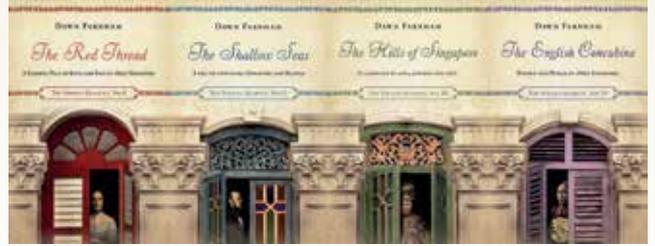


The BEAM hears from  
*Philip Tatham*  
 of *Monsoon Books*  
 a publisher specializing in books set in Southeast Asia



Philip Tatham

My decision to specialize in books on Southeast Asia is a direct result of reading for an undergraduate degree in Indonesian literature, but can be traced further back to my childhood. In the early 1970s I attended preschool for a year in the highlands of Papua New Guinea and upon returning to the UK was fed stories by expats on leave from posts throughout Asia. I distinctly recall as a youngster a family friend, a rubber planter, describing golden orioles in his garden in Malaysia and me thinking that sounded very exotic. I ended up living in Singapore and Malaysia for twenty years.

Monsoon publishes books that are set in Southeast Asia and written by authors from all over the world. We have curated a fascinating list of colonial and military memoirs that spans two world wars, the Malayan Emergency and Konfrontasi. These social histories are more approachable than academic textbooks and offer invaluable insight into the history of the region. In "Out in the Midday Sun: the British in Malaya 1880-1960", Malaya-born historian Margaret Shennan cleverly weaves personal anecdotes from British colonials in pre-independence Malaysia and Singapore through the text thus bringing to life the daily exploits of expats and locals at the time.

Military memoirs are always in demand and, at time of writing, "You'll Die in Singapore" by Charles McCormac, ranks #1 on Amazon UK's "Travel / Asia" bestseller list. "You'll Die in Singapore" is the true story of how 17 British and

Australian POWs made a 2,000-mile, 5-month escape from a Japanese POW camp in Pasir Panjang, Singapore, through Indonesia to Australia. Just as incredible are stories about British spies who stayed behind in Malayan jungles during the Japanese Occupation. In "Malayan Spymaster" author Boris Hembry recounts how he would enter Malaya by submarine from Ceylon and make contact with the likes of war hero Freddy Spencer Chapman, while in the biography "Our Man in Malaya" author Margaret Shennan reveals how Britain used Jon Davis, another member of the clandestine services, to engage with Chin Peng, Britain's chief postwar enemy in the long Communist struggle for the soul of Malaya.

Fiction is no less important a vehicle for Monsoon to introduce readers to a particular place or period of time. Billed as "Singapore's most passionate series of historical fiction" the four

books that comprise The Straits Quartet, written by former Singapore expat Dawn Farnham, offer romance and 19th century Singapore history in equal measure. Author Han Suyin caused a huge fracas in the 1950s when the release of her novel "And the Rain my Drink" maligned the British administration during the Malayan Emergency. The Monsoon edition of this novel features an "insider interview" with Han's former husband, then a British Special Branch officer in Malaya, whose job became untenable following the book's publication.

My aim is for Monsoon to bring Southeast Asian history and culture to life in print and ebook form for the enjoyment of readers worldwide.

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