

Gandhi, Buddha and Yoga in Indonesia, 1930s – 1970s. **Moral geographies of Greater India across Decolonization**

With Prof. Dr. Marieke Bloembergen

Thursday, 18.04.2019, 18 – 21 h

ESA Hauptgebäude, Hörsaal M, Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1, 20146 Hamburg



Indonesia's cultural exchanges with India and mainland Southeast Asian have either been understood in the context of the Bandung conference (1955) or, more recently, as part of new, post-independence efforts of nation-building. This seminar focuses on alternative transnational networks of knowledge exchange between the regions, developing along non-alignment cultural diplomatic lines and at grass root level, that may have looked for progress 'beyond the nation', and that fed

into older, still influential transnational imaginations of Asia in which Indonesia came to be seen as part of 'Greater India' – or: the scholarly and popular imaginations projected on the region that is now South and Southeast Asia as one Hindu-Buddhist 'civilization' with its origin in India, perceived as superior to other (imagined) civilizations. Using the concept of moral geographies of Greater India as a heuristic tool, the question is how, why and with which impact on Indonesian experiencing of a decolonizing world did ideas of Greater India develop so strongly worldwide and come to include Indonesia, a country with the largest Muslim population of the world? One focus are the interactions between scholarly, artists' and spiritual networks, from the Theosophical Society of the 1880s, until the hippie trail of the 1970s.

For this seminar, after a sketch of 1950s inter-Asian activities and non-alignment heritage politics in Indonesia in the field of educational exchange, re-sacralization of Buddhist sites, and efforts to popularize Yoga as a tool for empowerment, the focus will be on one of the Indonesia-born actors relevant in this history, the Balinese Hindu-reformer ibu Gedong Oka (1921-2002), founder of the first Gandhi-ashram in Indonesia in the 1970s, and formed, notably, within inter-Asian as well as (post-colonial Christian transnational networks. Through an analysis of her and other Indonesians' engagements with sites, texts, and gurus of India across decolonization, this event will cover the forms and socio-political implications of Greater Indian thinking on mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, developing in Indonesia.

Prof. Dr. Marieke Bloembergen

Is a senior researcher at the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), and professor in Archival and Postcolonial Studies at Leiden University. She has published a monograph on the Netherlands Indies at world exhibitions (NUS: 2006), and on the history of policing in the Dutch East Indies (Boom: 2009). Forthcoming is *The politics of heritage in Indonesia. A cultural history* (Cambridge University Press: 2019), written with Martijn Eickhoff. Her research interests concern the politics and mobility of knowledge in colonial and post-colonial Indonesia, through the lens of policing and violence, material culture, and heritage practices within inter-Asian and transnational contexts.