DEPARTMENTAL SEMINAR
(Book Talk)
Taming the wild: Aborigines and Racial Knowledge in Colonial Malaya

Dr. Sandra Khor Manickam

CHAIRMAN
A/P Timothy Barnard

Wednesday, 26 August 2015, 3 pm
History/Political Science Lounge, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Block AS1, #04–01, 11 Arts Link, Singapore 117570

Abstract
The speaker will discuss the central ideas of her new book on the history of racial ideas in Malaya. The book examines the complex history of indigeneity and anthropology in the Malay Peninsula, and the role played by the politics of knowledge in determining racial affinities, by charting the progression of thought concerning “indigenous” or “aboriginal” people. The classifications of “indigenous” and “Malay” depend on a mixture of cultural, social and religious knowledge that is compressed under the heading “race” but differs according to the circumstances under which it is produced and the uses to which it is put. By historicizing the categorization of aborigines and British engagement with “aboriginal” groups in Malaya, Taming the Wild situates racial knowledge within larger frames of anthropological and racial thought, and highlights the persistence of nineteenth-century understandings of indigeneity and Malayness in racial contestations in modern Malaysia.

About the Speaker
Sandra Khor Manickam is a historian specializing in colonial British Malaya, the history of Orang Asli and anthropology and the history of ideas of race. She obtained her PhD in history at the Australian National University (2010), was Visiting Fellow at the History Department, National University of Singapore (2011) and Junior Professor of Southeast Asian Studies at the Goethe University of Frankfurt, Germany (Feb. 2012–Sept. 2014). Since November 2014, she holds the position of Assistant Professor of Southeast Asian history at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Her first monograph, Taming the Wild: Aborigines and Racial Knowledge in Colonial Malaya, is part of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) Southeast Asia Series and has recently been published by NIAS and NUS Press.

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