



A Life Beyond Boundaries: A Memoir

By Benedict Anderson

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An intellectual memoir by the author of the acclaimed *Imagined Communities*

Born in China, Benedict Anderson spent his childhood in California and Ireland, was educated in England and finally found a home at Cornell University, where he immersed himself in the growing field of Southeast Asian studies. He was expelled from Suharto's Indonesia after revealing the military to be behind the attempted coup of 1965, an event which prompted reprisals that killed up to a million communists and their supporters. Banned from the country for thirty-five years, he continued his research in Thailand and the Philippines, producing a very fine study of the Filipino novelist and patriot José Rizal in *The Age of Globalization*.

In *A Life Beyond Boundaries*, Anderson recounts a life spent open to the world. Here he reveals the joys of learning languages, the importance of fieldwork, the pleasures of translation, the influence of the New Left on global thinking, the satisfactions of teaching, and a love of world literature. He discusses the ideas and inspirations behind his best-known work, *Imagined Communities* (1983), whose complexities changed the study of nationalism.

Benedict Anderson died in Java in December 2015, soon after he had finished correcting the proofs of this book. The tributes that poured in from Asia alone suggest that his work will continue to inspire and stimulate minds young and old.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Anderson, who died late last year, had an intuitive sympathy for nationalism’s anti-imperial origins. This was underpinned by his view of history, which was shaped by a rare and unfamiliar perspective. At the time of *Imagined Communities*’ publication, he was a political scientist at the centre of the small community of westerners working on Southeast Asia. Not only his training but also his family background had equipped him, in ways his posthumously published memoir *A Life Beyond Boundaries* makes clear, to understand nationalism’s extraordinary insurgent appeal.”

—*Financial Times*

“Engaging and winningly modest memoir ... [full of] canny and pertinent observations on modern academia: the prevalence of jargon and the lack of language skills. Poignantly, he tells us how lucky he feels about his achievements. We should feel the same.”

—*Prospect*

“A neat and tidy book about [Anderson’s] unusual trajectory and sensibility, infused with inside jokes, idiosyncratic asides, and sly humor. It is also a tart overview of academic life. But mostly the memoir is a primer for cosmopolitanism and an argument for traversing geographical, historical, linguistic, and disciplinary borders.”

—*The Nation*

“Throughout his memoir, Anderson’s writing is gentlemanly, kind, laced with jokes and vignettes of his favourite interviews, like those he conducted with two Indonesian brothers who exemplified the almost incestuous politics in Jakarta—ne was the head of army intelligence, the other a member of the politburo of the Communist party of Indonesia.”

—*Guardian*

“Benedict Anderson transformed the study of nationalism ... and was renowned not only for his theoretical contributions but also for his detailed examinations of language and power in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.”

—*New York Times*

About the Author

Benedict Anderson (1936–2015) was Aaron L. Binenkorp Professor of International Studies Emeritus at Cornell University. He was Editor of the journal *Indonesia* and author of *Java in a Time of Revolution*; *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World*; *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination*; and *Imagined Communities*.

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