

Bones Around My Neck: The Life and Exile of Prince Provocateur

Tamara Loos

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Bones around My Neck: The Life and Exile of a Prince Provocateur narrates the story of Prince Prisdang Chumsai (1852–1935). He served as Siam’s first diplomat to Europe during the most dramatic moment of Siam’s political history, when its independence was threatened by European imperialism. Despite serving with patriotic zeal, he suffered irreparable social and political ruin based on rumors about fiscal corruption, sexual immorality, and political treason. In *Bones around My Neck*, Tamara Loos pursues the truth behind these rumors, which chased Prisdang out of Siam. Her book recounts the personal and political adventures of an unwitting provocateur who caused a commotion in every country he inhabited. His drama offers more than a story about Siamese politics: it also casts in high relief the subjective experience of global imperialism. Telling this history from the vantage point of a remarkable individual grounds and animates the historical abstractions of imperialism, Buddhist universalism, and the transformation of Siam into a modern state.

Tamara Loos is professor of history and Southeast Asian Studies at Cornell University, and former Director of the Southeast Asia Program. She received her PhD from Cornell in 1999. Her most recent book, *Bones Around My Neck*, considers Siam’s history during the era of high colonialism through the dramatic and tragic life of a pariah prince, who will be the theme of her talk. Loos’ first book, *Subject Siam: Family, Law, and Colonial Modernity in Thailand*, considered Siam’s ambivalent status as a colonized and imperial power in Southeast Asia. It detailed the forced incorporation of Malay Muslim areas into Siam, and revealed the gendered core of Thailand’s modern legal system. It is the first study to integrate thoroughly both the Malay Muslim south and gender into Thai history. Her teaching and articles focus on an array of topics including sex and politics, a global history of love, subversion and foreign policy, sexology, transnational sexualities, comparative law, sodomy, the family, suffrage, and citizenship in Asia.

Wednesday, April 19, 12:00 Noon
Room 203, Luce Hall, 34 Hillhouse Avenue