

28 July-1 August 2024

Surabaya, Indonesia

## 2. From Oceanic Crossroads: Empires, Networks and Histories

*The goal of ICAS 13 is to facilitate global transdisciplinary conversations and to link such conversations with local realities. The broader scope and description of this theme can be found under the 'thematic cluster' header which provides ideas and examples of proposal topics that can be submitted under this theme. If you think your proposal fits in multiple themes, please choose the one that you believe suits best.*

*ICAS 13 would like to introduce the local realities in these transdisciplinary conversations, the explanation of the theme starts off with a note on 'local context' intended to highlight connections between heterogeneous Asian Studies research and the particular perspective from Surabaya, Indonesia.*

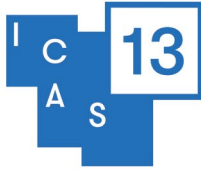
*This theme welcomes proposals with a broader disciplinary and geographical perspective as well as proposals that connect these perspectives to the Indonesian context.*

### The local context

Nenek Moyangku orang Pelaut (My ancestors were sailors) is one of the most popular Indonesian children's songs. Created by an Indonesian nationalist woman in 1940, this song is a reminder of how important water bodies are for the people in the archipelago. The Indian Ocean, and, at its core, the Indonesian archipelago, have long been recognized as a crossroads of many of the world's cultures, ideas, and a global commercial hub. Bugis, Madurese, Javanese, Malay, Indian, Arab, Chinese, European, Japanese, and American maritime trade networks converged and competed over the shallow waters of Indonesia, including Surabaya as one of its foremost port-cities. Major empires, from Sriwijaya to Majapahit along the coastal basins, emerged here resulting from intense exchange between the islands and the Eurasian and African landmasses. European colonialism and imperialism created significant changes and left many legacies until the present time, including the very existence of nation-states in these oceanic bodies. After the struggle for independence, national narratives frequently suppressed, silenced, and erased the histories that did not align with state interests and new nationalist projects. Such narratives often neglected the importance of water bodies as crucial connectors, framing them instead as barriers or borders between territories.

### This thematic cluster

This thematic cluster embraces discussions of aquatic connections in global history, as well as water's connection to present day (geopolitical) power dynamics, such as the Nusantara archipelago, Africa–Asia, inter-pacific, Indian, Chinese, Buddhist, Arab, Islamic, European, Christian, North American, US-promoted global 'market-democratic' neoliberal order, PRC's pan-Asian economic systems, old and new Cold Wars and alliance systems. Beyond these examples of integrated, usually unequal, systems, often associated with slavery, colonialism and geo-political hegemonies, are questions connected to multiple, intersecting oppositions: between maritime and continental security and trade systems; between empires and networks; and between Northern dominance and Southern experiences. As well, it addresses diverse counter-hegemonic efforts, from anti-colonial movements and non-alignment to, more generally, the invention of a Global South consciousness inaugurated by the visionary Afro–Asia Bandung Conference in 1955. However, the rise of new nation-states in the postcolonial world also



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continues many colonial practices to some extent. Many voices, stories and even artefacts – whether located on land or underwater – are still waiting to be heard, excavated and narrated. By looking beyond colonial and/or national narratives in the past centuries, this theme invites proposals to stimulate new historiographies for our present time.

These topics can be explored through various formats of engagement, including papers, panels, roundtables, posters, audio-visuals and other media, to ensure a broad forum of academic and civic exchanges. We also welcome you to share other formats and ideas; to propose activities, workshops and exhibitions to enrich the exchange of knowledge and experiences.