



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

Dipartimento di Studi sull'Asia
e sull'Africa Mediterranea

MAP

Centro di ricerca
Marco Polo
sulle connessioni
globali Europa-Asia
Marco Polo Centre
for Global Europe-Asia
Connections



Preedee Hongsaton

Wela Wang: The Struggle for Leisure in Colonising Siam, 1830s–1930s

May 7, 2026, 15.45-17.15

Aula A, Ca' Cappello

Preedee Hongsaton is a researcher, writer, translator, and editor into and out of the Thai language. His recent co-authored article is “Kite-Fighting in Siam at the Turn of the 20th Century: Social Time and Self-Control” (2026). He is currently part of a collaborative research programme Imperial Expansion and Intercultural Diplomacy: Treaty-making in Southeast Asia, c.1750–1920.

“*Tam arai tamjai khue thai thae*” [doing whatever one wants is the true way of the Thais] is one of the unwritten mottos—or critiques—illustrative of the perception that Thais are not the most rule-abiding or punctual people. The cultural history of time-keeping in Siam can be bracketed between Simon de la Loubère’s comment in the 1680s that Siamese men were “invincibly lazy” and Pridi Banomyong’s economic treatise, written after the 1932 Revolution that had recently overthrown the Siamese Absolute Monarchy, which asserted that the

“wretched” (*nak lok*) would also be eradicated. The wretched here were not the royals; rather, they were those who failed to maximise their productivity, resulting in unproductive land and, essentially, unproductive labour time.

These two moments appropriately frame the history of the emergence of leisure time in Siam/Thailand, which materialised during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Although not directly colonised, Siam became part of the European world-economy from the 1830s onward, much like its colonised Southeast Asian neighbours. Central to this process was the emergence of a new regime of time, which was integral to the making of the Thai Absolute Monarchy. This talk examines the intertwined history of state formation and economic transformation in Siam through the lens of leisure culture.

Organised by **Giuseppe Bolotta**. For info: giuseppe.bolotta@unive.it