUS). He is a historian of Southeast Asia and its global interconnections, with research interests in ethnic categorization, knowledge production, and labor control in Siam (Thailand) before the twentieth century. Before joining NUS, he was a postdoctoral fellow at the Asia Research Institute and an assistant professor at Yale-NUS College. He received his doctorate from Cornell University, where his dissertation earned the Messenger Chalmers and Lauriston Sharp prizes. Support for his research has come from the Fulbright-Hays program, the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, the Ministry of Education (Singapore), and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University. His work has been published in *Modern Asian Studies*, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, and *Asian Ethnicity*.