Departmental Seminar

**TITLE**

Thinking about “The Theatre of Death” in the Southeast Asian Context

**SPEAKER**

Prof Andaya Barbara Watson

**Day, Date, Time, Venue**

Wednesday, 17 October, 3 pm
HY/PS Lounge, AS1-0401

**Abstract**

Jennifer Woodward’s study of elite funerals in pre and post reformation England (The Theatre of Death: The Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England, 1570-1625 (1997) argues that although certain elements disappeared as a result of religious change, others survived if they were sufficiently ambiguous to be incorporated into the new religious system. Intrigued by the questions raised in this book, including the issue of state involvement in the management of ceremonies surrounding death, my presentation will suggest two possibilities for historical inquiry in Southeast Asia. The first, to be discussed rather briefly, argues for the value of regional comparison in assessing the extent to which imported religions and philosophies changed the nature of elite burials. The second part of the presentation will compare three descriptions of royal funerals from the island of Ternate in eastern Indonesia (1544; 1751; 1845) in order to identify some of Woodward’s “ambiguous” elements, as well as the motives of the Muslim ruler/state in instituting change.

**About the Speaker**

Barbara Watson Andaya is Professor of Asian Studies and Director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa. She is currently Raffles Professor of History, National University of Singapore. Educated at the University of Sydney (BA, Dip.Ed.), she taught in a high school for two years before returning to graduate school. She received her MA at the University of Hawai’i (MA), and her Ph.D. in Southeast Asian history at Cornell University. She maintains active teaching and research interests across all Southeast Asia, but her specific area of expertise is the western Malay-Indonesia archipelago. In recent years her research shifted to gender history in Southeast Asia, and in 2000 she received a Guggenheim Award, which resulted in The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Southeast Asian History, 1500-1800 (2006). Her current project is a history of Christian minority communities in Southeast Asia, 1511-1945.