

perspective of those not in power” and the consequence of “emotions, rumor, and fantasy ... embedded in and crucial to imperial success” (p. 12).

The limitations of *Empire's Mistress* are tied to the limitations of the archives. After all, the colonial archives are political and hence “function as an apparatus of power” (p. 9). But these limitations made Gonzalez treat the archival holdings differently compared to some historians’ old belief of ‘no document, no record, no history’. I suspect that the scarce materials about Cooper had paradoxically revealed more information and raised more inquiries beyond Gonzalez’s initial expectations in her quest. Gonzalez is a master narrator and a careful spectator. Still, I could not avow that *Empire's Mistress* is exclusively a work of history as it is also portraiture of “imperial love” and life (p. 11) and of coming to terms with the historical past’s “hauntings and ... provocations” (p. 159).

Most studies about the Philippines produced in the last five decades are too insular. But *Empire's Mistress* is outside that framework. It is an archetype of how archival research should be repurposed. Importantly, it is a great addition to the recent body of work that is gaining ground in treating the Philippines and its subjects within the framework of empire and global history.

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Celluloid Colony: Locating History and Ethnography in Early Dutch Colonial Films of Indonesia. By Sandeep Ray. Singapore: NUS Press, 2021. 218 pp.

To drive through the streets of Yogyakarta in Indonesia and see people going about their daily life is a wonderful way to spend some leisure time. It becomes a marvel when what you see are

scenes from more than one hundred years ago. To experience it, just join a captain of the Dutch East Indies army—Johann Lamster—on one of his so-called phantom rides through several Javanese cities in 1912. A camera is mounted on top of a car and we drive through town—a film format that was very popular at the end of the nineteenth century. The films of Lamster and his successors are the main focus of Sandeep Ray's book. He is right in arguing that this vast body of colonial non-fiction films has long been neglected, and that more of such films should and could be used in understanding colonial society.

Technical hurdles were an important reason why colonial films were not widely studied in the past. Most of these films are kept in Dutch archives and could only be accessed by visiting the archives through a cumbersome process of arranging appointments. Today, almost all of the colonial films are digitized: some are accessible for free on the internet; others still necessitate a visit to the archives, although the process of arranging appointments has now moved online and is thus far less laborious than before. So why are such films still not yet commonly used as a source in studies about colonial societies? Do scholars still feel awkward about using films in their research?

In his introduction, Ray suggests a series of strategies for using non-fiction films as a scholarly source. First, films (or footage) need to be classified as a 'primary source'; second, they should be cross-referenced with other (text-based) sources; third, they should be treated as a micro-history in itself; and lastly, they should be studied in relation to the commercial, cultural and political influences that motivated the film-makers. These strategies will sound familiar to scholars who use primary sources in their research. It is not easy, however, to classify and establish non-fiction films as a 'primary source' as footage is often re-used in news and documentary films without any reference to the original, making it hard to establish if a film is a 'primary source'. In addition, although not always obvious to the general public, there is a very thin line between fiction films and non-fiction ones. While the latter may seem to

show events as they happen, very often there will be interventions by the cameraman and/or director. For example, in the travelling shots that Captain Lamster made in the towns of Java, one can often see a small boy running across the street. While this may be a pure coincidence, my own experience as a film-maker leads me to believe it to be otherwise. *Celluloid Colony*, however, does not mention this. The possibility of the film-maker's intentional intervention is only discussed in the chapter about the films of Father Buis, which contain obvious re-enactments.

The book provides a clear and interesting review of the general discourse among film historians on the topics of genre, representation and the role of propaganda in films. This touches upon the central thesis of the book: although early colonial films may be considered propaganda, one can also read between the lines and discover information that was unintentionally put in there. In this sense, colonial films are more than just a representation of 'the colonial gaze'; they also show glimpses of the harsh life of Indonesians working on large plantations and the vocational schools where young Indonesians were trained—schools that later became known as the cradle of Indonesian nationalism.

Overall, the book's merit is that it gives meaning to the vast collection of early colonial films, which could easily be regarded as merely representing the colonial mentality of the day. Ray concludes that, while these films undoubtedly capture the "historical optimism and hopes for the colonial future" (p. 196), they also present a glimpse into "practices and traditions that are now lost" (p. 196) by using a "method of visual time travel" (p. 196). Concerning practices and traditions, I suppose Ray refers to the ethnographic value of the films, but he does not elaborate on the method of visual time travel. In addition, he does not explain the rationale behind his choice of examples of footage that might lead present-day viewers to look beyond the traditional colonial framework. It might be impossible to design an unambiguous method that can unveil hidden meanings in colonial non-fiction films—meaning is in the eye of the beholder, after

all. In the same vein, *Celluloid Colony* might not offer a definitive answer to the ongoing discussion since the 1970s about how films can be used as a source for historians and other scholars, but it is certainly an eloquent contribution to this discussion.

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Fluid Jurisdictions in the Indian Ocean – Arab Diaspora under Colonial Rule. By Nurfadzilah Yahaya. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020. 270 pp.

Focused on archives that trace the fortunes and strategies of Arabs in Southeast Asia, *Fluid Jurisdictions* synthesizes three bodies of scholarship that have been increasingly lively and important of late: world historical studies of diaspora and mobility; legal historical treatments of plural legal orders and layered hierarchies of law; and the study of Muslim communities beyond textual formalism. For scholars of Southeast Asia, it also offers a range of materials and methods for considering the social, economic and legal networks running within and through the region, which not only connect it to other coasts and hinterlands but also embed it within a range of intergenerational and multi-jurisdictional institutions: multiple colonial orders and their legacies; mercantile and familial estates; and racial, religious and linguistic systems of inclusion and exclusion. The book draws from a rich range of materials—case law and court records, testamentary documents, intelligence reports, as well as press and correspondence—which illustrate just how porous Dutch and British colonial legal regimes were and how varied the repertoires of the subjects who navigated them were. As a result, the book provides a rich, complicated and yet immensely readable text, which will be of great value in the classroom.