

Call for Papers

Centring the Margin: Agency and Narrative in Southeast Asian Borderlands

Alexander Horstmann and Reed Wadley (eds.)

Although it is a relatively recent focus of study, anthropologists and other social scientists increasingly recognize borderlands as a zone of contact in which the most important transnational social spaces become particularly visible: labour and marriage migration, religious movements, trading networks and supra-national politics. Using social memory/qualitative methodologies as main tools, the aim of this book is to focus on the interaction of populations in the borderlands with the agents of the state. While every borderland has to be studied in its own right, the question of just how border people are situated in history is a question that concerns us all. The future of border studies in Southeast Asia lies in a project of marginal history, centred on the agency of transnational communities (e.g. the Karen, Miao, Iban, Bugis, and Orang Laut), and on the ways in which these communities give meaning and shape to the transformation of the borderland. In this light, we emphasize historical dimensions and oral histories in the study of borderland communities within processes of the proliferation and redefinition of borders. We follow Baud and van Schendel (1997) in exploring the social forces that originate in borderlands, along with the effects they have had both locally and beyond the borderland. The central interest reflects a more dynamic approach in the field of borderlands by focusing on the narratives, oral cultures and local histories of the populations in the borderlands themselves. The authors united in this volume give voice to indigenous border people and document their struggles with the colonial and post-colonial state. By "centring the margin," we hope to contribute to the rewriting of the history of the state -- from the margin. The volume will be the first effort to bring together individual studies on agency and narratives in Southeast Asian borderlands (Horstmann 2002).

Please send your proposal to the editors by 1 October 2002:

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