



## WORKSHOP

### **Morality and ethics in the history of medicine in colonial and postcolonial Southeast Asia**

When: 23 June 2025

Where: University of Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Who: invited speakers and commentators

We invite scholars from Southeast Asia to contribute to an upcoming workshop (and hopefully a publication) on “Morality and ethics in the history of medicine in colonial and postcolonial Southeast Asia.” This workshop seeks to discuss all sorts of moral ideas and ethical practices surrounding health, medical research and treatment during the colonial period in Southeast Asia. We also explore the afterlife of colonial medicine in the postcolonial era. While there is a lot of work that explores how Western doctors conceptualized the bodies of Southeast Asian peoples, and how they studied ‘docile bodies’ in institutions, we think that more fine-grained histories of ethics and moral ideas or practices are needed. The fact that there were few ethical protocols in the first half of the twentieth century, should not preclude us from studying morality in medicine and public health in this period. With a publication, we hope to develop this new research direction further.

We welcome contributions on a wide range of topics, including but not limited to the following themes:

- How did ethical standards evolve over time, and how did the specific colonial contexts shape these developments?
- What moral issues were high on the agenda of doctors or health departments? Abortion, venereal diseases, the treatment of indentured laborers? How were they discussed?
- How did colonial or indigenous physicians navigate ethical dilemmas?
- Medical experiments: what kind of medical experiments were conducted in Southeast Asia and what moral guidelines shaped these experiments? How did patients fare in these experiments? How did animals?
- How did medical doctors (and others) deal with human remains?
- How were moral ideas shaped around bodily material such as blood, milk, urine or sweat?
- How did patients or research subjects resist medical practices? What can we learn from rumors about medical practices?

- How did political, religious, or professional factors influence medical ethical practices? What was the role of local healing practices?
- What can we learn from scandals in the history of medicine?
- Continuities and discontinuities between the colonial and postcolonial period.
- What approaches and methods can we use to study these themes?
- What ethical challenges arise from the continued use of colonial human remains, medical data or colonial medical photographs?

This workshop is a pre-conference workshop, organized the day before the HOMSEA (History of Medicine in Southeast Asia) Conference, 24-27 June. This workshop is co-organized by the COMET research project, based at the University of Leiden, and the University of Gadjah Mada.

We are pleased to inform participants that travel (from Southeast Asia) and accommodation costs for this workshop will be reimbursed.

We do ask you to send in your papers of max 2000/2500 words to commentators two weeks before the workshop.

If you are interested, please send a title and abstract (300 words), and a brief biography (3 sentences), to Mohammad Bin Khidzer, [m.k.bin.khidzer@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:m.k.bin.khidzer@hum.leidenuniv.nl) by 22 December 2024.