

EUROSEAS HUMANITIES BOOK PRIZE 2022

Thongchai Winichakul, *Moments of Silence, The Unforgetting of the October 6, 1976 Massacre in Bangkok*

This emotionally powerful book is about the history of the memory of a turning-point event in Thai politics, the state-organised killing of students at a university in Bangkok. Part of the book's originality lies in its multi-disciplinary approach, drawing on history and anthropology in its sources and the manner of their presentation. But what really sets it apart is the author's centrality to the narrative. Thongchai Winichakul was a leading activist in October 1976, he survived the massacre and has played a central role in the remembrance of the event since that date. In this respect, the book is a masterpiece of reflexive scholarly writing, as the author skillfully and sensitively navigates the challenges of his own positionality in the story he tells. The book makes several methodological achievements, one of which is particularly striking: the author's interviews with perpetrators of the massacre and his careful narrating of those interviews. It also makes an important theoretical contribution, with the introduction to the field of Southeast Asian studies of the idea of "unforgetting", or memory impasse, a significant phenomenon in the region given the cruelty of its twentieth-century history and the limitations placed on public discourse in many countries. Finally, this work of history is of intense significance to contemporary Thailand and conveys a powerful warning for the future about politics and society and the role of the monarchy. All these qualities make *Moments of Silence* a truly remarkable work, and – rare thing indeed – an eloquent scholarly expression of deep emotion and sadness, itself a monument to those who died.