

**CESS Book Prize 2014 announcement, presented by John Heathershaw, on behalf of CESS, to
Morgan Liu**

The CESS book prize for 2014 is awarded to the author of the best research monograph in the Social Sciences on Central Eurasia published in 2012 or 2013. This year's prize goes to Morgan Y. Liu for *Under Solomon's Throne: Uzbek Visions of Renewal in Osh* (Pittsburgh UP).

The book prize committee was comprised of Scott Levi (The Ohio State University), Eric McGlinchey (George Mason University) and Alima Bissenova (Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan) with John Heathershaw (University of Exeter, UK) acting as a non-voting chair.

Seven books were shortlisted. Of these the following three were selected for honourable mention.

The panel commented that **Madeleine Reeves' *Border Work Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia* (Cornell UP)** is, 'a masterful bottom-up ethnographic study that examines all sorts of contradictions in peoples' lives on both sides of the occasionally contested and always fluid borders in the Ferghana Valley. The volume is deeply researched and theoretically sophisticated, and the narrative is accessible to those of us beyond the small community of Central Asian social scientists.'

The panel noted that **Emily T. Yeh's *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development* (Cornell UP)**, 'does a fantastic job of appreciating the complicated dialectic between the Tibetan and Chinese interests and identities in Lhasa.' Furthermore, 'the way she shows how the colonized come to terms with and collaborate with colonizers -- lease their own land out of their very own will for cultivation by 'colonizers'-- was very, very powerful'.

The panel consider that **Alexander Cooley's, *Great Games, Local Rules: the new great power contest in Central Asia* (Oxford UP)**, 'puts Central Asia at the heart of the international geopolitical struggles being waged by Russia, China and the U.S. The timeliness of the study cannot be overstated: in the wake of the Russian annexation of the Crimea, Russia's efforts to expand its interests in Kazakhstan and the rest of Central Asia remain of vital importance to the international community.'

Each of these books is an outstanding contribution to the literature on Central Eurasia and all were highly ranked by all members of the committee. However, **Morgan Y. Liu's *Under Solomon's Throne: Uzbek Visions of Renewal in Osh* (Pittsburgh UP)** was chosen as the winner. Our panellists commented:

'This ethnographic study gets to the heart of the paradoxical social dynamics that have twice in twenty years propelled the city of Osh into ethnicity-based riots and potential war, sending as many as half a million people fleeing as refugees. The study is wonderfully researched and brilliantly illustrates the ways in which Osh is reflective of the region as a whole. It peel back the multiple layers of identity — Soviet, post-Soviet national, neighborhood, regional, religious — and exposes how they combine to inform the ways that people make sense of their lives and the political tensions that they confront on a day to day basis. The study is bookended by two traumatic ethnic conflicts. By focusing on the time in-between, Liu's study does a beautiful job of bringing to the fore the complexities of everyday life for all Central Asian peoples. The scholarship is exceptional, it is

written in elegant prose, and it stands to improve knowledge about Central Asia among vast audience.'

'Liu's book does a magnificent job at portraying Central Asian Muslims in realistic and three-dimensional terms. It is finding an enthusiastic audience among scholars of multiple disciplines, including of course Anthropology and Sociology, as well as IR/Political Science, and has already made its way into the classroom. I am very impressed by all four studies, but I think more than the others, Liu's study is a real field-changer.'

Morgan Y. Liu is a cultural anthropologist studying Muslims in former Communist countries, the impact of oil extraction on Central Asian societies, urban space, and Islamic ideas of social justice. His broadest interests concern how Central Asians make sense of and act on structural inequalities and abuses of power. This includes using an ethnographic lens on the developing connections between Central Asia, Turkey, and China. He is an Associate Professor in Anthropology and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, The Ohio State University.

Before coming to the Ohio State University he was a postdoc at the Society of Fellows, Harvard University. His Ph.D. is from the University of Michigan in Anthropology. He teaches Middle Eastern culture, Central Asia, Islamic revival and social justice, and cultural theory.

The formal announcement of the winner was made at the annual conference of the Central Eurasian Studies Society at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University of New York, October 25th, 2014.
