

“NO MORE KARAMAT?”: SACRED BEINGS AND MULTISPECIES HAUNTING



Thursday, 27 August 2026,
11 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.



AS7 #06-42 (FASS Shaw
Foundation Building Research
Division Seminar Room)

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ABOUT THE SEMINAR

This talk follows Islamic saints and their more than human companions across coastal and urban landscapes that have been repeatedly cleared and redeveloped in Melaka and Singapore. Moving between islands, burial grounds, and roadside shrines, I listen to miracle stories, hagiographies, and popular ghost story collections to show how karamat, trees, animals, spirit mediums, and working class devotees resist being reduced to superstition or simple relics of the past. Bulldozers stall, trees bleed, shrines migrate, and petitions continue to be addressed to saints whose graves have been razed, sealed, or displaced. These presences are not mere hauntings of a bygone era: they are active agents in multispecies landscapes who shape ethical conduct, temporal rhythms, and even the forms that religious reform and environmental ‘greening’ can take, unsettling singular narratives of progress and inviting us to listen more carefully to leaves, ruins, and stories.

Chaired by: Prof Vineeta Sinha (Department of Sociology & Anthropology)

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Teren Sevea is the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at Harvard Divinity School, studying Islamic societies across the Indian Ocean world. He is the author of *Miracles and Material Life: Rice, Ore, Traps, and Guns in Islamic Malaya*, which received the 2022 Harry J. Benda Prize from the Association for Asian Studies. He is also in Singapore as the Lee Kong Chian NUS–Stanford Fellow in Contemporary Southeast Asia.



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