

Despite solidly situating much of this work in the eighteenth century, the book is significant for engaging with contemporary debates on the ethnicity and belonging of Arakans today. With the hugely valuable addition of Persianate sources to this history, South Asian sojourns into Burma on behalf of the East India Company could not be simply dismissed as an alien influx but as part of a longer history of Indo-Persian connections in the Indian Ocean World, to which Burma was an outlying but important node. To better illustrate the geographic positions of *The City and The Wilderness*, the book could use more detailed maps. For example, the former French port of Syriam was mentioned several times in the text but was not shown on any of the accompanying maps. In all, this accessible and thoughtful book, particularly the last chapter, will be a rewarding read for scholars of the Indian Ocean World and those keen to add historical nuance to discussions of the Rohingya issue in Myanmar today.

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*Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide: Identity, History and Hate Speech.*  
By Ronan Lee. London: Tauris, 2021. xii+306 pp.

The plight of the Rohingyas became a global cause célèbre after the Myanmar army's brutal 'cleansing' operations in Rakhine State in 2016–17. Ronan Lee's book adds to the considerable activist literature exposing the humanitarian and legal aspects of an ongoing crisis. Lee, a former Australian politician and currently a fellow at Loughborough University's Institute for Media and Creative Industries, has crafted a book based on research going back to the outbreak of violence in 2012 and interviews conducted between 2015 and 2017. The voice of the author is pervasive in the style

and content. As an activist-researcher, he backs key assertions of the Rohingya ideology that argues for their indigeneity based on the historical presence of Muslims in pre-colonial Arakan (chapters 1, 2 and 5). As a sensitive interviewer, he lends voice to the Rohingya leaders who describe the injustice their community has endured and their political beliefs (chapters 6 and 7). Lastly, as a narrator, he aptly summarizes the latest decade of events in Myanmar while placing emphasis on human rights violations, state brutalities and genocidal intents (chapters 3 and 4). The volume concludes with an assessment of Myanmar's depressing domestic context even before the military coup of 1 February 2021, harsh criticism of the United Nations ("a broken system", p. 220) and an account of admonitions by the international community. Copious endnotes and a detailed index make up a quarter of the book.

Lee's book references serious aspects of marginalization, and crimes against humanity perpetrated against the Rohingyas. Poignant details from ten refugee interviewees illustrate an escalated dehumanization that led to allegations of genocide. For Lee, the genocide of the Rohingyas is an unchallenged fact. The book starts with the allegation that "Myanmar's Rohingya community experienced genocide gradually, and then suddenly" (p. 1). The ongoing debates by international criminal lawyers on genocidal intent at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) take a back seat for the author as the legal process "moves slowly" (pp. 101, 116). However, readers may want a more detailed account and analysis of discussions by legal specialists as genocide figures prominently in the book's title. From Lee's viewpoint, the international community and its organizations should expedite their acknowledgement of the genocide and "do more to assist the Rohingya" (p. 239).

The internationalization of the Rohingya cause is a recurrent topic in more than twenty interviews conducted with community leaders and political actors (see pp. 131–33, 140, 145, 173–77, 210, 218). While Lee highlights that "solutions are largely domestic" (p. 209), for the past seven decades, Rohingya leaders hold the

conviction that only intervention by foreign powers can ensure the protection of their rights and claims within the country. In his last chapter, the author succinctly concedes that “the relationship with the [Buddhist] Rakhine is certainly important” (p. 210), but like in other similar publications, he does not give much attention to the muddled relationship between the Buddhist majority and the Rakhine State’s Muslim minorities.

Lee’s book is a passionate defence of Rohingya claims about their history and identity. Ethnicity is understood from the postcolonial anthropological perspective that it is socially constructed. Regrettably, Lee does not engage his readers with an analysis of the uncertainty and contradictions displayed through the opinions shared by the Rohingya leaders in chapters 6 and 7. Decrypting the inconsistencies in their narratives could help readers understand the becoming and the complexities of modern Rohingyas and the social identity labels articulated by their transnational elites under hostile conditions. Lee, however, puts a lot of effort into streamlining the partly historical and partly mythological claims of Rohingya writers like Mohammed Tahir Ba Tha, Mohammed Yunus and U Kyaw Min. While he criticizes the reification of “previously loosely adopted ethnic identities and identity labels” (p. 73) in Burma after 1948, chapters 1, 2 and 5 support an essentialist narrative of ethnic formation more in tune with the political beliefs of Rohingya leaders rather than a fluid understanding based on regional historical developments.

Ethnicity is also an ideology, as Siniša Malešević (2004) has argued. Lee’s commitment to flesh out the ideological pillars of Rohingya ethnicity is problematic because there still exists little consensus on the facts behind the historical claims. These claims, usually based on Arakanese Buddhist chronicles, local folklore and British colonial writings, are not always historically verifiable, especially since there was no autonomous Muslim historiography in pre-colonial and colonial Arakan. Western writers like Mr Lee ignore this and reproduce misconceptions from the late 1950s. For instance, the myth that Arab Muslim sailors were shipwrecked on a

coast in Arakan in the eighth century CE, taken for a certified fact, hinges on just one sentence from Nga Mi's chronicle of the 1840s.

To conclude, Lee's book is a vivid account of the Rohingya crisis over the last decade and will benefit readers who are looking for descriptions of the plight of the Rohingyas. However, one needs to differentiate issues related to the humanitarian and legal causes behind basic rights from the ideological underpinning of ethnic formation and politics. The issue of human rights cannot be delayed as it is a moral duty. However, the myths of origins, discursive strategies, interpretations of archival sources and the writing of history beyond the ethnocentric echo chamber should be at the forefront of continuing critical debates.

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*Belittled Citizens: The Cultural Politics of Childhood on Bangkok's Margins*. By Giuseppe Bolotta. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2021. ix+250 pp.

Focusing on *dek salam* (slum children) in Bangkok, *Belittled Citizens* offers the readers a thorough examination of the lives of children living on the margins of society. This comprehensive and easy-to-read book is dedicated to a different way of thinking about children, culture, place and politics. Written in a highly accessible manner, free from disciplinary jargon and dense theory, the book conveys a strong ethnographic sense of young people's identity and agency in the adult world. Moreover, it offers intimate glimpses into the