

The Harry J. Benda Prize, awarded since 1977 by the Southeast Asia Council of the U.S. Association for Asia Studies (AAS), was established in memory of that remarkable Yale University scholar and teacher to recognize outstanding contributions to the field of knowledge about Southeast Asia. The award comes from a fund consisting of contributions from 270 individuals all over the world—many of whom were personal friends, colleagues, or students of Harry Benda—as well as generous contributions from Yale and Cornell Universities and the Lee Foundation in Singapore.

Yale-affiliated winners of the AAS Southeast Asia Council's Harry J. Benda Prize in Southeast Asian Studies

2015 Harry J. Benda Prize in Southeast Asian Studies

Charles Keith: *Catholic Vietnam: A Church from Empire to Nation* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2012)

Charles Keith's *Catholic Vietnam: A Church from Empire to Nation* is an absorbing, elegantly written and deeply contextualized account of Catholicism in colonial Vietnam. It combines a strong and compelling narrative with a sharp focus on the key individuals and historical junctures that helped to define the role of the Church in Vietnamese life, offering us new and original insights into the contested role of Catholicism within the historiography of Vietnam. Through this account of Catholicism, Keith also contributes a broader narrative of modern Vietnamese history, geography and politics in the colonial period (and with connections drawn to the present). Tracing out the transformation from a missionary to a national church, Keith reveals an important and until now largely absent view of colonial modernity and decolonization through the lens of the Catholic experience.

Another major contribution of the book is to complicate the historical representation of Christianity in Southeast Asia as somehow autonomous and separate, showing us instead just how interwoven Catholic individuals and the Church are in Vietnamese society. Through visual images, personal letters, court records, ritual descriptions, and ecclesiastical documents, Keith's impressive and meticulous social history has much to teach us about the larger intertwined history of religions in Southeast Asia.

2014 Harry J. Benda Prize in Southeast Asian Studies

Erik Harms: *Saigon's Edge: On the Margins of Ho Chi Minh City* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012)

Erik Harms' *Saigon's Edge* offers a fascinating picture of daily life in the margins of the modern metropolis of Ho Chi Minh City by exploring the notion of 'social edginess' in present day Vietnam: how do people live their lives at the interface of the urban and the rural, and how do they make sense of what could be called a mutual marginality? The book is a provocative exercise in combining descriptions of an ethnographic character with reflections on theoretical issues. Vignettes that illustrate how individuals and collectivities rely on conventional binary oppositions to make sense of the fast-changing world around them are embedded in philosophical musings about the ever shaky notions of spatiality and temporality in present day social life.

The book offers a series of original ideas about continuity and change in the daily life of Vietnamese people in the beginning of the 21st century, and it does so in an open-ended style addressing socio-economic developments and cultural life in Vietnam and Southeast Asia as a whole. The interactions between countryside and city should remain a central point of study and reflection, and Harms' book should serve as an inspiring guide to all of us.

Selection Committee: Henk Maier, Chair (UC-Riverside); Shawn McHale; Anne Hansen; Andrew Willford

2011 Harry J. Benda Prize in Southeast Asian Studies

Jeffrey Hadler: *Muslims and Matriarchs: Cultural Resilience in Indonesia through Jihad and Colonialism* (Cornell University Press, 2009)

In *Muslims and Matriarchs*, Jeffrey Hadler provides a rich social history of the Minangkabau of West Sumatra. Elegantly written, it is an illuminating study of change in the realms of gender relations, public and private space, intellectual life, religion, politics and society. Steeped in the scholarship of the region, Hadler worked closely and creatively with both historical records and contemporary realities, and his book offers a rich mix of sources and analytical approaches to the Minangkabau of West Sumatra, and to the broader Muslim community of the Indonesian archipelago.

Muslims and Matriarchs traces the patterns of continuity and change that have characterized modern Minangkabau history, stretching from the end of the Padri rebellion into the twilight years of Dutch colonial rule in West Sumatra. His primary interest, however, lies largely in broader social changes, in education, gender relations and home life for the Minangkabau. With great nuance and depth, Hadler shows how the Minangkabau "matriarchate" responded creatively to change and to the forces of capitalism and modernity by questioning elemental cultural definitions and, as a result, producing some of the country's leading nationalist intellectuals and activists. Thanks to its originality, meticulous research, elegant writing, compelling analysis, and deep reflection on local realities and responses to some of the most significant transformations in modern Indonesian and Southeast Asian history, Hadler's book is this year's distinguished winner of the Benda Prize.

Selection Committee: Nora Taylor (Chair), Nancy Eberhardt, Richard O'Connor, John Sidel.

2008 Harry J. Benda Prize in Southeast Asian Studies

Matthew Cohen: *The Komedi Stamboel: Popular Theatre in Colonial Indonesia, 1891-1903* (Center for International Studies, Ohio University, 2006)

Matthew Cohen's book traces the life of the pioneering Eurasian theatre actor and director Auguste Mahieu and the history of his Komedi Stamboel theatre between 1891 and 1903. Based on extensive research of old newspapers and other archival sources Cohen brings the adventures of the theatre and its performances back to life. Through its evocative prose, the book draws the reader into the theatres where we watch Komedi Stamboel, as it were, through the eyes of the audience and share its excitement. We witness a variety of performances – including Arabian Nights, Sleeping Beauty, Aida and political allegories – while we are also informed about financial fraud, sex scandals, imprisonments, and the other trials and tribulations experienced by members of this popular theatre.

However, the book is about more than theatre. It highlights the emergence of a hybrid modernity within the dynamic context of popular urban culture. Borrowing elements from European opera and Indian theatre, performed in Malay, staged by Eurasians and Chinese, *Komedie Stamboel* attracted a large multi-ethnic audience. Taking Javanese high culture as their aesthetic standard, colonial authorities looked down upon *Komedie Stamboel*, just as subsequent generations of scholars largely ignored it. Cohen convincingly demonstrates how this popular theatre helped to create early nationalist attitudes and how it laid the foundation of modern Indonesian culture. At the same time, Cohen situates his topic within a set of wider, global developments, which he elaborates theoretically with great sophistication. *Komedie Stamboel* is, in short, a highly original, innovative, and utterly fascinating book.

Selection Committee: Henk Schulte Nordholt, Chair; Patricia Pelley; Michael Peletz; James Rush.

C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (Harvard University Press, 2006) was accorded runner-up status.

2007 Harry J. Benda Prize in Southeast Asian Studies

Eric Tagliacozzo: *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865–1915* (Yale University Press, 2005)

Eric Tagliacozzo's *Secret Trades, Porous Borders* is a meticulous history of colonial state-making and transgression at the frontier between the Dutch and British spheres in Southeast Asia. It unveils the reciprocal relationship between the anxieties of the colonial state and the actions of peoples located in or passing through border regions: as the state's fears regarding threats to its security and revenue led it to construct an increasingly solid border, so a variety of challenges immediately arose. Smugglers, traders, pirates, traffickers, local rulers and the state's own officers pursued their interests along and across the frontier, simultaneously penetrating and manipulating the border. As the border-making project developed, challenges to state authority were eventually worn down through the deployment of new material and administrative technologies, but state authority remained fragile and contested well into the twentieth century.

Secret Trades, Porous Borders constructs a rich and original inter-imperial history, drawing on intricate research in a variety of archives. Tagliacozzo wonderfully sketches a dynamic world, weaving the details into a clear and coherent story. His work confirms the importance of borders for the state-making project, but vividly demonstrates that what actually happens in the process is far more complex than narratives of the 'territorial' colonial state would have us believe. The conceptual sophistication and innovation of this book, along with the penetrating reading of archival sources alongside a broad range of other source materials, make an outstanding contribution that promises to change the way we think about state-making in Southeast Asia.

Selection Committee: Natasha Hamilton-Hart, Chair; Panivong Norindr; Patricia Pelley; Henk Schulte Nordholt

Harry J. Benda Prize in Southeast Asian Studies, 1987

Victor B. Lieberman

The Association for Asian Studies and its Southeast Asia Council are pleased to award you the 1987 Harry J. Benda Prize in Southeast Asia Studies. The Benda Prize was inaugurated in 1977 to honor outstanding achievement in every field and country specialization in Southeast Asia studies. It is intended especially to encourage the work of younger scholars of all nationalities with whom we are proud to associate ourselves as Southeast Asianists.

In making its decision, the Selection Committee paid special attention to your re-interpretation of events in early Burmese history, included in your *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580–1760* (Princeton, N.J. 1984). In that work and in your articles you demonstrated a careful, creative and comprehensive use of Burmese sources, many of them neglected or underutilized by earlier historians. Your introduction of the idea of administrative cycles, as opposed to dynastic cycles, transforms our thinking about Burmese history in a hitherto poorly understood period of time. You have broken new ground and have contributed substantially to the study of Southeast Asia.

Harry J. Benda Prize in Southeast Asian Studies, 1981

Huynh Sanh Thong

The Harry J. Benda Prize in Southeast Asia Studies for 1981 is awarded to Huynh Sanh Thong for his signal achievement in bringing to an English-speaking public the classical tradition of Vietnamese poetry in translations that are both graceful and do great credit to the original texts. Huynh Sanh Thong is best known for his translation of the early nineteenth-century epic poem *The Tale of Kieu* and for his comprehensive anthology of Vietnamese poetic traditions from the tenth to the twentieth century, *The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry*. His introduction to the latter is a lucid exposition of Vietnamese poetic conventions and forms which acquaints the reader with the rich diversity of a great literary tradition.

Members of the Selection Committee for the 1981 prize were John Echols, Mary Hollnsteiner, Truong Buu Lam, James Scott (Chair), Alexander Woodside, and David Wyatt. R. William Liddle (Chair of the Southeast Asia Council) and President Eleanor M. Jordan were ex-officio members of the committee.

Harry J. Benda Prize in Southeast Asian Studies, 1977

Dr. Sartono Kartodirdjo

FIRST HARRY J. BENDA PRIZE AWARDED

Dr. Sartono Kartodirdjo, of the Department of History at Gadjah Mada University, Jogjakarta, Indonesia, has been selected as the first recipient of the Harry J. Benda Prize in Southeast Asia Studies for his work on popular protest movements in colonial Java. Professor Sartono, who has degrees from the Universities of Indonesia, Yale, and Amsterdam, is also concerned with Indonesian historiography, and was leader of a UNESCO project on that subject. His several published works include *Protest Movements in Rural Java* (Oxford University Press, 1972); he is currently working on a multi-volume set of Indonesian textbooks.