

**AAS 2018 Annual Conference**  
**March 22-25, 2018**  
**Marriott Wardman Park Hotel**  
**Washington, D.C.**



**AAS PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS  
AND  
AWARDS CEREMONY**

**Friday, March 23, 2018 | 9:00am-10:15am**

**The Association for Asian Studies**  
**[www.asian-studies.org](http://www.asian-studies.org)**

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# *The Association for Asian Studies*

## OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

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## CHINA AND INNER ASIA COUNCIL

**ANNE REBULL**, *University of Chicago*

“How to Act: Emboldening Theatricality in 1950s Performance Practice”

This beautifully written and carefully wrought paper translates the gestural language of xiqu theater in the early PRC. Rebull uses a careful reading of the performance of *Fifteen Strings of Cash* to open out into a study of vernaculars of theatricality in 1950s China and the moral economies of traditional theatrical gesture. The paper simultaneously offers fine-grained readings of individual sources with an analysis that reaches out more broadly to contribute to how we understand the nature and translations of bodily performance and the theatrical arts in the context of political transformation.

**DENISE VAN DER KAMP**, *University of California, Berkeley*

“Clean Air at what Cost? The Rise of ‘Blunt Force’ Pollution Regulation in China”

Drawing on data from nearly two years of field research, this paper convincingly argues that China is increasingly relying not on regulatory mechanisms to address its current environmental challenges, but rather on a “blunt force” approach that involves highly intrusive measures such as forcibly shutting down entire industries. This paper contends that this “blunt force” approach is economically inefficient, and asks how and why China is sacrificing growth in order to achieve its environmental objectives.

**NICHOLAS Y. H. WONG**, *University of Chicago*

“A Genealogical Askesis, or Beyond the Classroom: Zhang Taiyan and Ng Kim Chew’s Other Teachers on Chinese Writing”

Through a detailed and innovative reading of the work of the Malaysian Chinese author Ng Kim Chew, this paper uses a focus Ng’s “genealogical askesis”—defined as a simultaneous embrace *and* rejection of earlier writerly traditions—in order to reexamine Ng’s reliance on a set of mainland Chinese intellectual precedents, and specifically his engagement with the legacy of the late Qing philologist Zhang Taiyan. In this way, the paper speaks to current debates over Sinophone literature and a Sinophone methodology, arguing that Ng sets up Malaysian Chinese literature’s “diasporic modernity” through a detour on May Fourth debates about literary reform.

Selection Committee: Carlos Rojas, *Duke University*  
Carla Nappi, *University of British Columbia*

## NORTHEAST ASIA COUNCIL

**SARA OSENTON**, *University of Toronto*

“Historicizing the Cyborg: Bodies Broken by War and the Cultural Imaginary”

The paper explores the history and plight of returning, maimed veterans in Japan after World War II, treating them as “cyborgs”: liminal, hybridized bodies that disrupted narratives of recovery, pacifism, victimhood, wealth, and technologization during the postwar decades. While it is widely known that returning maimed veterans were reviled in the wake of Japan’s defeat, the paper takes these observations one step further, contrasting WWII veterans with veterans of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, exposing their challenge to Japan’s emergent wealth, and revealing their association with Japan’s aggression (in contrast with atomic bomb victims). The paper uses both contemporary theoretical sources and archival ones.

Selection Committee: Amy Borovoy, *Princeton University*  
Albert Park, *Claremont McKenna College*

## SOUTH ASIA COUNCIL

**NICOLAS ROTH**, *Harvard University*

“To Not Be Ignorant Like Frogs in a Well: Bābū Pyāre La’l (1870/71-1917) and Vernacular Technical Literature in Provincial North India”

Nicolas Roth’s paper draws our attention to a neglected dimension of the history of print capitalism in colonial north India. Focusing on a single author, Bābū Pyāre La’l, and his concern to provide the Urdu- and Hindi-reading public with access to technical manuals and scientific reference works, Roth explores some very suggestive instances of the ongoing recalibrations between the diverse knowledge systems in circulation at the turn of the twentieth century. Roth’s careful overview of Bābū Pyāre La’l’s corpus also provides a novel vantage point for reconsidering the large-scale projects of progress and uplift that quickened colonial South Asia.

Selection Committee: Charles Hallisey, *Harvard University*  
Nile Green, *University of California, Los Angeles*

## SOUTHEAST ASIA COUNCIL

**KISHO TSUCHIYA**, *National University of Singapore*

“Converting Tetun: The Early Missionary Texts in a Timorese language and the Timorese Absent Presence 1875-1937”

The Southeast Asia Council is pleased to award the Pattana Kitiarsa SEAC Prize for Best Graduate Student Paper to Kisho Tsuchiya. Tsuchiya studies the writings of Portuguese missionaries in Timor during the late 19th century to investigate how the colonial religious mission attempted to map conceptual categories such as “idolater” and “(Christian) God” to the indigenous Tetun cosmology. This essay demonstrates the relevance and applicability of historical and sociolinguistic methods to contemporary Southeast Asian studies while also presenting focused and detailed information on a population within Southeast Asia that was, and to some extent remains, marginalized.

Selection Committee: Thomas Pepinsky, *Cornell University*  
Oona Paredes, *National University of Singapore*  
Michele Thompson, *Southern Connecticut University*

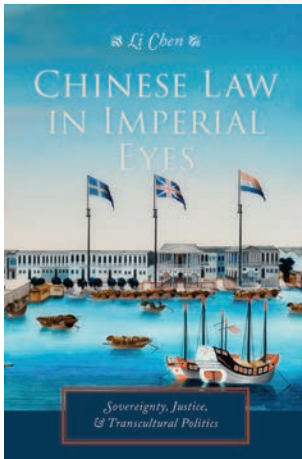
## JOSEPH LEVENSON BOOK PRIZE (Pre-1900 China)

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LI CHEN

*Chinese Law in Imperial Eyes:  
Sovereignty, Justice, and Transcultural  
Politics*

Columbia University Press, 2015



Li Chen's ambitious and groundbreaking book *Chinese Law in Imperial Eyes* provides a fascinating new interpretation of a critical period of Sino-Western relations, namely the century before the first Opium War, based on meticulous readings of both published sources and documents in Chinese and Western archives. His arguments, simultaneously complex and incisive, construct an innovative and persuasive analysis of the interplay between Chinese and Western understandings of law in the formation of imperialist ideology and the making of modern legal systems in China and the West.

This analysis provides critical historical context and transforms our understanding of both domestic Chinese approaches to law and its current interactions with the West over legal matters. Li's theoretical arguments and deep engagement with comparative perspectives make this work appealing to readers from a range of different fields. At every turn, his claims are convincing and consistent, supported by copious evidence, and carefully presented in clear and elegant prose.

Selection Committee: Anthony Babieri-Low (Chair), *UC-Santa Barbara*  
Janet Theiss, *University of Utah*  
Christopher Nugent, *Williams College*

## JOSEPH LEVENSON BOOK PRIZE (Post-1900 China)

SIGRID SCHMALZER

*Red Revolution, Green Revolution:  
Scientific Farming in Socialist China*

University of Chicago Press, 2016



*Red Revolution, Green Revolution* offers an exhaustively researched and elegantly written account of how the deep entwinements and contradictions of science and politics unfolded through the agricultural revolution in socialist rural China. Delving into the experiences and perspectives of a diverse set of actors—foreign and native-trained scientists, peasants, cadres, and sent-down youth—the book showcases a rural China where modern agricultural science, use of pesticides, crop fertilization, and new seed development were intimately interwoven into scientific and political practice from the 1960s through the Cultural Revolution.

Instead of pitching western science against native knowledge and politics, the book skillfully demonstrates how the Maoist *tu/yang* rhetoric mobilizes local actors in the process of producing—bottom up as well as top down—best practices of agricultural development. Ironically, perhaps, even though some of the more sustainable environmental practices were later rejected under the Reform Era, socialist agricultural science paved the way for China's post-Cultural Revolution economic miracle, and Mao-era radicalism continues to live as a resource for thinking and doing science and development in the present. Schmalzer's book challenges many habitual assumptions about rural China, the Cultural Revolution, and science and development. It is also a poignant reminder that science and politics have never been separated and that their entanglements on the ground shape agricultural futures in and beyond China.

Selection Committee: Mei Zhan (Chair), *University of California, Irvine*  
Andrea S. Goldman, *University of California, Los Angeles*  
Petrus Liu, *Boston University*

## E. GENE SMITH BOOK PRIZE (Inner Asia)

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**TOM CLIFF**

*Oil and Water: Being Han in Xinjiang*

University of Chicago Press, 2016



In this imaginative work, Tom Cliff focuses on the Han Chinese settlers in Xinjiang rather than on the much-studied Uyghur population. He relies on textual sources as well as vivid accounts of the lives of the Han in an often difficult environment. He does not ignore the tensions and conflicts between the Han and non-Han, but his principal interest is to describe the Han population. He reveals that the Han were not monolithic. They had arrived in Xinjiang at different times in the communist era, with the military-based Production and Construction Corps [*bingtuan*] among the first. Later settlers reached the region as part of the government's "Go West" campaign. Others came to capitalize on the greater economic opportunities in Xinjiang with the discovery and extraction of oil and other natural resources. These separate groups differed in their lifestyles, economic statuses, objectives, and relationships with the Uyghurs and other non-Han peoples.

In highly readable and well-chosen vignettes, based on years of observations, Cliff provides tangible evidence of their aspirations, disparities in income, and prejudices about the non-Han. His vivid descriptions of a variety of individuals not only illustrate his main themes but confirm his ability to gain the confidence of his informants through both his discretion and his empathy. His own well-crafted photographs contribute immeasurably to this absorbing and readable book.

Honorable Mention: **Daniel Hirshberg**, *Remembering the Lotus-Born: Padmasambhava in the History of Tibet's Golden Age*, Wisdom Publications, 2016

Selection Committee: Morris Rossabi (Chair), Columbia University  
 Claire Harris, University of Oxford  
 Ron Sela, Indiana University

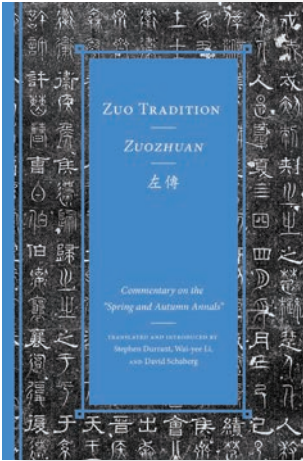


**PATRICK D. HANAN BOOK PRIZE  
FOR TRANSLATION  
(China and Inner Asia)**

**STEPHEN DURRANT, WAI-YEE LI  
AND DAVID SCHABERG**

*Zuo Tradition/Zuo Zhuan: Commentary  
on the “Spring and Autumn Annals”*

University of Washington Press, 2016



With its concise and elegant style, this translation of the classic of early Chinese historical writing, *Zuo Tradition, Zuo Zhuan*, which also provides the original Chinese text, will be the new standard edition. The well-organized design of the translation and original text visible on every page will appeal both to general readers and to erudite scholars.

The translation is complemented by a wealth of footnotes. The indices to place and personal names will allow these volumes to also serve as a reference to the wider audience of those interested in early Chinese history and culture. The excellent Introduction offers insights into the language of the text, some of the principles of translation, an assessment of previous translations, a clear history of the period, and a thorough background to the text, while the scholarly vigor of the textual criticism and critical review underscores the intellectual and cultural significance of this classic for the past two millennia of Chinese history.

Honorable Mention: **Anthony Barbieri-Low and Robin Yates** *Law, State and Society in Early Imperial China*, Brill, 2015

Selection Committee: Grace Fong (Chair), *McGill University*  
Michael Gibbs Hill, *College of William & Mary*  
William Nienhauser, *University of Wisconsin*

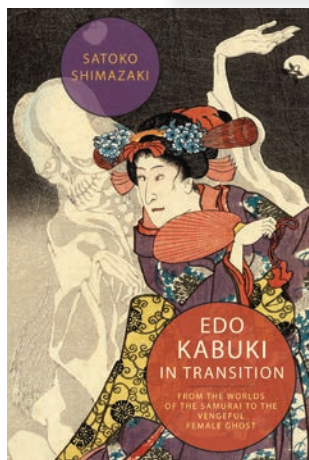
## JOHN WHITNEY HALL BOOK PRIZE (Japan)

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**SATOKO SHIMAZAKI**

*Edo Kabuki in Transition: From the Worlds of the Samurai to the Vengeful Female Ghost*

Columbia University Press, 2015



This masterful work dives deep into the archives of theater, art, and literature to emerge with a fresh take on late Tokugawa culture, pushing back the onset of modern interiority in the kabuki world to the early nineteenth century. Elegantly composed, Shimazaki's book as an artifact mirrors the intertextual nature of her subject. The source material spans more than two centuries and ranges from woodblock prints and play scripts to Buddhist morality tales, vernacular literature, instruction manuals for actors, and theater criticism.

In a daring conclusion, the author suggests that the ghost Oiwa represented a radically new kind of grieving female spirit: one obsessed with destroying her family line rather than preserving it. A haunting final passage suggests that Oiwa's relentless resentment lingers on, "hovering over stage after stage and even moving beyond theater walls into literature and other artistic realms."

Honorable Mention: **Yoshikuni Igarashi**, *Homecomings: The Belated Return of Japan's Lost Soldiers*, Columbia University Press, 2016

Selection Committee: Karen Nakamura (Chair), *University of California, Berkeley*  
Ran Zwigenberg, *Pennsylvania State University*  
Kären Wigen, *Stanford University*

## JAMES PALAIS BOOK PRIZE (Korea)

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### YOUNGJU RYU

*Writers of the Winter Republic: Literature and Resistance in Park Chung Hee's Korea*

University of Hawaii Press , 2015



*Writers of the Winter Republic* is a beautifully written and textured account of four celebrated literary figures and their impact on catalyzing a new political generation. Writing during the authoritarian years of Park Chung Hee's rule in the 1970s, Kim Chi-ha, Yi Mun-gu, Cho Se-hŭi, and Hwang Sŏk-yŏng all produced the kind of literature that exposed the social, economic and political injustice of the times and expanded the aesthetic and cultural space for collective resistance from below.

Ryu expertly interweaves illuminating theoretical formulations with close textual analysis to show how literary tropes such as the "five bandits," the neighbor and the drifter delivered potent social critiques, not only against state corruption and oppression but also a violent and dehumanizing political economy. Her sophisticated treatment of archival and ethnographic sources, which places the lives of dissident writers in vivid context, also encapsulates literary history at its best. This eminently readable and brilliant book is a shining example of James B. Palais' legacy.

Honorable Mention: **Jaeeun Kim**, *Contested Embrace: Transborder Membership Politics in Twentieth-Century Korea*, Stanford University Press, 2016

Selection Committee: Jennifer Chun (Chair), *University of Toronto*  
 Steven Chung, *Princeton University*  
 Jisoo M. Kim, *George Washington University*

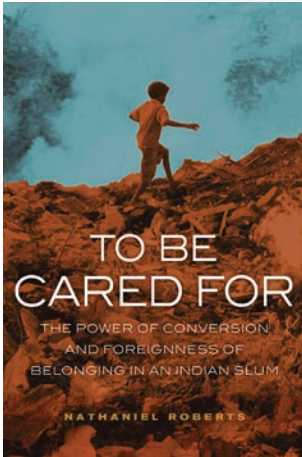
## Bernard Cohn Book Prize (first book on South Asia)

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**NATHANIEL ROBERTS**

*To Be Cared For: The Power of Conversion and the Foreignness of Belonging in an Indian Slum*

University of California Press, 2016



Nathaniel Roberts' book *To Be Cared For* is a moving study of ethical life in an Indian slum, populated by people from the lowest caste of India's social system, so-called "Untouchables" or Dalits. In lyrical, empathetic, and yet incisive prose, Roberts describes how the citizens of this community negotiate an urban existence taut with differences of caste, gender, labor, and religion.

The book has heart while remaining analytically precise and cogent. Roberts deftly explores the complexities of conversion to provide striking new insights into why some Dalits embrace or reject Christianity in a Hindu-majority society, and what this means for the individuals, for their community, and for the Indian nation-state. A majority of Roberts' interlocutors are women and the "positionality" of a white male Western ethnographer (with no religious inclinations) studying mostly female Dalit Christian slum-dwellers offers a fascinating and productive dialectic. But more than this: Roberts and his interlocutors together create an ethically charged and self-aware ethnographic world. The results are nothing less than stunning. *To Be Cared For* is a work at the vanguard of the anthropology of South Asia and of the discipline as a whole.

Honorable Mention: **Walter Hakala**, *Negotiating Languages: Urdu, Hindi, and the Definition of Modern South Asia*, Columbia University Press, 2016

Selection Committee: Karen Leonard (Chair), *University of California, Irvine*  
Christian Novetzke, *University of Washington*  
Azfar Moin, *University of Texas*

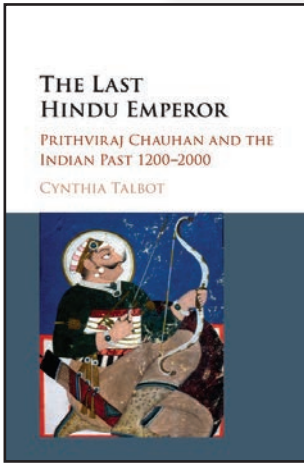
## Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy Book Prize (South Asia)

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**CYNTHIA TALBOT**

*The Last Hindu Emperor: Prithviraj Chauhan and the Indian Past 1200-2000*

Cambridge University Press , 2015



In *The Last Hindu Emperor*, Cynthia Talbot gives us a masterful study of the “layers of memory” that surround the Rajput chief, Prithviraj Chauhan, who was defeated in battle in 1192 C. E. by the Afghan warrior, Muhammad Ghuri. Talbot draws on a range of sources in multiple languages – from inscriptions, epic texts, historiography, and images to political statements –in order to illuminate shifting socio-political contexts over some 800 years, down to the present.

In the early 19th century, a heroic image of Prithviraj emerged that made him into a nationalist representative of Hindu Indians resisting foreign rule, an image that in recent years has been turned on South Asian Muslims, among them India’s own citizens. Talbot offers a far richer picture of the medieval and early modern past than such bifurcation suggests. As she surveys this long period, from the time that a minor, unsuccessful, Rajput mostly fought other Rajputs, Talbot looks her sources squarely in the face to show us the divergent Prithvirajes of history and memory. Her call for historians to attend not only to academic history but to collective historical memories as well is one that well deserves scholarly emulation.

Honorable Mention: **Sara Dickey**, *Living Class in Urban India*, Rutgers University Press, 2016

Selection Committee: Joyce Flueckiger (Chair), *Emory University*  
Barbara Metcalf, *University of California, Davis*  
Deborah Hutton, *College of New Jersey*

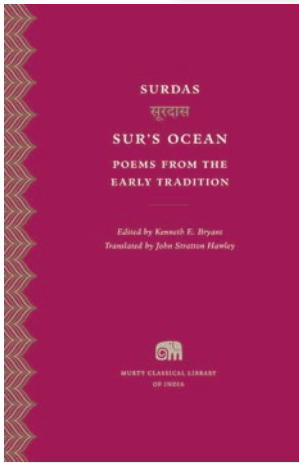
## A.K. Ramanujan Prize for Translation (South Asia)

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**KENNETH BRYANT AND JOHN S.  
HAWLEY**

*Sur's Ocean: Poems from the Early  
Tradition, originally published by Surdas*

Harvard University Press, 2015



*Sur's Ocean: Poems from the Early Tradition* is more than magisterial: it is a canon-defining work. Over the centuries the body of poems attributed to Surdas has grown until it has become a kind of genre in itself. Amidst so many later accretions, any voice of the original poet has been in more and more danger of being drowned out. Kenneth E. Bryant and John Stratton Hawley have been working for several decades to rescue it, and in this splendid volume they have succeeded.

By careful analysis of the earliest manuscripts, they have brought us as close as we can hope to come to the figure of Surdas himself (though they are scrupulous in not claiming to bring us any closer than the available evidence permits). Hawley's thoughtful, lucid translations of the poems have been organized topically in a way that will be approachable for the general reader. Every poem clearly reflects the rhythms and language of the original Braj, with the endless innovation and invention of Surdas on full display. The book is beautifully organized and arranged (with elegant Devanagari fonts for the facing text). It is the new gold standard of Surdas studies, and a great resource for scholars of South Asian literature.

Honorable Mention: **Charles Hallisey**, *Therigatha: Poems of the First Buddhist Women*, Harvard University Press, 2015

Selection Committee: Frances Pritchett (Chair), *Columbia University*  
Laura Brueck, *Northwestern University*  
Martha Ann Selby, *University of Texas*

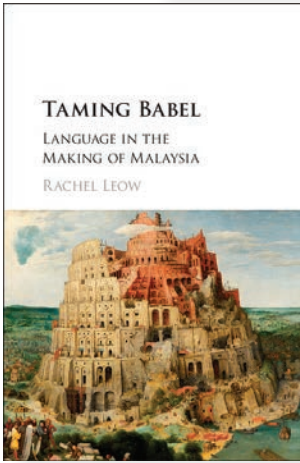
## Harry J. Benda Prize (first book on South Asia)

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**RACHEL LEOW**

*Taming Babel: Language in the Making of Malaysia*

Cambridge University Press 2016



*Taming Babel* presents a compelling account of how colonial and postcolonial states in what is now Malaysia have endeavoured to manage their subjects' polyglot linguistic diversity. Rachel Leow chronicles a range of schemes to standardize language usage, beginning with early attempts by British colonial agents to find and train reliable interpreters through to planners' efforts to promote and purify Melayu as a national language after independence. By doing so, she extends our understanding of the disciplinary state to the regulation of everyday vernacular language and the management of multilingual populations.

In an engrossing analysis that unpacks the broad sweep of language policy over more than a century – including the cultural politics of that most mundane of texts, the dictionary – Leow highlights persistent state failures to realize full linguistic control and points to the polyglot creativity which still frames daily life. Drawing on a wide range of sources in multiple languages, *Taming Babel* is an impressive work of scholarly innovation that will appeal to readers from varied disciplines. It will push forward thinking on the role played by the governance of language in the creation of modern social and political orders in Southeast Asia and beyond.

Selection Committee: Edward Aspinall (Chair), *Australia National University*  
 Mary Beth Mills, *Colby College*  
 Patricio Abinales, *University of Hawaii*  
 Catherine Raymond, *Northern Illinois University*

## Franklin R. Buchanan Prize for Curricular Materials

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**AILI MU**

*Contemporary Chinese Short-Short Stories: A Parallel Text*

Columbia University Press, 2017



*Contemporary Chinese Short-Short Stories: A Parallel Text* presents over thirty Chinese short-short stories in English and Chinese (on facing pages). While this collection thoughtfully reflects a variety of different contemporary voices, its real strength comes from its organization and the supporting materials that provide rich cultural context. The stories are grouped into nine thematic chapters, each of which highlights a central concept in Chinese culture, such as *ren* (benevolence) and *mianzi* (face). The chapters include introductory essays that give informative background information on the relevant cultural concepts exemplified by the subsequent stories. Importantly, each story includes supplemental materials that assist in student understanding, including a list of relevant vocabulary, short biographical information about the authors, and a set of pertinent discussion questions.

The well-sourced introductory essay makes a compelling case for the pedagogical usefulness of parallel texts in language instruction. However, because the book purposefully highlights Chinese cultural themes and concepts, it could also be integrated into classes dealing with Chinese culture and society. While the book is intended for advanced learners of Chinese, its thematic organization combined with the informative essays and other supporting materials make this book useful for non-specialists and those who are interested in contemporary Chinese writing.

Selection Committee: Patrick Hughes (Chair), *University of Pittsburgh*  
 Duane Johansen, *University of Illinois*  
 Arnold P. Kaminsky, *California State University, Long Beach*  
 Karen Kane, *Columbia University*  
 Lynn Parisi, *University of Colorado*  
 Emily Rook-Koepsel, *University of Pittsburgh*



## **DAVID CHANDLER**

Professor Emeritus  
*Monash University*



David Chandler has had an enormous impact on the study of Cambodian history and Southeast Asian studies more broadly. Educated at Harvard College (AB), Yale University (AM) and the University of Michigan (PhD, 1974), he has also held academic positions at Cornell University, Georgetown University, Johns Hopkins University, University of Michigan, and University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has served as a senior advisor at the Center for Khmer Studies and an expert witness for the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, as well as a consultant for USAID, US Department of Defense, Asia Foundation, Amnesty International, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

His numerous books and articles, translated into several languages, span Cambodian history from pre-colonial times to the present. His book *A History of Cambodia*, now in its fourth edition, has attained a global readership. He has served as co-editor of the Southeast Asia series at the University of Hawaii Press and has worked on curriculum for secondary and higher education in Cambodia. Generations of students of Cambodia remain grateful for his mentorship. For all his contributions, David Chandler is a most worthy recipient of AAS' highest honor, the Distinguished Contributions to Asian Studies Award.

**KATHERINE BOWIE**

*University of Wisconsin, Madison*

AAS President, 2017-2018

*Palimpsests of the Past: Oral History and the Art of Pointillism*



Between Jawaharlal Nehru’s 1946 description of India as “an ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed” and Mao Zedong’s 1957 vision of China as a “blank sheet of paper” on which “the most beautiful pictures can be painted” lie intriguing differences in political historiography. The mural on this year’s AAS program cover depicts happy scenes paralleling moments in the life of Kruba Srivichai (1878-1939), the most famous monk of northern Thailand. However, this mural also illustrates processes of historiographical erasure, ignoring his temple arrests, his investigations in the capital city of Bangkok in 1920 and 1935, the mass disrobings of over 400 of his disciples, and other key events in his life in order to create a more joyous biography which facilitates a narrative of national harmony. As elsewhere across Asia, Thai archival records typically consist of accounts by native elites or foreign residents. The historical realities of the lives of Kruba Srivichai and other villagers are fading. Although once met with skepticism, scholars are increasingly realizing that oral histories can enable a more fulsome, more democratic understanding of the past. As a historical anthropologist, my research combines archival sources with hundreds of oral histories. Each of the oral histories, much like the individual dots which comprise a pointillist painting, combine to enrich palimpsests of the past. In this keynote, I will reflect on the interplay of archival accounts and oral histories, noting how oral histories can lead to reanalyses of hegemonic historiographical paradigms.

SEE YOU IN 2019!

**2019**  
**AAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
**DENVER, COLORADO**  
**MARCH 21-24, 2019**





*Association for Asian Studies*

825 Victors Way, Suite 310

Ann Arbor, MI 48108 USA

Tel: (734) 665-2490

[www.asian-studies.org](http://www.asian-studies.org)