

**Interpretative Methodologies and Methods Group @ APSA
2021 Hayward Alker Best Student Paper Award**

Winner

Rahardhika Utama (PhD candidate, Northwestern University) for “Politics of Memory, Underdevelopment, and Remnants of Political Violence in the Sumatra Rubber Belt” presented at the Southeast Asia Research Group Mini Conference II, August 2020

The members of the 2021 Hayward R. Alker Student Paper Award Committee are thrilled to announce this year’s winner, chosen from among the 14 excellent papers submitted for the award: **Rahardhika Utama**, PhD Candidate at Northwestern University for his paper, “Politics of Memory, Underdevelopment, and Remnants of Political Violence in the Sumatra Rubber Belt.”

The papers nominated for this year’s award include research from across the subfields of political science as well as related work in political violence, historical sociology, security studies, authoritarianism, and social movements. Interpretivist methods and methodologies are thriving, and we look forward to these papers being published and pushing the boundaries of major disciplinary debates.

In an unusually strong field, Rahardhika’s paper stood apart. He shows how political violence in 1965 and subsequent efforts to enforce official memory marginalizes small landowners. The Indonesian state deploys an "official memory regime" against smallholder rubber farmers, using monuments and commemoration events as “reminders for the surrounding communities to the lethal consequences of fighting against the interest of the state” (14). Rahardhika describes the practices that continue to embed the official memory regime at the local level, including a memorial built both literally and figuratively on the grave of massacred peasants. The commemoration serves as a yearly reminder about the lethal consequences of opposing the state. Following the massacres, the state also stripped research funding related to smallholder rubber development while prioritizing large landowners. Smallholders remain unable to organize or advocate collectively due to the legacy of the massacres and association with the Indonesian Communist Party. While peasants are able to work collectively to combat thieves, they are deemed unfit to collectively petition the state, trapping them in a loop of economic underdevelopment.

Methodologically, Rahardhika pushes memory’s impact beyond its standard confines into the realm of economic underdevelopment. By “following the thing” from the colonial period to the present, from the villagers to the market, and through the various politically-influenced

interventions by the state, he demonstrates the mechanisms by which political and economic marginalization is enacted. The paper is an exceptionally creative and powerful interpretivist account of the legacies of political violence at the local level, and is based on original interviews on a difficult subject in a challenging location to do fieldwork on violence. Utama uses ethnographic and historical methods combined with an interpretivist sensibility to showcase how memory and practices of commemoration may be harnessed to long-term economic violence. We anticipate the paper having a major impact, and the members of the selection committee invite the audience to join us in celebrating Rahardhika's excellent work.

Award committee: Award Committee: Jeremy Menchik, chair (Boston University); Tania Weinstein (McGill University); Michelle Weitzel (University of Basel)