

To be sure, none of this detracts from the book's eloquence. Imy is a skilled raconteur. She has a talent for finding stories in the archive and using these to illustrate wider points (a technique used to strong effect in chapter 4, "Labored Intimacies"), without straying into the realm of narrative history. This makes *Losing Hearts and Minds* accessible (as well as analytically sophisticated).

This is a highly original work of scholarship that should be read by anyone with an interest in the modern history of Malay(si)a and Singapore. It will also help to make Southeast Asia more visible in the fields of gender and colonial history.

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Sikh Pioneers of Perlis, Malaysia 1906–1957: A Community History.

By D.S. Ranjit Singh Darar. Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Malaya Press, 2023. xxv+291 pp.

This book stands as a monumental contribution to Malaysian historiography, shedding light on an often-overlooked segment of the Sikh diaspora. It explores the arrival of Sikh immigrants in Perlis—Malaysia's smallest and northernmost state—and highlights how this community carved out a meaningful existence by preserving their cultural and religious heritage while adapting to the changing socio-economic landscape. Spanning two parts and thirteen chapters, the book vividly captures the pioneers' journey as they built a cohesive community. Through interviews, archival sources and detailed family histories, the author brings to life the tenacity, resilience and significant contributions of the Sikh settlers in establishing a sustainable and thriving environment in Perlis.

Ranjit Singh's work focuses on documenting the experiences of numerous Sikh settlers in Perlis, but this review will highlight the contributions of only three individuals. Recognized as "The Perlis

Rothschild”, Jagat Singh stands out as a visionary leader whose impact on the Sikh community was profound. Starting as a state dispensary officer, Jagat Singh’s role expanded significantly, contributing to infrastructure, financial services and cultural enrichment, including establishing gurdwaras and launching the first “Talkie Cinema” in 1928. Despite political challenges, including accusations of anti-British activities and ties to the Ghadar Movement, he returned stronger and became the first Sikh president of the historically British-reserved Diamond Jubilee Sikh Temple in Penang, uniting the Sikh community and leaving a legacy of resilience and cultural impact.

The book also shines a spotlight on Gurcharan Singh, a figure of remarkable versatility and influence in Perlis. During the Japanese occupation, Gurcharan Singh served as a translator and confidant to the Raja of Perlis, trusted for his advice and loyalty. Post-war, he served as an unofficial member of the Perlis State Council until 1958, tirelessly championing educational advancement. He secured government grants for students, reflecting his steadfast belief in the transformative power of education. He founded the Perlis Transport Company, introducing the state’s first public bus service, and later led as president of the North Malaya Bus Services Association. Within the Sikh community, he presided over the gurdwara, working to uphold the community’s religious and cultural identity while fostering unity and progress.

Jarnail Singh, another visionary leader highlighted in the book, played a key role in integrating Sikh settlers into Malayan society by advocating for their adoption of Malayan citizenship, fostering a sense of national identity, belonging and permanence. As president of the Sikh Gurdwara Perlis for an impressive twenty-two years, Jarnail Singh spearheaded the construction of a new gurdwara in 1970, creating a vital spiritual and cultural hub for the community. His dedication was acknowledged through honours from the state and federal governments and the royalty of Perlis, underscoring the lasting impact of his leadership and vision.

The book also provides a compelling look at the second wave of Sikh settlers (1939–57), who navigated the challenges of the Second

World War, the Japanese occupation and the Indian independence movement. Unlike earlier arrivals, these settlers were independent and voluntary immigrants. Despite facing economic hardships, cultural adjustments and modest living conditions, they demonstrated resilience, diversifying into roles such as security guards, cloth vendors and traders. Many, after securing some financial stability, brought their families from India to Malaya, while others integrated into the local community through intermarriage with Thai-Buddhist women, showcasing their adaptability while preserving their Sikh identity. Notably, unlike Sikh communities elsewhere in Malaya, they did not engage in cattle-rearing or bullock-cart transport businesses.

Modest Perlis became a fertile ground for the Sikh community to establish roots and build a future. Despite their small numbers, these settlers emerged as leaders in various sectors, leaving an inspiring legacy. Through vivid narratives and meticulous research, this book celebrates the enduring contributions of these trailblazers. The author's personal connections and insights lend authenticity and depth to the storytelling, creating an intimate portrayal of the pioneers' lives. While the narrative is evocative and richly detailed, it occasionally reiterates the contributions of central figures, leading to some repetition that could detract from the overall flow. A more balanced focus on the broader community, including the daily lives of ordinary settlers, would have further enriched the narrative.

Crucially, the book touches minimally on interactions between the Sikh pioneers and the local communities, primarily in political and institutional contexts. A deeper exploration of everyday social exchanges and mutual support networks would have illuminated how these diverse communities coexisted and cooperated. Moreover, the omission of Sikh women's contributions represents a missed opportunity to provide a fuller picture of the community's cultural and social dynamics. Their untold stories remain an untapped reservoir of insight into the role of women in preserving and enriching Sikh traditions while navigating life in a pluralistic society.

Despite the dwindling Sikh population in Perlis—from 189 in the 1980s to just 98 in 2021—this book serves as a vital testament

to a once-thriving community, illuminating their unity, resilience and enduring contributions to Malaysia's multicultural tapestry. By safeguarding their cultural heritage and showcasing their remarkable adaptability, this work goes beyond simple historical documentation to serve as a rich and invaluable resource for Malaysianists and scholars of diaspora studies. Its treasure trove of stories will inspire future generations and highlights the urgent need to celebrate underrepresented narratives. For those passionate about preserving the legacies of diverse communities, this work is essential—serving as a powerful reminder that, if left untold, these histories risk fading into obscurity.

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Forging the Nation: Land Struggles in Myanmar's Transition Period.
By SiuSue Mark. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2023.
xix+225 pp.

More than four years since the military *coup d'état*, the political and economic landscape of Myanmar has changed so drastically that it can be challenging to remember the direction the country seemed to be heading in before the putsch. In the decade prior to the 2021 coup, the military pursued civilian, institutional, economic and democratic reforms that created limited but meaningful political opportunities for activists, civil society organizations and political parties. It was a period full of contradictions, including the intermittent reminder that the military remained the ultimate power holder. Central to this era were struggles over land, in which peasants and their allies sought to resolve past injustices and violence as well as contest new rounds of land dispossession. In this book, SiuSue Mark expertly guides us through this tumultuous recent history.