

influenced the course and outcome of the Cold War in their region. Ang's book highlights the importance of these local participants as well as the major powers in the Cold War in Southeast Asia. By doing so it adds a good deal to our understanding of this crucial period in the region's history.

Richard Stubbs

Department of Political Science, Kenneth Taylor Hall 527, McMaster University, 1280 Main Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, L8S 4M4, Canada; email: stubbsr@mcmaster.ca.

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Planting Empire, Cultivating Subjects: British Malaya, 1786–1941. By Lynn Hollen Lees. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. xvii+359 pp.

Originally conceived as two separate manuscripts, Lees' monograph uses Ho Engsen's earlier notion of empires as hybrid spaces as a launching point to compare rural and urban lifeworlds under colonialism. Employing British Malaya as a case study to interrogate the 'internal workings' of colonial power, the author convincingly demonstrates that relationships between rulers and the ruled were as complex as they were conflicted. Malaya's strategic location and heterogeneous population bred dissimilar modes of colonial governance over time, an argument buttressed by Lees' sensitivity to different lived experiences from below (primarily northwest Malaya's plantations and small towns). The questions she asks will interest social historians working on imperialism, urbanization, migration, labour, and commodity production: questions regarding the extent to which colonialism nurtured social mobility, cross-cultural learning, and new belongings within diasporas.

Lees pursues these enquiries over eight substantial chapters, frequently referencing developments outside Malaya for additional context. Chapters 1 and 2 chart plantation agriculture's expansion and impact across northwest Malaya during the nineteenth century (mostly

the second half). Lees' focus on sugar — a commodity neglected in Malaysian historiography — is interesting, not least because it leads her to credit the oppressive racial hierarchies of Malaya's nineteenth-century European-run plantations to "assumptions" (p. 59) carried over from earlier slavery systems in British Caribbean sugar plantations. She later highlights the persistence of social segregation in Malaya's twentieth-century rubber estates in chapter 5.

Lees nevertheless clarifies that 'agricultural imperialism' did not cause relentless misery for Malaya's Asian participants. British-supported Chinese farmers launched sugar holdings from the early 1800s, sometimes with great success. By the late nineteenth century, middling Eurasian and Chinese households were also building respectable careers from the need of European sugar estates for skilled employees. Even indentured Tamil labourers found some respite from maltreatment, evading penal sanctions regarding breach of contract by chasing better-paying jobs in towns beyond local jurisdiction.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus accordingly on nineteenth-century urban Perak's social world. Here, the most vital features of Lees' narrative may lie in the comparisons made between Perak's small towns and estate life. Such towns, she contends, were socioculturally distinct from European-run plantations because of competitive labour markets, abundant imported goods, ideas and technologies, and British reliance on incumbent Asian professionals and businessmen to maintain the peace. In an expanding economy, smallness, according to Lees, led to multiculturalism rather than parochialism. Proliferating trades in the diminutive open spaces of Perak's 'overgrown villages' forced inhabitants to work together. The heroes of Lees' narrative — energetic middle-class Malays, Chinese and South Asians — used their cross-cultural competencies to cultivate early town life, most importantly by building schools to train new generations of (mostly male) polyglot Asians with a common English-language proficiency. Confounding imperial 'collaborator' stereotypes, middling groups contested colour bars in British-dominated associations, spearheaded nascent civic movements within Perak's towns, and relegated British urban officials to reforming sanitation and issuing licences.

The book's second half sees the author develop these themes of indirect rule, Asian mobilities, and evolving identities across twentieth-century Malaya's first four decades, an interval when rubber became Malaya's main commodity export and colonial control withstood increasing criticism. Under colonial oversight, operators of all sizes and nationalities cultivated rubber. The crop thus offered unprecedented avenues for social mobility when prices were buoyant. Lees notes that many European and Asian planters soon acquired political cachet, serving on various town and legal committees (p. 181). She could, however, have done more to clarify the extent to which plantation-based racial stereotypes infiltrated urban governance, especially given her contention that European estate managers continued to wield "assumptions of hierarchy and dominance" (p. 199) over Tamil workforces even after the formal end of indentured labour in 1910. Meanwhile, commercial expansion and social reform generated new opportunities for educated middle-class male Asians to assuage plantation demands for skilled specialists and ancillary businesses. These variegated experiences under indirect rule — underlined by differences in class, gender, education, language, religion, attitudes and transnational allegiances — ultimately propagated very mixed domestic responses to economic hardship in the 1930s, even as anti-colonial sentiments swept across South and Southeast Asia. Such nuances are anchored within a judiciously-cited English-language primary source base, notably the Penang Sugar Estates' archives, and testimonials from the Perak Oral History Project.

At the outset of her study, Lees asks why "awareness of differences overwhelmed the forces of integration" in so many former Asian colonies (p. 7). She attributes Malaysia's controversial ethno-nationalism partly to decisions by leading British administrators to share political power with rajas and lesser aristocrats working to "preserve local customs and an Islamic heritage" among villagers. Colonialism thus strengthened the hand of "conservative Malays" preferring a "quasi-feudal order based upon hereditary rulers, rather than representative government" (pp. 118–19, 167–69). Unfortunately,

she spends little time developing this crucial contention, one which suggests complex struggles over identity and belonging within what would eventually become a ‘Malay’ countryside. Lees hints at these variances in occasional references to agricultural fairs, banditry, peasant rubber cultivation, Jubilee-celebrating foresters, and — most significantly — British-supported mass migration from the Netherlands Indies. But greater emphasis on rural dynamics would have enriched her investigation of views of empire from “other boats” (Ho 2004, p. 213), while perhaps refining her own contention that “social engineering [was] implicit in the British Empire” (p. 11). Nevertheless, Lees’ vigorous attention to small-town and plantation societies ensures that this book will remain an invaluable reference for years to come.

Geoffrey K. Pakiam

Regional Economic Studies Programme, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Singapore 119614; email: geoffrey_pakiam@iseas.edu.sg.

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Multinational Maids: Stepwise Migration in a Global Labor Market. By Anju Mary Paul. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. xxix+386 pp.

This book is an important examination of contemporary international migration, as it presents a necessary and timely challenge to the prevailing paradigms of permanent settlement and binational approach to transnationalism. Recent estimates suggest that about two-thirds of international migrants are workers, most of whom are considered ‘low-waged’ and ‘low-skilled’, and are therefore barred from permanent residency in most destination countries.