

For Immediate Release

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Professors Harms and Rai Awarded YCIAS International Book Prizes

February 1, 2005. New Haven, CT ◆ Professor Robert Harms and Assistant Professor Mridu Rai, both in the Department of History, have been awarded inaugural YCIAS International Book Prizes. Established in 2004, the \$5,000 Prizes are awarded annually for books on international topics written by members of the Yale faculty. Professor Harms received his prize in the best book category for *The Diligent: A Voyage Through the Worlds of the Slave Trade*; Professor Rai received her prize in the best first book category for *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir*.

The centerpiece of Professor Harms' eloquent book is the journal of a young officer on the French slaving ship, *The Diligent*, which in 1731-1732 made the circuit from France to West Africa and Martinique, transporting human cargo. The book reconstructs the story of the ship's nefarious enterprise, illuminating the diverse moral, cultural, and economic environments that sustained the trade. Bringing both social context and individual personalities to life, Professor Harms evokes the particulars of this remote time, without losing sight of the tale's lasting moral dimension. Abundantly illustrated and deftly composed, the work is a tour de force of scholarship and a compelling read.

Professor Rai, in this exceptionally well-researched book, examines how the attempt to establish legitimate authority in Kashmir on the basis of Hindu rituals and traditions led to political articulation of a religious identity among the region's subject Muslim populations. By carefully reconstructing the strategies pursued by the British and Dogra rulers as well as the reactions of the various local cultures, Professor Rai provides a new view into how certain identities become politicized through the interaction of colonial authorities and their subjects.

"We are very pleased to honor both scholars with an International Book Prize," said Ian Shapiro, YCIAS Director. "YCIAS established the book prizes to stimulate scholarship in the international field by honoring outstanding accomplishments. Professor Harms' book is a model of inventive and thorough-going research, as well as narrative skill. Professor Rai's work is a testament to the value that rigorous archival work, undertaken with a careful eye to historical and local particularity, can contribute both to our understanding of contemporary international affairs and to questions of broader interest."

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