

**Project B13: Engaging with Transcultural Public Spheres: The Case of Tamil-Speaking Muslims in Colonial Singapore**

Home to diverse people from Southeast, East, and South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, and a node of the circulation of goods, people, ideas and information between 'East' and 'West', the city of Singapore played an important role in the cultural flows which connected Asia and Europe. Between 1819 and 1942, Singapore grew from a small port to one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the British Empire. The presence of such a diverse population soon forced various communities to talk not only amongst themselves, but with each other as well as with the colonial state. The result was the rise of a number of interrelated public spheres, whose relationship with each other was characterized by strong asymmetries. This project endeavors to trace the engagement of one particularly mobile (spatially and socially) segment of the Singaporean population, Tamil-speaking Muslims from South India, in Singapore's diverse public spheres, and to gauge the role played by them in the local translation of international transcultural flows.

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**Workshop**

**Publics and Public-spheres in Colonial Singapore**

**Organized by Project B13**

**December 2, 2011**

Karl Jaspers Centre  
Voßstraße 2, Building 4400, Room 212  
69115 Heidelberg



# EVENT TITLE

## PROGRAMME

### Friday, December 2, 2011

- 9 to 10 am** Registration
- 10 to 10.30 am** Welcome and introduction: Publics and Public Spheres in Colonial Singapore
- 10.30 to 11 am** Coffee-break
- 11 to 11.45 am** *Holger Warnk, Goethe-University Frankfurt*  
Becoming Visible: Muslim Printing and Publishing in Colonial Singapore
- 11.45 am to 12.30 pm** *Torsten Tschacher, Georg-August-University Göttingen*  
Learning to Speak? Tamil Newspapers and the Public Sphere in Singapore, 1875-1915
- 12.30 to 2 pm** Lunch-break

- 2 to 2.45 pm** *David L. Kenley, Elizabethtown College*  
Advertising Community: The "Union Times" and Singapore's Public Sphere, 1906-1939
- 2.45 to 3.30 pm** *Kirsty Walker, University of Cambridge*  
Isolation and Interaction: Eurasian Publics in Interwar Singapore
- 3.30 to 4.15 pm** *Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied, National University of Singapore*  
Coffeeshops and Vernacular Publics in Colonial Singapore
- 4.15 to 4.45 pm** Coffee-break
- 4.45 to 5.30 pm** Final Discussion

## CONCEPT

Colonial Singapore was easily one of the most diverse and cosmopolitan cities in the British Empire. Its daily life involved constant transcultural communication and negotiations, which were at the same time subject to asymmetries of power and misunderstandings. As older historiographies, which have mainly been concerned with the political history of British administration are being questioned, scholars have begun to turn increasingly to studying the historical experience of the diverse populations which had made Singapore their home.

One of the most interesting, and as yet least explored, aspects of the history of colonial Singapore is the development and interaction of diverse publics with each other as well as with the state. This workshop seeks to explore the effects and challenges of this transcultural communication on the constitution of publics and the public sphere in colonial Singapore as well as their complex entanglement with publics elsewhere in Asia and Europe.

**ADMISSION FREE**